Natural Exhale Awareness

Purpose and choice: briefly observe an ordinary breath for a pause. Choose another route if attention is unwelcome, distressing, too demanding or conflicts with care advice. Do not use this attention task while driving, cycling, operating machinery or doing a task that needs full awareness.

Steps

1. Remain in a familiar comfortable position. Leave your breathing as it is.
2. If you want, notice one ordinary out-breath. No particular sensation is needed.
3. Let the next breath proceed without a rule about depth, speed or pause. You may notice a second ordinary out-breath or finish already.
4. Let go of observation and return to your activity or rest.

Starting amount: one or two ordinary breaths, fewer if wanted. No count, breath hold, depth cue or target length applies. If observation becomes controlling, end the task rather than repeatedly correcting yourself.

Adaptation and non-breath alternative: you can finish earlier or leave this practice aside. If it becomes uncomfortable, stop rather than switching immediately to another breathing exercise. At another time, you may choose an object focus, an existing undemanding sound, one sensory-demand change, familiar support or no practice. Card 5B is a separate option, not a correction for difficulty with this card.

Stop: end breath attention for discomfort, dizziness, breathlessness, pain, anxiety or preference. Do not add large breaths, holds or another exercise to correct it. Follow prescribed symptom-management guidance where applicable.

Help: call your local emergency service for severe breathing difficulty; a tight or heavy chest; sudden chest pain that persists, spreads to an arm, back, neck, jaw or stomach, or comes with sweating, nausea, light-headedness or breathlessness; unusually pale, blue or grey lips or skin; sudden confusion; or sudden facial drooping, arm weakness or speech difficulty, even if these stroke signs stop. Do not drive yourself or delay help for this card. These are examples, not a complete list. [13 to 15]

Sudden, unexpected breathing difficulty needs immediate medical help. Other new or worsening breathlessness needs urgent medical advice. Do not assume the practice explains symptoms. [13, 22]

If you cannot keep yourself safe, seek emergency help now. Chapter 10 gives fuller support guidance.

Check: consider comfort and usefulness separately, including noticeable later effects if relevant. Not noticing a change does not establish safety or effectiveness.

Keep if comfortable enough and useful. **Adapt** one detail only if wanted after ending the trial. **Pause** when uncertain, uninterested or out of capacity. **Stop** for discomfort, worsening or preference, with no obligation to retry.

Evidence and limits: the cited studies do not establish treatment benefit or universal suitability for this exact short version. If you have a respiratory or cardiovascular condition, unexplained breathing symptoms or prescribed breathing instructions, ask your healthcare professional whether this option fits your care. Do not change prescribed instructions to match this card. Chapter 4 and Appendix G explain the evidence limits.