

Ten Thousand Things Exercise - Rick Hanson Buddha's Brain

Relax and steady the mind, focusing on the breath.

Pick a situation in which you feel someone has wronged you. Be mindful of your reactions to this person, especially the deeper ones. Scan yourself for any ill will.

Now reflect on some of the various causes – the ten thousand things – that have led this person to act in the way that s/he has.

Consider biologically based factors affecting him, like pain, age, innate temperament, or intelligence.

Consider the realities of his life: race, gender, class, job, responsibilities, daily stresses.

Consider whatever you know about his childhood. Consider major events in his life as an adult.

Consider his mental processes, personality, values, fears, hot buttons, hopes, and dreams.

Consider his parents in light of whatever you know or can reasonably guess about them; consider, too, the factors that may have shaped their lives.

Reflect on the historical events and other upstream forces that have formed the river of causes flowing through his life today.

Look inside yourself again. Do you feel any differently now about him? Do you feel any differently about yourself?"