

# The Four Awarenesses

(can replace the 321 relax relax relax if your mind keeps drifting)

*This technique is a mindfulness technique. It keeps you focusing on the here and now, and grounds you in the present. This is a wonderful technique for getting off to sleep, but also good practice for switching off your “chattering monkey” in general, which naturally happens when a woman is in labour. Research shows that using mindfulness techniques on a regular basis is very good for your mental health, so we think it’ll be good for your baby too!*

Get yourself comfortable. Take a deep breath and slowly let it out. Breathe comfortably and breathe easily. Pick a spot for your eyes to focus on, above your head (but not too far up as to be uncomfortable). Keep your eyes focused on that spot. (At some point, your eyes may want to close during this relaxation, and that is just fine. Just allow them to close when you feel that it is too much effort to keep your eyes open or to keep your mind focused. You can allow your eyes to close at any point, as you drift off into self hypnosis). In the stillness of your eyes and calmness of your body, focus your attention, and notice things going on around you.

Notice four things that you can see in you direct or peripheral vision. For example “I can see the curtains, I can see a light reflecting on the wall, I can see marks on the ceiling, I can see a picture frame”.

Then notice four things that you can hear. For example, “I can hear a car outside. I can hear my tummy rumbling. I can hear the clock ticking. I can hear silence”.

Then notice four things that you can feel. For example, “I can feel my shoulders aching. I can feel the warmth under my feet. I can feel my baby moving. I can feel my body calming.”

Then, do this again, beginning with what you can see, but drop down to only three things that you can see, hear and feel (they can be the same as the last ones, or different).

Then again, but drop down to two things, and then one thing, and then, if you haven't already drifted off into self-hypnosis, just allow yourself to do so. You may find that your mind wanders – and that is just fine. Just let it drift off. If you want to, you can choose to bring it back to the four awarenesses, going back to where you left off. There are no rules or shoulds. Take a moment out to reflect on you and your baby as you feel right now, releasing relaxation hormones and endorphins as you do so. Enjoy!