

# *3 Breathing techniques for better pain control and mindfulness.*

Breathing is something we do all the time, without paying attention to it, but its pattern changes with what is going on with our emotions. If we are anxious, worried or in pain, we tend to take short and quick breaths. This is usually also associated with muscle and body tension.

Breathing mindfully can be a good way for relaxation and helps with pain management. Moreover, it's available to you ALL THE TIME and EVERYWHERE you go. No need for fancy electronics, gadgets or resources needed.

Tips:

Some people may use pleasant smells, essential oils and aromatherapy to enhance the experience, but it not necessary to add anything to get the benefits from the exercise.

Some of the breathing exercises can feel uncomfortable for some of the pain patients, or make you feel light headed or dizzy. That usually means they are not being done correctly. In that case, it is important to stop the exercise and to work with a trained person and learn under direct guidance before trying it own your own again.

Let's put it in practice!

## *1. Observing the Breath*

Can be done anywhere, any time and even during activities.

- Simply pay attention to your breathing, without changing it in any way. Notice how slow or fast it is. Notice if it is shallow (small breaths) or deep (big breaths).
- Notice where the breath enters your body and where it leaves.
- Although you are just observing the breath and not attempting to change it, you will also notice that the breath is automatically slower, it increases your awareness, relaxes your body and decreases the muscle tension.
- Now practice breathing in through the nose, and out through the either mouth or nose.
- As you breathe in, notice the sensation of air going into your nostrils, hitting the back of your throat and filling up your lungs. When you breathe out, notice sensation of the air on your nostrils or mouth and lips.
- Sometimes, it is challenging to keep the focus on the breath, while thoughts, feelings and sensations keep popping in your mind. It is ok to notice them, but instead of getting caught up in these, for return to your breath. So, I recommend a trick that you count your breaths to 10 and if your mind wanders, start from 1 again.

This breathing exercise is also common in the practice of mindfulness.

For most people a pace of 4-5 seconds for breathing in and 4-5 seconds for breathing out is a good pace. Ideally do this for 10-15 minutes 1-2 times per day, but even if you take 3 breaths, that is enough to reset your attention, reduce painful sensation in the moment.

## *2. Square Breathing.*

People who prefer more structure can try square breathing. In this practice you can imagine the shape of a square and move from corner to corner in a pattern.

- Breathe in slowly through your nose for a count of 4.
- Hold your breath for a count of 4.
- Breathe out through your mouth for a count of 4.

### 3. *Healing Breath*

This is particularly a good exercise for children as children have such imaginative minds.

- Begin by paying attention to your breath, and invite your body and mind to begin to relax.
- Imagine that healing oxygen in the air you're breathing in is traveling to all areas of your body.
- With each breath in, imagine this healing traveling to a different area of your body.
- First to your head, with your next breath to your face, next your neck and shoulders, next down your arms to the tips of your fingers, next your chest and stomach, next your back, next your pelvis, and down your legs to the tips of your toes.
- Now focus on this healing oxygen going to the area(s) of your body that have pain or discomfort, with each breath, one area at a time.
- Let each area receive that healing oxygen for 10 or 15 or more breaths.

