

The Power of Belly Breathing

Mindfulness Worksheet

Date / Time:

What have you brought mindful awareness to today? Check all that apply.

Heart

Mind

Body

Breath

Environment

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



Due to the increasing stress and pace of modern day life, many of us have forgotten how to breathe deeply. When we are in a balanced state of being, the natural breath engages the diaphragm – a thin skeletal muscle that rests between the chest and the abdomen. When the diaphragm is used in breathing, the stomach rises and falls with ease – and as it does so, it helps to initiate feelings of ease and relaxation.

The alternative to this is breathing exclusively into the chest. When we breathe shallowly like this, we promote the body's 'fight or flight' mode and associated feelings of stress. Deepening the breath helps to bring us back into a restful state of being.

If you have not practiced belly breathing before, explore the following practice while resting on your back. This will make it easier for you to sense which part of the body is rising and falling as you breathe.

PRACTICE:

1. Resting on your back, place one hand on your belly and the other on your chest.
2. Take a few normal breaths to first observe which part of the body is rising and falling with each breath – Is most of the movement happening in the hand resting on your chest or the one on your belly?

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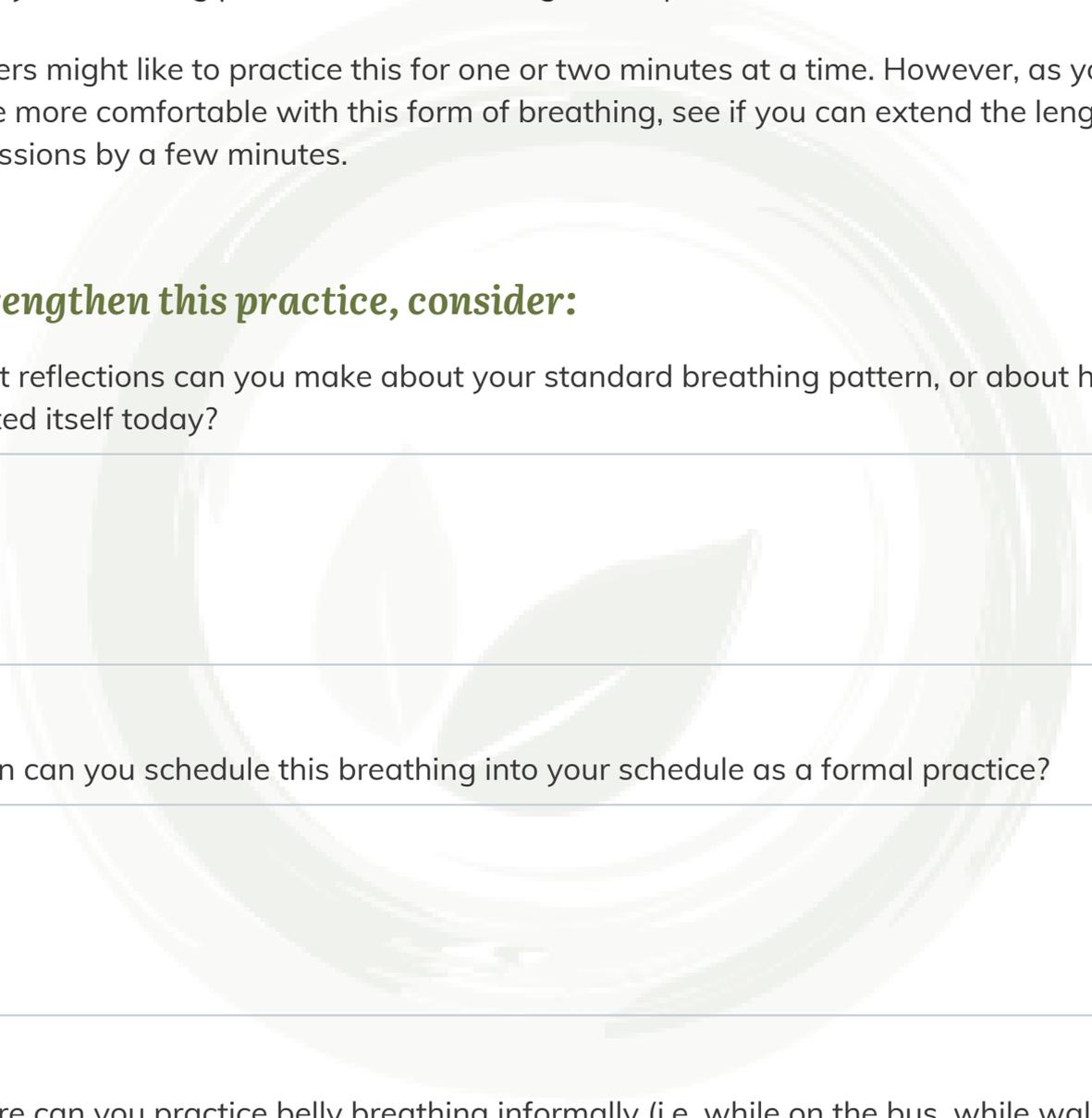
3. Now, see if you can deepen your breath by softening the belly. Take one minute to explore this, seeing if you can let most of the movement be in your stomach rather than in your chest.

4. Let your breath come back to its natural depth and pace. Notice the state of your mind and body after having practiced this breathing technique.

Beginners might like to practice this for one or two minutes at a time. However, as you become more comfortable with this form of breathing, see if you can extend the length of your sessions by a few minutes.

To strengthen this practice, consider:

1. What reflections can you make about your standard breathing pattern, or about how it presented itself today?



2. When can you schedule this breathing into your schedule as a formal practice?

3. Where can you practice belly breathing informally (i.e. while on the bus, while walking, before a big presentation)?