

Breath Connection with Sheila Goodfellow

Welcome to this guided walking meditation. This series is brought to you by the team members of Estate of Health in partnership with the Town of Kingsville's Communities in Bloom. We thank you for practicing meditation today and we hope that you enjoy this practice.

Hello and welcome to this mindfulness practice. In our practice today, we're going to use a wonderful tool that very conveniently we carry with us everywhere we go. And that tool is our breath. There's a couple of different approaches we can take to working with a breath. And so let's dive into three different ways we can play with the breath.

Take this next moment and check in and notice how you're feeling. Notice how the body's feeling. Maybe noticing the activity level of the mind or your energy level.

And now I invite you three times to inhale through your nostrils if that's available inside the breath out.

A breath in, a sigh out, one more.

And check in once again, after three sighing breaths has anything shifted? How does the body feel or the mind feel? The energy level?

Begin to notice the natural flow of the breath - not trying to change or control anything. Being really curious about the natural breath. Is the breath moving in and out through the nostrils or through part of the lips? Perhaps a combination of the two? Do different parts of the body move with the breath? Perhaps there's movement in the belly or the chest?

What about the length of the breath? Does it seem long or short? Does either the inhale or the exhale seem longer than the other? Or are they about the same length?

Is there a texture to the breath? Does it seem easeful? Or does it seem jagged? Or halted? Rushed or even stuck somewhere? Resting with the natural breath and being curious with each inhale with each exhale, what is showing up in this moment?

How is the breath appearing in this moment? And perhaps even noticing how from moment to moment the breath shifts, it changes... it does not remain the same. Constantly changing, constantly moving.

Taking another friendly check in to notice how the body's feeling. Noticing activity level of the mind. Or the overall energy.

Let's begin to shift into consciously controlling the breath if it's available, I invite you to draw the breath in through your nose and release the breath back out through the nose. Inhaling actively and exhaling actively.

If nostril breathing is not available, if you're feeling a little bit stuffed up, that's okay. Just breathe through parted lips instead. Mindfully drawing the breath in and mindfully releasing the breath back out as you continue moving the breath in and out of the body consciously.

See if on the inhale the belly can soften and expand and on the exhale, there's a gentle contraction of the belly. Inhaling, belly softens and expands. Exhaling gentle contraction. Breathing in, belly expands. Breathing out gentle contraction.

It can be helpful to place a hand on the belly for feedback. As the inhale comes, feeling how the belly presses into the hand. And on the exhale, noticing how when the belly tugs in the hand and naturally follows the belly in.

This inhaling to expand and exhaling to contract might feel odd. It might even feel awkward or even like reverse breathing. That's okay, we simply notice that that's arising and we invite the inhale to soften relax, expand belly and the exhale to gently contract.

Stress of our day-to-day life often has us breathing in a very shallow way up in the chest and there's very little movement in the belly. And so that might be contributing to any awkward feelings. This full belly breath.

As you begin this practice, you might have moments where you feel a little bit dizzy or lightheaded. And that usually just means the body's taking in these full doses of fresh air or fresh oxygen that it's not entirely used to getting. So you can always let go of the practice and come back to it when you're ready. Letting the inhale expand belly and the exhale to gently contract. Inhaling is expansion and exhale is gentle contraction.

With practice over time, you might notice how on the inhale not just the belly expands but part of that side body part of the back body expands. The chest might even rise and the collarbones might broaden. And on the exhale they all return back towards the center back towards your core.

Breathing in expanding, breathing out contraction. Taking a moment to check in once again. How is the physical body feeling? What about the activity level in the mind or the overall energy level? Let's mindfully draw breath in. Sigh this one out.

These three different approaches to the breath: the sighing breaths; observation of the natural breath; or mindfully controlling the breath as it comes and goes can be wonderful tools to help navigate the ups and downs - the roller coaster ride of life.

I encourage you throughout your day to continue to connect into your breath. It's with you all the time. And it can be an amazing indicator of what's going on. How your inner experience is going. And alternatively, it can be used to help navigate what's going on in both the inner and the outer worlds.

Thank you for taking this time to practice. May you be well, may you be happy, and may you

have a fantastic day.