

Observe Your Breath



Simple breath awareness, known as *Anapana* in Sanskrit teaches one how to watch the natural breath in the present moment. The key to *Anapana* is to **observe without judgment and without changing** the breath to fit a preconceived expectation.

To begin: Find a comfortable position, either sitting up or lying down. If comfortable, close the eyes, if not narrow your focus to something slightly in front of you. Place one hand on the belly, the other hand on the heart.

Next: Observe the breath entering through the nostrils and filling the chest. Do not control the breath in any way.

Ask yourself one or two of the following questions to help you observe the breath:

- Where do you feel your breath moving your body most – low belly? Ribs? Chest? Nostrils?
- Can you feel where your breath begins?
- Which is longer – the inhalations (in breath) or exhalations (out breath)? Or are they the same?
- Are you breathing quickly or slowly?
- Is your breath shallow or deep?
- Would you describe your breath as smooth and flowing, or rough and choppy?

Continue observing the breath for a few minutes, increasing over time to 5-10 minutes.

To finish: Bring awareness back to the body by wiggling the fingers and toes. Gently lift the gaze or blink open the eyes if closed.

When to practice: Choose a time of day that works for you and practice regularly.

Benefits: Calms the mind, increases focus and concentration, aids in managing difficult emotions.