

# Awareness Through Breathing (Anapanasati)

These are the 16 steps or stages of anapanasati (awareness through breathing). Depending on our capacity in attention, the quality of effort we are making, and the conditions we encounter, some of the steps are methods (something we do) and some of the steps are results (experiences that arise). Over time, as gentle, persistent attention permeates the four aspects of experience (body, feelings, mind, dharmas), there is a natural unfolding of stability, calm, happiness, knowing, and freedom.

Good commentaries include Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's *Mindfulness With Breathing: A Manual for Serious Beginners*, Thich Nhat Hanh's *Breathe: You Are Alive!*, and Larry Rosenberg's *Breath by Breath*. In the side boxes below are two abbreviated methods we can use on the spot.

body

breathing in long, knowing I am breathing in long  
breathing out long, knowing I am breathing out long

breathing in short, knowing I am breathing in short  
breathing out short, knowing I am breathing out short

breathing in, fully experiencing the whole body  
breathing out, fully experiencing the whole body

breathing in, calming the body  
breathing out, calming the body

The four foundations or aspects

Body (kaya): physical body and sensations

Feelings (vedana): pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral feelings, physical or emotional

Heart-mind (citta): emotions, thoughts, mental images, impulses, and intentions

Dharmas: objects (phenomena), the laws of nature (how things interact), and a path or life path aligned with the laws of nature

feelings

breathing in, experiencing pleasure  
breathing out, experiencing pleasure

breathing in, experiencing happiness and joy  
breathing out, experiencing happiness and joy

breathing in, experiencing feelings as they arise  
breathing out, experiencing feelings as they arise

breathing in, calming feelings as they arise  
breathing out, calming feelings as they arise

Buddhadasa's two-step method

Step 1: Breathe in and out with awareness, until you are just calm and cool enough to...

Step 2: Examine experience as it arises, seeing that nothing -- not sensations, not feelings, not any of the mind's activities -- are permanent, ultimately satisfying, or separate from the causes and conditions that are coinciding to make the experience arise.

heart-mind

breathing in, fully experiencing the activity of heart-mind  
breathing out, fully experiencing the activity of heart-mind

breathing in, satisfying the heart-mind  
breathing out, satisfying the heart-mind

breathing in, steadying the heart-mind  
breathing out, steadying the heart-mind

breathing in, releasing the heart-mind  
breathing out, releasing the heart-mind

Ken McLeod's Seeing from the Inside

Breathing in I feel this emotion / pain / problem

Breathing out I feel this emotion

Breathing in I feel the reactions to this emotion

Breathing out I feel the reactions to this emotion

Breathing in I feel calm in this emotion

Breathing out I feel calm in this emotion

Breathing in I feel at ease in this emotion

Breathing out I feel at ease in this emotion

Breathing in I understand / know how this arises

Breathing out I understand how this arises

dharmas

breathing in, seeing impermanence  
breathing out, seeing impermanence

breathing in, seeing the fading of attachment  
breathing out, seeing the fading of attachment

breathing in, seeing the cessation of attachment  
breathing out, seeing the cessation of attachment

breathing in, tossing back what is not me or mine  
breathing out, tossing back what is not me or mine

