This is Patrice Rancour for Ohio State University’s Your Plan for Health. We are bringing you this guided imagery exercise to promote your health and well-being. So close your eyes and remember: all you have to do is breathe. This is a meditation on taming “monkey mind.” On our journey through life, we all develop a part of our personality that helps us understand what the rules are so that we can get along with other people. It is the part of personality that tells us that it’s not right to lie, cheat, or steal. Freud called this the “superego.” Others have called it “the inner critic” or “judge.” The Buddhists have called it “monkey mind.” When we are in charge or this part, it helps us work within the ground rules of a civil society. When this part is in charge of us, we can be led to feel overly guilty, fearful, anxious, and suffer from poor self-esteem. This exercise is designed to help you remember that while we each have this “monkey mind” we are not the “monkey mind.” It is important to remember to be in charge of your monkey mind and not let it control you. Ready to meet your monkey? Find yourself in a comfortable position and take in a nice deep breath. Closing your eyes you remember that this is the signal breath and it signals to you that you are moving into a special time and place just designed for you. All subsequent breaths will be breathed normally, rhythmically, and with conscious awareness. As you continue to breathe, you’ll be hearing all sorts of sounds from outside the room. You’ll be having all sorts of thoughts. Nothing to change or judge about any of these sounds or thoughts whenever you feel the least bit distracted by them. Without judgement, return your attention back to your breathing. Watching the air move in and the air move out. As you continue to breathe, allow an image to enter your mind that represents that inner critic or judge. That monkey mind part of the personality that is constantly criticizing you, judging you. And as you breathe, project that image outside of yourself and notice what this part of your personality looks like and how big it is. Continuing to breathe, notice what it feels like to be with it. Listen to its ongoing chatter about you and what you have to be about today. And notice that the effect of the critic is to keep you in your place. To limit your true self. As you listen to this critic, this judge, this monkey mind, decide that you are in charge of it and not the other way around. Using your imagination, begin to shrink your monkey down to a size that is more useful to you. You will never get rid of the monkey. And in fact what the monkey assumes its rightful size, it can be quite helpful to you in reaching your goals. When the monkey gets too big, shrink it down to size, and send it some compassion and mercy. Thank it for sharing, but let it know that it is here to serve you to meet your goals, and not the other way around. You will probably need to have this conversation frequently throughout the day, until you set the relationship between you and your own monkey. So keep its image available to you, when you hear its inevitable and frequently subconscious chatter, begin to disturb your sense of balance and equilibrium. Whenever you hear the monkey start to chatter, take a nice deep breath, shrink it down to size, thank it for sharing, send it love, and precede with your own goals. And remember, you have the power to come from this space any time you wish. You take this power with you everywhere you go. And the only thing you need to remember to trigger this is to take that initial signal breath.