

Resting in Awareness

“Settle into the breathing body”

Explore the possibilities for being alert, relaxed, naturally.

You don't need to try to sit straight or hold a rigid position. Ideas about “straight” and “correct” don't help at all.

Use a cushion, a stool, or a chair. Adjust the height of your seat so your thighs slope slightly downhill.

Sway a little forward and back and side to side, until you find your center of gravity.

Find your sit bones. Try gently tilting your pelvis forward and back, and side to side, exploring until it feels right.

Gently and slowly bend your head, shoulders, spine, and ribcage side to side. See if you can feel your whole spine and each rib as you gently bend to one side, then the other.

Then return to what feels neutral and see how that feels. The goal isn't to see how far you can stretch, it's to see how much you can notice as you stretch a little.

Gently and slowly turn your head to one side, letting your shoulders and collarbones participate in the turning. Then return to what feels like the center. Then turn slowly and gently to the other side.

Let your arms hang naturally from your shoulders, with your hands resting in your lap or palms-down on your thighs. Experiment until you can rest without straining your neck, shoulders, elbows, or arms.

Adjust your legs so they're stable but relaxed. Feel your feet or legs on the floor. Feel your sit bones on your seat.

These are a just a few of the ways to explore sitting with ease, stability, and alertness.

Move gently, slowly, with sensitivity to what you are feeling in your body as it breathes in and out. Take the time to discover what feels right. Explore anew in each session, because each session will be different.

Feel the weight of the body resting on the cushion or chair. Your bones and your seat will hold you up, so you can let go of using muscles to hold yourself up. Relax your jaw, drop your shoulders, soften your belly.

If you find yourself slumping, or you feel tension in your lower back, play with the height and angle of your seat.

Let your eyes be slightly open. Don't focus or stare; just gaze softly. Whenever your sight collapses down to a particular object, relax and gently let your peripheral vision widen again to include the whole visual field.

Feel your body naturally breathing in and out. Ribcage expands and contracts in all directions. Belly rises and falls. Breathing massages the internal organs. Spine undulates and head rolls to maintain balance. This all happens on its own when you let it.

Feel the whole body breathing. Breathe in and out of your arms and legs and fingers and toes. Open so that sensations and feelings, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, freely arise and pass through the body. Tingling, pressure, numbness, buoyancy, sinking, cold, warmth, solidity, space – sensations, feelings, and thoughts come and go.

As you settle into the breathing body, muscular tension and holding release themselves from time to time. Without fidgeting, feel free to keep making whatever subtle adjustments you need to rebalance and relax.

A settled body can rest in attention with whatever arises. Settling comes from relaxing and balancing, not from holding still. Pliancy, flexibility, and resilience are qualities that promote awareness. How does the breathing body allow these qualities to arise?

“Return to what is already there & rest”

Rest in the experience of the body breathing in and out. Whenever you discover you’ve been distracted, simply return to what is already there: the alert and relaxed body, naturally sitting, naturally breathing.

Open to whatever arises. Don’t try to exclude sensations, feelings, emotions, thoughts, memories, or images from awareness.

Don’t be distracted by them either. As you rest in the breathing body, watch the mind try to grasp pleasant experiences and push away unpleasant experiences.

Just include everything in awareness. Use the breathing body as an anchor to experience sensations, feelings, and thoughts as they arise and pass away on their own.

When you are agitated by physical restlessness or mental busyness, simply relax and return to resting in the breathing body.

When you sink into dullness, renew your alert and energetic attention to the sensations and movements of the breathing body.

Don’t try to create a certain state of mind. Simply return to what is already and always there: breathing, sensations, feelings, thoughts and emotions, coming and going.

Returning and resting will help more than focusing and holding.

Practice every day. Start with 10 or 15 minutes, and gradually extend to 30 minutes or more. Daily practice is more important than the length of the session. Over weeks and months and years your capacity in attention will grow.

Stick with the method: settle into your naturally breathing body, open gently to whatever arises, return and rest, again and again.

Let the results grow in their own way, at their own pace.