

# Setting Up: Allowing the Breath to emerge out of Broad Awareness

## Setting Up:

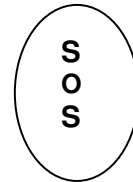
It is vital to set yourself up properly to meditate. Without the proper preparation, it may take you some time to settle in your practice. If you prepare properly, it will be easier to meditate.

Awareness can be described in terms of breadth or focus. In the Mindfulness of Breathing, one is broadly speaking moving from broad awareness to more focussed awareness.

There are different aspects of our experience that we can pay attention to, in order to establish a broad awareness of ourselves. It is out of this broad awareness that awareness of the breath then arises.

Awareness can be differentiated into awareness of:

1. Surroundings
2. Others
3. Self: Body, Feelings/Emotions and Thoughts



### **Surroundings:**

Broaden your awareness once more to include our **surroundings** – the room you are meditating in, the building, the sounds of the street or city, the people passing by. Simply letting all these things be like the background to your meditation. Let them arise and let them pass away. The world isn't going to keep quiet for us so we have to assimilate any noise and then let it go. Try not to get caught up in any sounds.

### **Others:**

Now take in the **others** around you. Simply be aware that there are others in the room with you, or in the building, or in the street. People either sitting meditating, or going about their business. Broaden your awareness to include these people.

### **Self:**

Relax into your **bodily** experience. Notice any discomfort and make any adjustments before you begin so as to then sit as still as possible when you are actually meditating. Pay attention to the physical sensations of your body, trying not to push away any painful ones, nor grasp after pleasurable ones. Simply try and accept your bodily experience as you find it.

You may like to do a quick body scan in posture to reconnect you with your bodily mindfulness. Remember to keep it as tangible as possible! Simply enjoy sitting here.

Next we come to our **feelings & emotions**. Here we are trying to pay attention to the overall tone of our experience: what is going on? Asking yourself simple questions such as 'How am I?', or 'What is going on?', is often useful. You might feel happy or sad, anxious or calm. You may find it useful to find an imaginative counterpart to your experience; is your mind bright or dark, for example, or if your mind were the sky what would the weather be? Sometimes an image can very accurately tell us what is going on for us internally.

Try and identify what your emotional experience is, without identifying with it too much. Don't let it define you. Simply acknowledge whatever is going on and let it be for the moment.

Notice what **thoughts** are flying around. Often they are bound up with our feelings and emotions, like the foam on the crest of waves. Once again simply acknowledge that they are there. Try and let them be like clouds floating across the vast clear blue sky of your mind. They have arisen, and they will pass away. We don't have to get caught up in them.

Finally you might like to recall why you are meditating. This might be to realise some of your **ideals**. Being in touch with your ideals can give you a sense of confidence and helps you connect this particular session of meditation with realising these ideals. Being in touch with your ideals can also give you a sense of confidence in your own potential.

Now, having cultivated a broad awareness and recalled any intentions you might have, allow your breath to gradually emerge. It is important not to go chasing after your breath – allow it emerge gradually from this broad awareness of yourself. Don't forget the background attitudes of CELT:

- Curiosity
- Enjoyment
- Letting go of expectations
- Tangible – keeping the experience tangible

You can't force your mind to be concentrated; you have to let focus emerge out of breadth. If your mind wanders, you can come back to the broad awareness and let the breath emerge from this broad awareness again. Remember to relax into the experience and enjoy breathing! Feel the sensations of breathing.

## Finishing

It is important to finish as carefully as we begin. If you jump up straight after meditating you are likely to lose all the calm and concentration you have built up. It is also likely that you'll find the experience unpleasant! Once again, we want to make a smooth transition from our now more focussed awareness back to a more broad awareness.

So start by simply letting go of the practice and just sitting, doing nothing. Not making any effort and simply allowing the mind relax. You have made a lot of effort in meditation and it is important to simply rest your mind now. Let go into your broader experience.

Try and sit still for 3-5 minutes after the end, just to absorb your meditation. And when you do move, do so gently. Re-introduce movement in a kind way – wiggling fingers and toes, taking a deeper breath or two. When you are ready come back to your normal sitting position.

You might like to use the concentration you have developed to reflect on the change in your experience – how the breath changed its qualities as your awareness deepened, or how you yourself are now in a different (hopefully better!) state than when you started.

## And finally....

Remember there is no such thing as a bad meditation! Absolutely none. Meditation is about cultivating positive states of mind. If your mind kept wandering and you tried to bring it back, then that is a good meditation! Meditation is about creating a momentum towards positive change. It may take some time for that to bear fruit. In the meantime, we just have to try and be patient and simply enjoy the process!