

Counting Breaths Meditation



Calms The Mind, Reduces Stress and more

Let us start with the basic 'Counting mode' of counting breaths meditation. We count silently, keeping the eyes closed.

'Counting mode': During the in-breath, feel the coolness inside the nostrils. During the out-breath, say the number 'one' silently and slowly as 'Ooone...', like a chant, keeping its sound alive in the mind, as long as you exhale. When you run out of air, stop the sound. During the next in-breath, feel the coolness in the nostrils again and during the out-breath, say the number 'twooo...' like a chant. During the next in-breath, feel the coolness and during the out-breath, say 'threeee...' like a chant. Breathe in like before but during the out-breath, don't say the next higher number. Instead, restart counting from 'Ooone...'.
Follow this pattern of 'counting breaths' in sets of three, in the following modes.

It is normal for the mind to wander and lose track of the breaths. Don't worry. Every time this happens, quietly resume counting the breaths from 'Ooone...'. Let the breathing happen effortlessly. There are no other guidelines or restrictions. Feel free to adopt this practice to your own style, to make you feel calm and relaxed. *Follow this pattern of 'counting breaths' in sets of three, in the following modes.*

Tip mode: Start with any one hand, say the left hand. Touch the tip of the thumb to the tip of the little finger. Count three breaths as explained above. Repeat the practice at each of the next three finger tips. When you get to the thumb, place the tip of the index finger at the base of the thumb and count three breaths. Then switch to the right hand and repeat all the steps. Practice as long as you like, switching the hands.

Segment mode: Start with any one hand, say the left hand. Note that every finger has two cross lines dividing it into three segments. Place the tip of the thumb at the top segment of the little finger and count three breaths. Move the thumb down, to the middle segment of the same finger and count three breaths. Move down to the bottom segment and count three breaths. Release the little finger. Repeat the same steps at the next three fingers. When you get to the thumb, place the tip of the index finger on its segments and repeat the steps. Note that you will be counting 3+3+3 breaths at each finger. Then switch to the right hand and repeat the steps. Practice as long as you like, switching the hands.

Feeling mode: Don't use the fingers or count the breaths. During the in-breath, feel the coolness inside the nose. During the out-breath, feel the warm or neutral sensation. You may also place a hand on your abdomen and focus on the slight outward and inward movements during the in-breaths and out-breaths respectively. Practice as long as you like. Every time your mind wanders, resume focusing on the coolness during the in-breath.

Staring mode: Keep your eyes open. Keep staring at a small but prominently visible spot, mark or part of an object, at eye level or lower. Simultaneously, practice any of the above four modes. This way you keep the eyes and mind focused.

911 mode: Keep your eyes closed. Breathe in quickly through the nose or mouth. Blow air slowly through slightly open lips, as if blowing through an imaginary straw, till you run out of air. Repeat this mode 5 to 10 times, till you feel some relief from acute mental or physical stress. When you feel good enough, switch to the other modes for a longer time.

See more options at www.countingbreaths.com

*** "I struck Gold in 'counting breaths'" ****

*** "Wonderful portable relaxation technique that detaches from daily stresses" ***

...Practitioners

When Can I Practice ?

You will notice below that you don't have to sacrifice your useful times to practice this meditation.

As a beginner, practice at these times

Bedtime: When you wish to sleep, begin practicing the 'segment' mode. When you feel sleepy, switch to the 'counting mode'. When even more sleepy, switch to the 'feeling' mode. If you wake up in sleep, practice the segment mode again and get back to sleep. No more sleep problems!

Waking up: On waking up, practice the 'Tip mode' or 'Segment mode' till you leave the bed, being still in each posture: turned left, turned right, and lying on your back. You will set a calm tone for the day and will tackle the daytime stresses much better. Spending a few minutes in this practice daily will turn it into a habit.

Home: While doing routine activities like cooking, cleaning, gardening etc, the mind wanders. Focus on a few breaths periodically, to bring the mind back. You won't be bored.

Waiting: We feel bored and restless waiting for breakfast, lunch or dinner, waiting for computer program to load, standing in a line, sitting at the doctor's office etc. These are wonderful times for practicing the counting mode and feeling relaxed!

Traveling by Car /Bus /Train/Plane: Practice your choice mode, eyes closed, for a fatigue free journey.

Driving: When waiting at a red light, don't watch the moving vehicles or read the signs on them. Instead, keep staring at the red light and count your breaths, till it turns green. Call it red light meditation!

After a few weeks of practice, add these

Walking: First, develop this habit by walking slowly, practicing the 'counting mode'. During the in- breath, feel the coolness inside nose. During the out-breath count the number, matching each count with a foot touching the ground. Repeat that number till the out-breath ends. For example: during the first out- breath, say one...one...one, matching with three steps. After some practice walk at your normal pace. In a few weeks, you can practice even while running!

Workplace: Whenever you walk in the parking lot or the hallway, practice as explained above. Whenever your mind wanders, you feel tightness in any part of your body or feel stressed, practice your choice mode for a few seconds at least to come out of the stressful state. Use a part of the lunch break for a breathing break. Before leaving the workplace, practice for a few minutes to shed the stress, instead of carrying it home and blowing up on the family.

Chronic pains: Practice at bedtime routinely. Before the breakfast or dinner, lie down on your back, on a carpeted floor. Cover yourself if you need to. Keep your legs straight and keep a pillow below the knees. Keep the hands by your side, palms up. Practice the 'segment mode' for thirty minutes and extend gradually to an hour. Follow up with gentle stretching. Do this daily to reduce the pain meds.

Exercise: Practice the 'counting mode' or 'feeling mode' on the treadmill. When doing weights or resistance training, breathe out during the strenuous movement and breathe in during the easy return movement.

Under stress: When angry, anxious, panicky or in pain, use the '911 mode' till you feel some relief. Alternate '911' with other modes till the stress eases.

(Optional) Meditation: Sit on the floor or a chair, over a cushion thick enough to ensure the back assumes a healthy shape with lumbar curve. Practice the segment mode for at least 20 minutes. Doing this twice a day, before breakfast and dinner, will help you become immune to all kinds of stress.

See more suggestions at www.countingbreaths.com

*** "Moronically simple but works like a charm" ***

*** "This meditation technique helped me survive the crisis I was going through and saved my life. " .Practitioners

Benefits

Insomnia

* "This technique has been very beneficial to calm the mind. I had insomnia and anxiety ever since I joined my medical college 15 years back. After practicing these techniques, my sleep quality has improved phenomenally and so has the ability to reduce the impact of the stressors of day to day life." - A Rheumatology Specialist.

* A Burmese refugee client was suffering from severe insomnia for the last 8 years, able to sleep for only 2 to 5 hours. Within a week of practicing this technique, she enjoyed uninterrupted sleep for 10 hours, from 9 in the night to 7 in the morning!

Anxiety, headaches, insomnia

"I had some anxiety issues, sleep problems and headaches. Once I got into bed, it used to take me about 3 hours to fall asleep. After practicing this technique, it only takes me 10-15 minutes to fall asleep! Every time I feel a little stressed I use the 'counting mode' to feel relaxed. The '911 technique' helped me to cope better with my anxiety issues. Since using the techniques, I feel great, no more anxiety, no more headaches and I sleep better!" - A client

Anxiety, depression, neck and back pain

"I have been cutting down on the anxiety medication slowly and made great progress. I used to take 2 pills a day. I am now down to 1.25 to 1.5. I feel better cutting back on this medication. I don't have as much anger or depression. My neck pain has greatly improved from the stretching as well as my back. I can't remember the last time I needed pain medication for these problems." - A client

Stress

* "I was really stressed out on my job at a medical office, due to my boss. I had to always to prove myself and be constantly on the go. I practiced the breathing techniques in the morning, night and also during the day. Now my body balance has changed, my mind has become so relaxed that nothing and no one stresses me. I am so calm even when dealing with others at work. My skin complexion has changed. I now have a bright glow in my face." - A client

* "A simple, no expense, meditation-oriented approach to stress reduction which we recommend for all our patients (and ourselves!) is nicely presented at the following website: www.countingbreaths.com. Try it; you'll be glad you did!"
- (Late) Peter Horvath MD, FACOG

Hypertension

"Last week I had a really great blood pressure reading 126/86. This is one of the lowest I have had" - A client.

Back pain

* "I practiced the technique intermittently during the day, whenever I remembered. Within 3 days, my back pain was completely gone, never to return. Before, I was depending on Celebrex to control the back pain. Now, I do not need it at all. I feel stress was the cause for my back pain which was reduced by practicing this relaxation technique."
- A research scientist who had a heart attack.

* "I was having back pain and sleep disorder from the last 25 years. I was diagnosed with herniated disk and arthritis in L4 & L5' hospitalized twice and taken numerous painkillers, muscle relaxers and narcotics. I frequently visited Pain clinics, Chiropractors and Physical Therapists, spending lot of dollars. These would help for a while and then I would be back to pain..After practicing the breathing and stretching exercises for the past 3 months, I did not have to take a single pain medication and enjoy a good night sleep. My back pain is less by 80%." A client

Migraines

A man 53, was suffering from migraine every week, lasting for a day, for more than 30 years. He was not taking any medicine and bearing the pain. Within 2 months of practicing the method, his migraines totally stopped. He practiced this technique for mental comfort from my hand outs, not expecting relief from migraine. This relief was a pleasant side effect!

Turn over.....

Smoking

"I was smoking a pack and half a day. I had been looking for a way to quit that would not require more money and the same old results. After just a week of doing the 'counting breaths' method once in the morning and right before bed, I was able to cut down smoking down to around 15 cigarettes a day from the previous 20 a day, by doing nothing more than the method. I now do it throughout the day and I am down to about 4 cigarettes a day. - A practitioner who learned from my handouts.

Grief and Depression

"The 'Focusing on breathing' technique has helped me tremendously. Seven years ago I lost my daughter and I went into a deep depression and chronic anxiety, in spite of medications. I started to use the breathing technique and I got to say they were very helpful. For the first time in 7 years I feel my depression has lifted." A 70 year old woman who practiced on her own from my handouts.

Relationships

"Since I have started 'focusing on breathing' practices my family life has changed dramatically. My daughter and I now talk on a daily basis without yelling at one another. My husband has calmed down his attitude around me. I am sleeping much better than I use to, without taking sleeping pills. Basically I am a much calmer person with more energy." - A client

More than 200 reports can be seen at www.countingbreaths.com.



Programs (Venue given at the end of this box)

Monthly group classes by voluntary donation

'Beginners meetup' on the First Tue of the month, 6 - 7.30pm or Third Saturday from 2 to 4 pm. Sign up on meetup.com <https://www.meetup.com/Counting-Breaths-Meditation> or Email or Call.

FREE 'Domestic Violence Awareness' meetup group: Just started. Sign up at <https://www.meetup.com/Castleton-on-Hudson-Domestic-Violence-Awareness-Meetup-Group/>

Solo classes by appointment - In person or by Skype

- Counting Breaths Meditation
- Overcoming Insomnia, Anxiety, Stress, Phobias, Anger, Grief, Lack of focus
- Improving relationships with parents, spouse, children and coworkers

Flexible hours. Weekdays from 6 pm and weekends from 2 pm. Duration 1 hour 30 minutes.

Venue: At the end of this box

Charges: \$45/person for 3 classes. Email or Call for appointment.

Group Seminars By Appointment

At any Library, Wellness centre, School/College, Workplace, Conference, Nursing home/Hospital or Home.

Duration flexible to suit your choice: A demo of 15 minutes to a full session of 1 Hour 30 minutes.

Charges: Flexible and affordable. Call or Email to schedule.

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Distribution of this brochure is supported by Padma Sripada MD (Internal Medicine), www.doctorpadma.com as a service to the community. She uses 'Meditation on breathing' and encourages her patients suffering from anxiety, stress and insomnia to try it.