

Equal Breathing – a Different Breathing Exercise

Equal breathing is not strictly a mindfulness practice, though like anything else, it can be done mindfully. Equal breathing is a calming breathing practice which is very useful when your thoughts are racing or out of control. It has two parts. **The first is to get the “breath count”**. To do this you simply count to yourself slowly (approximately seconds) as you breathe in and again as you breathe out. It may take a couple of breaths to get “the count”. Let’s say you take a count of four to breathe in and a count of three to breathe out. **The second part of the practice** is then to lengthen the shorter, in this case the outbreath, to four so that your breath is now equal, a count of four in and a count of four out. Continue this slower breathing for four or more breaths. If your counts above had both been equal to start, e.g. five in and five out, then the technique is to lengthen both by one count. So that now the count is six in and six out and the breath is still equal. If you are going to use this breath technique, you need to learn it by practising it say six times a day for a few days until you can do it fairly easy. Then use it whenever you need it to calm your mind.

The practice works to calm the mind in a number of ways. It is a little bit tricky so the effort involved distracts you from any negative thoughts you may be having. Secondly the breath is close to the emotions and so paying attention to the breath tends to take a little energy out of strong emotions. Finally in lengthening the breath we are working to slow things down throughout the body.