

# Breathe

Breathe?

Breathe! We often don't pay enough attention to our breathing. Of course, we all breathe, our brain takes care of it automatically – even when our awareness is somewhere else entirely. And yet our breathing changes depending on what we experience, what we are thinking about and how we feel. When our tension recedes, our breathing becomes flatter. When our tension increases, we breathe more erratically and faster. When we get a fright, we hold our breath. When we are in a crisis situation, our body can switch modes very fast and, depending on our needs at that moment, we will want to flee, fight back or freeze. But even when a crisis situation lies in the past, things happen that remind us of it and that can trigger off all those old reactions.

So, breathe! And because breathing in comes automatically, the first thing to remember is: breathe out! And again: breathe out! Calmly. Place one hand on your belly and one on your chest. Pay attention to what hand moves when you breathe. Be conscious of breathing out and notice how your hands move. And if only one hand moves? That's okay. Maybe you'd like to experiment a little. What happens when you direct your breath to the other hand? You don't have to, but with a little practice you can mostly manage to do that. But only do it if it feels good. It's not about doing it right or wrong, but about whether you want to do it that way and whether it feels okay for you.

Our breath can bring us back into the here and now if our attention has wandered elsewhere. When that happens, it helps to take a deep breath and stay calm. Begin by breathing out, as breathing in will happen all on its own afterwards. And, if you want, place a hand on your belly or on your chest, or one on your belly and the other on your chest and observe what happens. And breathe!

But always bear in mind – you decide! Breathing calmly can help you feel totally present. That doesn't always feel good. Therefore, decide yourself when the time is right for you to take a few deep and calm breaths.