

How to Center Yourself within 60 Seconds

Exercise #1: Breathe Like It Matters

When you're out of Center, one thing is certain: you're not breathing properly. Both your thoughts and emotions are linked to your breath. For example, when your mind is racing, your breath is coarse. If you smooth out your breath, making it quieter and more rhythmic, your mind will slow down. Take deep, slow, rhythmic, quiet, breaths from your belly. Just 3 or 4 breaths can help bring you closer to the Center. If this creates tension, breathe from your chest a few times first before focusing on your belly. See this [complete guide on how to breathe properly](#).

Exercise #2: Feel Your Feet

When you're out of Center, you're often over-thinking. Too much energy is swirling in your head. Put both feet firmly on the ground. Place your awareness on the bottom of your feet. This helps draw the excessive energy down into your body. Pay attention to any sensations in your feet. This practice often works within 30 seconds.

Exercise #3: Attend to Your Navel

In Qigong and Tai Chi, the center of your body is called the *lower dantien*, which is about two inches below your navel. Place your awareness in this area and breathe naturally. It's helpful to put one or both hands over your navel as you breathe. Combine this with the conscious breathing exercise (above) for greater benefit. You'll probably notice the effects within 30 seconds to 1 minute.

Exercise #4: Thank Your Heart

Our hearts are working all day and night for us and we rarely give it any attention. Place your awareness on your heart region as you breathe naturally. Smile inwardly at your heart. Acknowledge your heart on the inhale, saying, "I see you." And then express gratitude to your heart on the exhale, saying, "Thank you." Repeat this five times.

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Exercise #5: Establish a Plumb Line

To construct a vertical wall or a door jam without using a level, carpenters first establish a plumb line. A plumb line is a straight vertical line. There's a plumb line in the body too. In an upright seated position, gaze with both eyes at the tip of your nose. As you do this, place your awareness on your "third eye" region in the center of your forehead, about an inch above your brow. This practice may take a little trial and error, but you'll know when you get it. Once you do, you can establish a plumb line quickly whenever you need it.

Exercise #6: Call Forth the Observer

When there's chaos on the surface, sometimes you need to seek higher ground. When you are out of Center, place your awareness about six inches above the crown of your head. Become an observer and watch your thoughts, feelings, and sensations from above. This is a powerful practice. It can provide space between you and whatever drama might be happening in your ego. Maintain this observer perspective for as long as it's comfortable for you.

Exercise #7: Find Stillness in Movement

Sometimes standing or sitting still makes your internal chaos worse. In these cases, try mindful walking. Walk as slowly as you can, staying present with every step. Keep your breathing slow and steady. Try to sync your breathing with each step, for example, a two-count for each small stride. Try this for a minute or two. If it feels good, do it for longer. If possible, walk in nature to further assist the centering process.

Four Tips for Help You Maintain Your Center

One of the many gifts of mindfulness meditation is that it can help train your mind to remain in a state of nonjudgmental awareness. The challenge most meditators have is

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they separate their meditation practice with the rest of their daily lives. To remain in the Center, you want to make this state more available throughout the day.

Since centering is a skill, you can improve your ability to stay in your center with practice.

1) Pay Attention Inside You

Before, during, and after you do these practices, pay attention to your mental, emotional, and physical state. Notice any changes that take place during and after you use these exercises. Attention builds awareness. Awareness precedes transformation.

Some people turn exercises like these into a chore—something they *should* do. I've done this many times. I've tried certain exercises for the sake of doing them—simply to feel better about myself. If you turn an exercise into a chore, it creates resistance in your unconscious mind. As a result, you'll quickly forget to use any methods and stay off-center.

2) Adopt a Beginner's Mind

Any ideas or preconceived notions you have about being centered will reduce or block the effectiveness of these practices. Your mind will try to discount the value of these practices and the Center itself. So when you practice, [adopt a beginner's mind](#). Stay curious and open-minded. Practice with a child-like innocence.

3) Run Lots of Experiments

Each time you try one of the above exercises, hold it as an experiment. You are the subject of the experiment and the scientist making the observations. See what you discover. After running an experiment, are you more in the Center or not? Can you detect any new sensations? Are you more present in your body? Is your mind calmer?

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4) Be Playful with these Exercises

I have a tendency to act serious, so I'm writing this as a reminder to myself and to the part of you that's serious too. Seriousness is another sign you're out of your Center. Seriousness creates internal tension. When you're in the Center, you're relaxed, alert, and spontaneous—all of which are signs of positive mental health. So have fun with this process and enjoy feeling centered.

The Power of the Center

The Center is a dynamic point of equilibrium within us. When you access your Center, it brings you to the present. Once you know how to center yourself, you can access the Center at will. Your center is only a breath away.