

Noticing Thoughts

Practice Description: We have many thoughts every day, both pleasant and unpleasant. Some are about the past, or what has already happened. Some are about the future, or what we expect to happen. Noticing out thoughts and naming them helps take the power from them so we can manage the underlying difficulty.

Age Group: 6-12 Grade

Welcome to the Noticing Thoughts exercise.
<i>Pause 3 seconds</i>
Have you ever felt stressed about how much homework you have or about something going on with your friends? Or felt pressure to perform well at an upcoming event? This is a natural stress response. Learning to notice and name these thoughts can help to release them.
Let's start by getting into a mindful position with both feet on the floor, and a long, strong back so that your body supports your intention to be awake and aware. Allow your hands to rest in your lap. Try softening your eyes and turning your gaze down toward your knees, or to the images on the screen. If you feel comfortable, you may choose to close your eyes.
<i>Pause 3 seconds</i>
Begin by bringing your attention to your breath, noticing the sensations of your breath in your nose, chest, or belly, wherever you feel it best.
<i>Pause for 15 seconds</i>
When you are ready, bring your awareness to your thoughts coming and going in your mind. These may be thoughts about what you are doing now, what you have done in the past, or what you are going to be doing in the future. These thoughts may be happy, sad, or unimportant. Try not to judge your thoughts, but to just allow them to come and go.
<i>Pause for 20 seconds</i>
When a thought arises, you may choose to experiment with naming the thought as "pleasant" or "unpleasant"
<i>Pause for 10 seconds</i>
Or if you'd like, "past", or "future"
<i>Pause for 10 seconds</i>
"happy, sad, or angry"
<i>Pause for 25 seconds</i>
Some of your thoughts may remind you of someone, or a past experience, and can bring up certain memories. Naming these thoughts may help to take away their power.
<i>Pause for 25 seconds</i>
As you name your thoughts, imagine they are floating off like clouds in the sky. Your mind is the sky and the thoughts are the clouds that you are watching move past.

Or, you can imagine that your thoughts are like traffic. Your mind is the road and each thought is a car. You are standing on the side of the road watching each “thought car” go by.

Pause for 15 seconds

If your mind will not let go of a thought, it is called a “sticky thought”. If a sticky thought is uncomfortable, you may choose to bring your attention back to your body sitting on the chair or focus on your breathing. Remember that you have a choice.

Pause for 20 seconds

Know that if you find your mind distracted or overwhelmed, your body and breath are always available to help bring you back to the here and now. As you practice noticing your thoughts coming and going, it may be easier to find a place of calm and harmony.

You can start to let go of your thoughts and come back to your breath or the feeling of your body on the chair.

Pause for 10 seconds

When you are ready, you may open your eyes and bring your attention back to the room around you.