



5-MINUTE HEARING EXERCISE

Begin by settling with breath and body

Find a sitting position, in which the spine can be self-supporting, with your back straight but not stiff.

1. Sit as described and with your shoulders relaxed, head and neck balanced and chin tucked slightly in. Allow the eyes to gently close if this feels comfortable for you.
2. Bring your attention to the movements of the breath in the body for a few minutes, until you feel reasonably settled. Then expand your attention to take in the body as a whole, as if the whole body were breathing.
3. Spend a few minutes practising mindfulness of the breath and body in this way, remembering that in the practice that follows you can always come back to the breath and body to anchor yourself if your mind becomes too distracted.

Sounds

4. Now, when you are ready, allow the focus of your attention to shift from the breath and the body to hearing – open to sounds as they arise.
5. There is no need to go searching for sounds or listening out for particular sounds. Instead, as best you can, simply remain open, so that you are aware and receptive to sounds arising from all directions – sounds near, sounds far, sounds in front, behind, to the side, above or below. Noticing any spaces between sounds – moments of relative quiet.
6. As best you can, be aware of sounds simply as sounds, as bare sensations. Notice the tendency we all have to label sounds as soon as they are received (car, train, voice, air conditioning, radio), and see if it is possible simply to notice this labelling and then refocus on the bare sensations of the sounds themselves (including the sounds within sounds).
7. You may find that you are thinking about the sounds. See if it is possible to reconnect with direct awareness of their sensory qualities (whether they are high or low, long or short, fast or slow, loud or quiet) rather than their meanings, implications or stories about them.
8. Whenever you notice that your awareness is no longer focused on sounds, gently acknowledge where the mind has wandered to and then return the attention back to sounds as they arise and pass away from moment to moment.
9. Continue focusing on sounds for four or five minutes, and then gently reopen the eyes and reconnect with the space around you.