

Mindful Breathing

Dr. Carrie Brennan: There are three benefits to mindful breathing. First, it's an opportunity to cultivate awareness. It's a chance to pay attention in the moment. Second, it gives us a break from our environment, both physically and mentally. And third, it's physically calming for us. It gives us an opportunity to calm our nerves and relax our muscles.

Carrie: When you're ready to practice mindful breathing, find a quiet space and take a seat. It's helpful to close your eyes and begin to breathe in and breathe out deeply. It can help to imagine that there's a balloon in your belly, and really focus on what it feels like when that balloon expands and when it deflates. Focus deeply on it. Experience the sound of your breathing, the way that it feels as the air is coming into your body and leaving.

Carrie: Now, you might notice that while you're in this action, your mind is wandering. That's okay—it happens to me literally every time I do it, but I notice it just as you will. Notice that your mind has left and then bring it back. Remember, this is about not being judgmental but just noticing that your mind has wandered. Bring it back, pay attention to your breath again and again. Do this for as long as you can or for as long as it takes until you start to feel a deeper sense of calmness.