

FRICTION

INTERNAL

Breathe Before the Story

The Experiment: Breathe Your Way Through the Logic

Duration: One week

Time required: 5 minutes daily

Goal: The experiment that follows is a structured practice for building this habit as a daily perceptual discipline.

Step One:

Don't wait until your system spikes to try this. Try taking five intentional breaths right now. Don't worry about counting or structure, just take a deep breath in through your nose, and then exhale deeply out your mouth. Try to exhale for about the same amount of time you inhale.

Step Two:

Now bring to mind something you've been thinking about and try to work your way back through the elements that have shaped the narrative you may be telling yourself.

A: Who are the characters involved—who were you with?

B: What's the setting—where were you?

C: When did the event in question take place?

D: What's the story you're telling yourself about it?

Step Three:

Now break the story down a bit.

A: What beliefs or assumptions do you have about the people involved? How might those have shaped your interpretation of what happened?

B: What else was going on that may have impacted how you heard or interpreted the situation?

Step Four:

Keep up with the breathing!

Step Five:

Try to write out in a sentence or two what you're observing about your understanding. It may be that nothing has changed, but you may also have experienced a shift. Start like this, "The story I was telling myself is . . ." and then write another sentence that starts, "I now see that the story could be . . ."