



AWAKEN THE WORLD

Guided Meditations

#1 - BREATH AS THE BRIDGE



#1 – Breath as the Bridge

Start with a calm and peaceful mind. Relaxing deeply, yet being completely alert and present. Your outer posture should remain strong, but not rigid. Relaxed, but not slumping.

Observe the natural breath. During this meditation, do not try to change or manipulate the breath in any way. You are simply observing this one thing that is already happening. Breath is happening, you are just noticing it, cultivating the skills of concentration and allowing.

As you observe the breath, don't be surprised or frustrated when your mind wanders. As soon as you notice the mind has wandered, bring it back to the breath. Remain relaxed. The mind will wander, and you will bring it back to the breath. This is the meditation.

Sometimes you might get lost in thoughts for a while. The practice is to become disinterested in any thought; planning, remembering, worrying, fantasizing. Regardless of what type of thought comes up, just let it go, without judgement. You may experience thoughts, that are judging your meditation, or judging your present experience, as being good or bad. Just let them go.

As you sit for a period of time, hindrances will arise. Hindrances can come in the form of sleepiness, or restlessness, maybe boredom, or pain and discomfort in the body. When attention is diverted to any particular phenomena, the practice is to be equanimous with what is. Simply, let it be as it is, and return to the breath.

Sometimes, if pain becomes too great, it may be necessary to adjust your position. But with practice, your capacity to work with the hindrances will develop. You may notice, that moving away from your pain, sometimes makes it come back even stronger. Allowing pain to be as it is, opening to it fully, lets it arise, express itself, and pass away. Paradoxically, the way out of pain, is to go into it and experience it fully.

Another form of hindrance, is wanting or expecting something to happen. Sometimes, blissful feelings will arise, and the mind will try to cling to these experiences, or recreate them. The same thing that applies to unpleasant sensations, applies to pleasant sensations. Allow them to be as they are, relaxing into the moment, and always bringing focus back to the breath.

Do not look left or right. Only see your meditation object, the breath. Observe the pulsation of the breath, the in and the out, expansion and contraction. Be sharp, lucid, present. Simply, abide with the natural breath. The mind may want to do something more interesting. Don't let it become dull and repetitive. Feel the aliveness of the breath. Go into it.

Notice every sensation, connected to the breath. From gross sensations, to the most subtle. When you observe the breath, maybe you will notice more air going in one nostril than another. Maybe there is a tightness somewhere in the body, constricting the breath. Maybe in the Hara area, the center located approximately two inches below the navel. Or in the heart area, or in the throat, or any part of the body.

Simply notice, and allow it to be as it is. Notice how the stomach rises and falls. Is it deep or shallow? Is it changing in quality? Is it sometimes deep, or sometimes shallow? Is it smooth and fluid, or is it choppy? It does not matter what you find, just notice. Don't try to manipulate the breath. Is the air going in the nostrils cooler than the air going out? Maybe there is a tickling sensation at the the nostrils. Can you feel the pulse of the breath?

Like waves rising and falling on the ocean. Let the breath be free. Let it change, grow and evolve if it wants to. Let it become subtle, or disappear completely, if it wants to. Don't miss the changes, notice them, no matter how subtle. Continue observing, patiently, persistently. It may take some time and practice to be able to stay with the breath without the mind wandering.

In deep meditation, the flow of concentration is continuous, like the flow of oil being poured in a continuous stream. Egoic thoughts are interruptions, in the flow of concentration towards the breath. Don't push away these thoughts. Don't repress them, or they will just come back in a different form. But at the same time, don't become interested in the thoughts. Otherwise, you will soon be daydreaming.

The middle-way is: neither pushing away, nor grasping. Just observe the breath, and the thoughts will settle down on their own. They will lose power. The patterns of thinking will gradually lose energy, when you don't feed them your consciousness. Don't feed the mind. You are using concentration on the breath, to divert the energy away from the mind patterns. The breath can move unconsciously, when it is not observed. Or, it can move consciously.

Notice if the breath changes when you put your attention on it. Notice any subtle change, when you bring consciousness to your breath. Conscious breath is Pranic breath. It is alive breath. When you focus continuously on the breath, your inner energy might begin to increase. This may generate friction, or some uncomfortableness. It may increase whatever patterns are in play.

You may experience friction between your intention to stay with the breath, and the old patterns of the mind. This friction may make you want to move, to interrupt the meditation process. But know that this friction is integral to meditation. It is the friction that creates the fire that burns up the self. It is the alchemy that transmutes the duality of your pain and pleasure, into Samadhi.

Always be surrendering. Always be present. Let the breath anchor you in the now. Let the breath ground you. If you want to gain mastery over the mind, master the breath. There is only one breath, the breath that happens now. Let the breath take you deep into your being. Dive deep into the ocean of breath, of inner energy, into the pranic stream.

If your mind has wandered, if some thought has interrupted the continuous awareness of the breath, the moment you notice it, you will actually be back at the breath. There is actually no doing, when you return to the breath. You don't do anything to return to the breath. You are simply noticing what the mind is already doing, and letting it go.

The breath is profound, mysterious, but we take it for granted. We don't really inhabit the breath. We don't really feel the breath. Like most things, we perceive only our thoughts about it, not the breath itself. Concentration and deep surrender. These are the two dimensions of meditation. Be patient, focused, remain aware, remain equanimous, relaxing, and eventually you can sit in silence without instruction.