

Belly Breathing

What is it?

Belly breathing is a simple practice that we can use to support ourselves when we are caught up in strong emotions such as fear, anger, despair or sadness. It is a practice associated with the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh.

Sometimes when we experience strong emotions it may feel like being in the middle of a storm. Often our normal reaction is to stay with our thoughts and let our feelings overwhelm us. Shifting the focus of our attention to the breath in the belly gives us a place to shelter and can help us to feel more grounded and settled.

How to do it:

You can do it standing, sitting or lying down.

When you notice that you are experiencing a strong emotion bring your attention to the rise and fall of your belly as you breathe in and breathe out. Steady your breath and breathe deeply.

If you notice your mind starting to wander gently guide it back to the breath in the belly.

If it feels ok for you try placing a hand on your belly- it may help you focus more on its rise and fall with the breath.

“ During the storm of emotion, you should not stay at the level of the head or heart, which are like the top of the tree. You have to leave the heart, the eye of the storm, and come back to the trunk of the tree. Your trunk is one centimeter below your navel. Focus there, paying attention only to the movement of your abdomen, and continue to breathe. Then you will survive the storm of strong emotion.”

Thich Nhat Hanh



