**Mindfulness Meditation: Breath Focus Technique**

Before you begin, make certain that you are seated in a comfortable position where you can relax all parts of your body as completely as possible. Make sure that are seated upright, unsupported, by a backrest, with knees below hips, a natural lumbar curve, and your arms are fully supported in your lap, on the arms of a chair, or on pillows allowing your shoulders the freedom to completely relax.

Closing your eyes (or half-closed looking at nothing) helps to focus your attention on the Meditation process more intently. As you practice, do not force or control the breath (with exception of the initial deep breaths); we ‘invite’ the breath to be deeper and slower but not restricted in any way. Also, be prepared for the mind to wander as it is natural for this to occur. When you notice it, simply redirect the attention to one the three foci of your breath-focus technique outlined below.

Begin by taking three slow, deep breaths; filling your lungs as completely as possible. As you exhale, let your shoulders drop while you relax your jaws and the muscles around your eyes. Let it be like a sigh of relief, allowing each exhalation to bring you more relaxation.

As you resume breathing naturally, focus your undivided attention on your belly. As you inhale feel the rise of the abdomen rather than the chest; this fills the lungs more completely. As you exhale allow the belly to relax. Continue in this manner, feeling the cycle of expansion and relaxation of the abdomen. Focus your attention on the sensation of this expansion and relaxation of the belly. Do so without controlling the breath too much, simply follow it with your mind.

Now direct your attention to the sensation of the air moving in and out through the nostrils. Notice as you inhale the air feels slightly cooler, and as you exhale it leaves you warmer. Feel this subtle temperature difference in your nostrils. Feel it over your upper lip, cooler as you inhale and warmer as you exhale. Continue to focus your attention on this subtle sensation.

Now shift your attention to your shoulders, notice that with every exhalation they drop ever so slightly, almost imperceptibly. Let them relax more and more with every exhalation; feel the muscles loosen, lengthen, and let go each time you exhale. Feel your arms get a bit heavier in your lap or on the pillows as the shoulders let go. Let your arms and shoulders go completely limp. (For the inhalation phase focus on feeling the air enter into the nostrils).

After you have spent a few minutes focusing on each of the above targets, cycle through them again. Count 9 breath cycles for each one. If you notice your mind wandering simply return your attention to the process and continue. Feel free to take a series of 3 slow, deep breaths at any time in the process to accentuate the redirection of the attention. NOTE: We are experiencing the breath, feeling it in a very real, tangible sense, in the present moment of every breath.

To finish, count backwards from 5 to 1, moving your fingers and toes, then hands and feet slightly when you get to 3, and slowly opening your eyes when you get to 1; whereupon you will be very calm and relaxed, and yet awake and alert.