Mindful Breathing

The Mindful Breathing Exercise may be used any time you are feeling emotionally overwhelmed, stressed out, or depressed and in need of "letting go." It is three simple steps, outlined below. There is no set length of time for the exercise. Just do it for as long as is necessary. The answer to the question, "How long does it take?" is "as long as it takes."

STEP ONE

Focus on your breathing.

Place one hand on your chest, and another over your navel. When breathing in and out, the hand over your navel should move up and down, while the hand over your chest should not move.

Make the exhalation longer than the inhalation, and breathe deeply into your abdomen, from the diaphragm. Feel all the sensations of your breath as it enters and leaves your body.

Can you feel each individual muscle in your abdomen as you breathe in and out?

Can you feel your nostrils flare with each breath?

Can you sense the air being warmed by your body as you breathe?

STEP TWO

Leave Doing Mind and enter Being Mind. In Being Mind, you are not trying to go anywhere or do anything. You are simply 'being.'

Note that if you engage in Mindful Breathing with the goal of 'trying to relax' or 'trying to calm down,' that 'trying' is 'doing,' and you are not doing. Your goal is to 'be,' not to 'do.'

STEP THREE

Leave Thinking Mind and enter Sensing Mind.

This doesn't mean that you're 'trying' to stop thinking. Remember, 'trying' is 'doing!' You're just refocusing your attention and concentration from your thinking to your senses.

You are paying attention to what your senses are telling you. What are you seeing right now? What do you hear? Are there any scents where you are? Tastes? How does your body interact with this environment?

That's it! Just use these three simple steps whenever you need a break from thinking or feeling or when your emotions overwhelm you. If it seems difficult to do at first, that's okay. It's a skill like any other. It becomes easier with practice. If it were easy the first time, you'd already be doing it!