

Counting the Breaths

A good technique for building concentration.

Calming the Mind:

Focus your attention on your breathing. Breathe naturally. Just focus the mind on the rising and falling of your shoulders and chest as you inhale and exhale gently. Allow your mind to settle and become calm and present, ready to engage in meditation.

Motivation:

Create an altruistic motivation for the meditation session. Think that you are meditating not just for your own individual benefit, but you are taking the time now to meditate and develop your mind to become a wiser and kinder person, able to be of benefit to all beings.

The Main Body of the Meditation:

Start by focusing your attention at the opening of the nostrils. Pay attention to the very subtle sensations as you breathe in and out through your nose. You can feel certain sensations as the air passes, as the small hairs move, cooler sensations as you inhale, warmer as you exhale. Don't follow the air into your body or out into the surrounding environment. Place your attention on the sensations associated with the breath at the opening of your nostrils. Your job is to keep your attention firmly placed on those sensations only.

As you inhale and exhale, mentally count each inhalation and exhalation together as one. Count from one to ten, concentrating on those sensations. When you reach ten, begin again at one.

If you become distracted, if the mind wanders to other things and moves away from the point of concentration, then begin again at one. Even if you never get past two, it is not a problem! The point is to train your mind to focus on one point only; this concentration can take some practice to attain.

Once you start to attain some mastery over the technique, then once you reach ten, count backwards from ten to one. Then start again, counting from one to ten.

Dedication:

Finally, dedicate your positive energy and insights to the well-being and happiness of all living beings.