

Mindful Monday

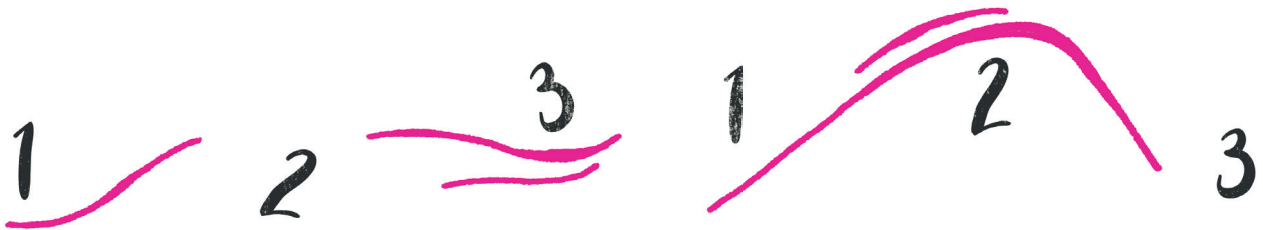
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BREATHE

Breathe. Let go. And remind yourself that this very moment is the only one you know you have for sure.

Oprah Winfrey

Have you ever noticed how your breathing changes when you get angry, upset or stressed? For instance, when someone panics or is anxious, their breathing becomes erratic, rapid and shallow. Frustration is characterised by a series of mini breath holds or 'stops'. Of course, our breathing changes instinctively, but we can take charge of our breathing to regain control and improve the quality of our thinking.



This explains why we are often told to breathe in deeply in an emergency. It's not the depth of the breath that matters. Instead the focus shifts to rhythm, smoothness and the location of attention.

Take a minute to practice the following breathing pattern. Begin by focusing on the rhythm of your breathing. Breathe in for the count of three, then out for the count of three. Or, breathe in for the count of six, then out for the count of four – whatever is comfortable for you. It's important to choose a comfortable pattern and repeat it. The smoothness relates to the quantity of air going in and coming out of your lungs per breath.

Make your breathing smooth. Finally, focus on your heart, or the centre of your chest, as you breathe. Try putting your hand on your chest as you breathe. This helps you to 'get out of your head' and 'into your body', which can help you regain control. Do this for a few minutes until you feel calmer. Once you get used to the technique, you won't need to put your hand on your chest and you can do it any time you feel anxious or stressed.

Taken from Chapter 40 of 'Meee in a Minute: 60 Ways To Improve Your Life in 60 Seconds' by Sid Madge.