

## Basic Relaxation Meditation

### **PURPOSE/EFFECTS:**

Stress is an extremely unhealthy condition. It causes the body to release the chemical cortisol, which has been shown to reduce brain and organ function, among many other dangerous effects. Modern society inadvertently encourages a state of almost continuous stress in people.

This is a meditation that encourages physical and mental relaxation, which can greatly reduce the effects of stress on the body and mind and lead to a more stable sense of calmness.

### **METHOD:**

#### **Summary**

Sit still and pay close attention to your breathing process.

#### **Basic Technique**

Take a reposed, seated posture. Your back should be straight and your body as relaxed as possible.

Close your eyes, and bring your attention to your breathing process. Simply notice you are breathing. **Do not attempt to change your breath in any way.** Breathe simply and normally.

Try to notice both the in breath and the out breath; the inhale and the exhale. "Notice" means to actually feel the breathing in your body with your body. **It is not necessary to visualize your breathing or to think about it in any way except to notice it with your somatic awareness.**

Each time your attention wanders from the act of breathing, return it to noticing the breath. Do this **gently and without judgment.**

Remember to really *feel into* the act of breathing.

#### **When You Have Mastered the Basic Technique**

If you want to go more deeply into this, try each of these specific targets of attention to see which is most comfortable for you.

1. Notice how the air feels moving through your nostrils on both the in breath and the out breath.
2. Notice how the air feels moving through your mouth and throat. You may feel a sort of slightly raspy or ragged feeling as the air moves through your throat. This is normal and also something to feel into.
3. Notice how the air feels as it fills and empties your chest cavity. Feel how your rib cage rises slowly with each in breath, and gently deflates with each out breath.
4. Notice how your back expands and contracts with each breath. Actually feel it shifting and changing as you breath.
5. Notice how the belly expands outward with each in breath and pulls inward with each in breath. Allow your attention to fully enter the body sensation of the belly moving with each breath.
6. Now allow your attention to cover your entire body at once as you breath in and out. Closely notice all the sensations of the body as it breathes.

As your practice develops, from time to time revisit these alternatives and others that may occur to you to see if your preference has changed.

Suggested session time is 10 minutes. More is better, as you become capable of it.