

THE 3 STEP BREATHING SPACE

Use the three-step breathing space in moments of stress, when you are troubled in thoughts or feelings. You can use it to step out of automatic pilot; to reconnect with the present moment and your own inner wisdom.

1. ACKNOWLEDGING

Bring yourself into the present moment by deliberately adopting a dignified posture. Then ask: 'What's going on with me at this moment? What thoughts, feelings and body sensations am I experiencing right now?'

You could put your inner experience into words, for example, say in your mind, 'A feeling of anger is arising' or 'self-critical thoughts are here' or 'my stomach is clenched and tense.'

2. GATHERING

Gently bring your full attention to the breathing. Experience fully each in-breath and each out-breath as they follow one after the other. It may help to note at the back of your mind 'breathing in...breathing out', or to count the breaths. Let the breath function as an anchor to bring you into the present and to help you tune into a state of awareness and stillness.

3. EXPANDING

Expand your awareness around the breathing to the whole body, and the space it takes up, as if your whole body is breathing. Especially take the breath to any discomfort, tension or resistance you experience, 'breathing in' to the sensations. While breathing out, allow a sense of softening, opening, letting go. You can also say to yourself 'it's ok to feel whatever I'm feeling.' Include a sense of the space around you too. Hold everything in awareness. As best you can, bring this expanded awareness into the next moments of your day.