



This practice is about tuning into the world around you. Sometimes, if we're anxious, someone inviting us to take a deep breath can actually make it worse! Our breath might already feel caught and restricted, our heart racing, our palms sweaty. **Listening Practice** can soothe the nervous system, slow the heart rate, allow contact with the broader world. When we tune in, we can notice there's a lot going on outside of our bodies. We're part of a much larger world.

After you're familiar with the practice, you can do this anywhere: in the midst of a panic attack on the bus, after a microaggression at work, stepping away for a minute in the midst of family conflict, struggling with melancholy alone in your apartment. In Aldous Huxley's novel *Island*, there are parrots filling the trees of an idyllic island. They fly around calling all day, "Here and now, here and now." Listening practice can be a different bridge **into the here, into the now**.

Have a read through these instructions, then set them aside. Time can move in funny ways when we slow it down. If you set a timer (5-30 minutes), then you can simply relax into

the practice without the impatience or curiosity to check how long you've been *listening*. You can do this practice for as little as a few breaths: at your desk at work, on the bus, a moment waiting for the WALK sign before crossing the street, after leaving the grocery car sitting in your car. Even in a few breaths, it can help settle agitation and anxiety. Please make sure when you begin trying this out that you are in a safe place where you don't have to worry at all about your physical safety.

- This can be done sitting, standing, walking or lying down. Notice your feet on the ground, your body connecting to the chair or the earth.
- Tune into the sounds around you. Sounds will come and go. Notice their coming and going. Sounds you notice may initially be quite close; the sound of your own breath, the rustling of your clothing, sound of heating-cooling in your environment, crows, garbage or recycling collection, and traffic outside.
- As your attention settles, your attention might expand to take in sounds farther away; distant fog horns, industry or railroad, ambulance sirens.
- Try opening your eyes with a soft focus and alternate with closing your eyes after a few minutes. How does this influence your awareness of sound?
- You can shift between close in and far away. Notice any changes in your anxiety or agitation and honor what seems most calming. Continue for 5-30 minutes.



If you feel your anxiety increasing as you do this (or any suggested practice), try to bring a bit more focus on your feet and if you still feel escalated after a few minutes, STOP. Get up and move your body a little bit, consider some [Lizard Medicine](#), or shift to a practice that works for you. However you conclude your *Listening practice*, gently transition to your next activity. Contact me with questions and curiosities about this practice and meditation in general. Supporting people to tune in is my greatest passion!!!

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