

MtM Meditation Series

I am

Saying anything more than just “I am” begins to close us into a confining, bounded mindset. I am this, I am that, I am not this or that...and so on. Our identity is wrapped up and controlled by the power of the concepts we accept as defining who we are. One directive while meditating is to drop our defining concepts.

The simplest of meditations to minimize preoccupation of mind thoughts is to say “I am.” Other simple words to help increase the relaxation response is “Let go,” and another “Let be.” And while thinking these simple words let your body relax.

The mental notion is to free the mind from percolating new thoughts and those thoughts taking us into a story timeline; here our attention is not present, but off in wonderland. The goal is to be present in the moment without attending to any particular thoughts. When thoughts arrive, work at allowing the thoughts to pass on when they occur, and peacefully return to “I am,” “Let go,” or “Let be.”

Following our breath, in and out, in and out, in and out helps the mind to focus on one thing. Continually working at staying with and following our breath with our attention, in time, helps minimize the mind from wondering around in wonderland. Focus on breath, not focus on thoughts. When we focus on breath, we are immediately connected to a present ongoing activity -- in the present moment. The longer you can follow your breath without being distracted correlates with empowering the mind to be better able to focus on other things in life too.

Meditatively following the breath helps our body to relax. Mediating while attending to the breath leads the body into creating what has been labeled the “relaxation response.” The body cannot relax and be stressed at the same time. You can do one or the other, but not both at the same time. So, in order to minimize stress, we learn to turn on the relaxation response.

The more often you can follow breath, the more often you have the opportunity to experience the relaxation response. Breathing is an automatic 24/7 activity, and typically we are not noticing our breath. Just doing one to three deep breathes several times throughout the day (that is if and when you remember to breathe) you will be helping your body to relax and potentially clearing the mind.

You do not need to be in a mediation setting to take an occasional deep breath and reap the benefits.