

Sitting Easy, Resting in Attention

Settle into the breathing body



Explore the possibilities for sitting alert, relaxed, naturally. You don't need to try to sit straight or hold a rigid position — in fact 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 that your thighs are sloping slightly downhill. Sit toward the front edge of the seat.

Find your sit bones and pivot on them until it feels right. Try gently tilting your pelvis forward and back, and side to side. Try swaying a little forward and back, and side to side, until you find your center of gravity.

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. Drop your jaw, drop your shoulders, drop your belly.

If you find yourself slumping, or 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 into the visual field. Whenever 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. Diaphragm massages internal organs. Spine undulates and head rolls to maintain balance. This all happens on its own if you let it.

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

As you settle into your body, layers of muscular tension and holding will 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 can you explore breathing in and out in ways that promote these qualities?

Return to what is already there & rest

Rest in the experience of the body as it breathes in and out. Whenever you discover you've been distracted, simply return to what is already there: your 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. Watch your 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, 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 generate a certain state of mind. Simply return to what is already there: breathing, sensations, feelings, thoughts and emotions, coming and going. Returning and resting will help more than focus 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 length of session. Over weeks and months and years your capacity in attention will grow. Stick with the method: settling into your naturally breathing body, resting in attention, opening gently to whatever arises. Let the results grow at their own pace.

