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Breath-Counting Meditation

This breathing meditation uses counting with the rhythm of the breath. Following the gentle inhales and exhales of the breath helps to create a sense of peace and restfulness.

1. Sit with a straight, comfortable but not rigid posture. Take several deep breaths. Either keep your eyes gently closed or keep them fixed on a spot on the floor about four feet in front of you. Your eyes may or may not be focused.
2. Take deep but not forced belly breaths, inhaling to fill you abdomen. As you do, focus your attention on each part of the breath: the inhale, the turn (the point at which you stop inhaling and start exhaling), the exhale, the pause (between the exhale and inhale), the turn (the point at which you start to inhale), the inhale, and so forth. Pay careful attention to the pause between the inhalation and exhalation. See if you can notice the sensations in your body as you pause between breaths.
3. As you exhale, say “one.” Continue counting each exhalation: “two...three...four...” Then begin with “one” again. If you loose count, simply start over again.
4. When you discover that your mind has slipped into thought, note this to yourself, you might want to even say to yourself “thinking,” labeling the experience. Then, gently bring yourself back to counting your breath.
5. If a particular bodily sensation catches your attention, focus on the sensation until it recedes. Then return your attention to your inhalation and exhalation, and the counting of your breath.