

## **FOUR STEPS to AWARENESS, FOCUS and COMPASSION.**

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These four steps can be used whether you are practicing formal mindfulness exercises such as a body scan, a breathing exercise, a kindness meditation, mindful eating exercise, or mindful walking. These steps can also be used if you choose to practice mindfulness in any of your ordinary day to day activities at work or home such as: washing your hands, walking to the elevator, listening to a colleague, washing dishes, showering, putting your child to bed, listening to music, waiting for someone, smelling flowers, and noticing nature etc. These simple four steps can be used throughout your day at home or at work to cultivate awareness, focus and compassion.

### **1. Choose what you intend to focus your attention on:**

For the purposes of this exercise, we will choose to focus on the breath cycle. Letting go of thoughts of the past and thoughts of the future guide your focus to your breath. When you are breathing in, know you are breathing in and when you are breathing out, know you are breathing out. Some people find it helps to focus on a particular aspect of the breath. For example, they pay attention to the flow of air in through the nose and out through the mouth. OR some prefer to focus on the expansion and deflation of the abdomen. Some people like to count to 4 or 5 for their inhaled breath and 5 or 7 for their exhaled breath. Experiment to see what works best for you.

### **2. Monitor how you are doing with your attention:**

Rather than being on auto pilot, engage the observer within you to pay attention to how you are doing with focusing on your breath. It may help to think of this as if you are an archaeologist on an expedition, and what you are studying and researching is how you focus on your breath.

### **3. When you notice you drifted off, gently return your attention:**

When you noticed you've drifted off, CELEBRATE because you noticed. (You could still be lost in thought!). Noticing you drifted off does not mean you are doing something wrong or you are not cut out for this at all. Depending on how you define thoughts we have between 60 and 90 thousand thoughts a day. Just as your heart beats and your lungs breath, your brain will think and produce thoughts. Noticing you drifted off and returning as often as you need to, over and over, is an essential component of this practice. When noticing and returning are practiced with a compassionate inner tone, this practice is the most powerful. In fact, noticing and returning with compassion and non-judgement is what this practice is all about. Which brings us to, step FOUR...

### **4. Cultivate a nonjudgmental, compassionate inner tone:**

If you are feeding a baby, and the baby gets distracted and turns her head away, you don't beat her with the spoon. You gently and invitingly call her attention back to the food. Experiment with a similar approach as you call your attention back to your breath. See if you can use a kind and inviting inner tone to refocus your attention. Allow your breath to be your link to the present moment. and will help you build awareness, focus and compassion in your own life.