

The Five Stages of Relaxation/Meditation

1 Stillness

Select a posture for relaxation or meditation. Allow yourself to rest in it, gradually experiencing a sense of stillness that rises naturally in you. Settle into that stillness and let it support you.

2 Diaphragmatic Breathing

Feel the flow of your breathing. The exhalation is cleansing, the inhalation is nourishing. Let the abdomen rise and fall with each breath. Let the breath flow without pause.

3 Systematic Relaxation

Use one of the systematic relaxation methods to release tensions. At the end of the method, bring your whole body into your awareness, breathing as if all the cells are cleansed and nourished with each breath.

4 Breath Awareness

Bring your attention to the touch of the breath in the nostrils. Feel the breath; warm as it flows out, and cool as it flows in. Maintain your awareness through each change in direction. Let thoughts come and go without judging or criticizing them. Simply rest your attention on the breath and relax.

5 Mental Focus

Continue feeling the breath and at the same time begin to think the natural sound of the breath in your mind. Think *so* on the inhalation, and *ham* (hum) on the exhalation. Let this sound become the focus of your awareness, gently bringing yourself back to it if your attention wanders. Relax your body, breath and mind, maintaining the focus. Rest in the presence of your own being.