
A safer way to meditate

Stage one: mindfulness of the body

Meditation can be settling, but closing your eyes and turning inwards can sometimes stir up more than it settles. This is a steady way in, chosen because it is the most grounding.

Where it fits

The Buddha described four foundations of mindfulness: the body (*kāya*), feeling-tones (*vedanā*), mind states (*citta*) and patterns of experience (*dhammā*). We stay with the first, the body: breath, posture, movement and ordinary physical sensation. It is concrete and present, and it tends to settle rather than stir. For now, stage one is the whole practice.

You're always in charge

- You can open your eyes, change your focus, move, or stop, at any moment. None of that is doing it wrong.
- Stay inside your window of tolerance: settled enough to be present, without being flooded or shutting down.
- Keep one foot on the ground: part of your attention on something present and safe.
- Short and often beats long and deep. Eyes can stay open, with a soft gaze.
- If the breath feels bad, don't use the breath.

Four ways in: choose one

- 1 **The breath** (*ānāpānasati*), gently. Notice where you feel it most easily, often the belly. Don't control it; just know it arriving and leaving. Two or three minutes.
- 2 **Points of contact**, often the safest start. Feet on the floor, hands in your lap, your back against the chair, a smooth stone or a warm mug in your hand.
- 3 **Posture and movement** (*iriyāpatha*). When walking, know you're walking; when sitting, know you're sitting. See walking meditation, in the garden.
- 4 **Clear knowing in daily life** (*sampajañña*). Washing dishes, making tea, walking to the car: knowing what the body is doing, as it does it.

A starter routine, 5–8 minutes

- 1 **Set up, 1 min.** Somewhere you feel safe. Remind yourself: I can stop or change this at any time.
- 2 **Ground, 1 min.** A few slow out-breaths. Feel your feet, seat and hands. Notice the room.
- 3 **Anchor, 2–5 min.** Rest on your chosen anchor. When attention wanders, and it will, come back gently. The returning is the practice.
- 4 **Ground to finish, 1 min.** Look around, stretch, feel your feet. Land back in the day.

When to stop and ground

If you feel unreal or far away, panic rises, distressing images come, or you go numb, stop and use Coming back to here, at the front door. Grounding is not failure; it is the practice.

Bring back to therapy

Which anchor settled you and which stirred you up, anything that took you towards the edges of your window, and what helped you come back. If a part of you felt too big, that's the moment to ground and bring it to a session, not to push on alone.