

Introduction to Meditation Guided Meditation on Mindfulness of Thought

Create your posture of awareness and gently close your eyes. Take a few slow deep breaths. As you breathe in, feel your ribcage expanding, the belly softening. Sense into the stretch across your chest and your upper back. As you exhale slowly allow the feeling of the outflowing breath to relax around the core of your spine, let your shoulders be at ease. As you are inhaling you can sense a quality of relaxed awareness in your spine. As you exhale, see if you can soften the muscles of your face. Gradually allowing the breath to reestablish its normal rhythm . . .

Scan through your body . . . are there any areas that you can ease? Staying upright with your spine and at the same time setting your body at ease. . . .

And then entering the world of your breathing, feeling breathing . . . inside the ways your body experiences breathing. . . for now, letting go of your thoughts and concerns . . . let them fade . . . be calmed, so that you can better feel and sense the experience of breathing . . . Noticing how inhaling feels different than exhaling . . . Now, either letting go of your thoughts, or letting them fade into the background, so that in the foreground of attention you are with your breathing. Breathing in, breathing out . . .

Giving yourself over to your breathing, so that the breathing has a chance to settle you and calm you. So breathing can help center you, as you center yourself around breathing . . .

If you notice yourself thinking, for the next couple of minutes, let go of that and re-establish yourself in the breathing . . .

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And now, with a certain degree of calm, let go of your breathing, and simply notice when you're thinking. You're welcome to think. No need to stop thinking now. . . . As you're thinking, you're clearly aware that thinking is happening Rather than letting go of thinking, look at your thoughts directly

If your thoughts fade away as you watch them, just wait until they come back or go back to your breathing until such a time as thinking begins again. When thinking surfaces, clearly look at your thinking, see that it's happening, be aware of it. As you are aware of thinking, softly, whisper in the mind to label or name: "thinking, thinking." Very softly.

For the purposes of meditation, what you're thinking about is not important. As we pay attention to thinking in meditation, you might notice other aspects of the process of thinking - qualities beyond the contents of the thoughts. If you're thinking words or images, what's the quality of the inner voice? What's the quality of the pictures that you see? Is the thinking voice soft and gentle or is it harsh? Is the inner voice critical? Or very accepting, easy-going? Is there a lot of energy arising with thinking? Or is thinking very subtle?

Are there any emotions connected to what you are thinking about? The process of thinking, is it connected to any emotion? If there is an emotion, then quietly name the emotion. Include that in the awareness.

If thinking goes away as you watch it, relax into the space that's left behind. Relax into the spaciousness of the quiet mind.

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And then as you notice your thinking, notice if there is any physical side to thinking. Is there any pressure or tension connected to thinking? Somewhere in the body? Tightness? Could be tensions in the brain, in the forehead, around the eyes, the jaw and mouth. Holding in the shoulders, upper back or the chest. Is there some part of the body that feels activated in support of thinking, as part of your thinking?

Is it possible to relax or soften any tension or pressure connected to thinking? Perhaps as you exhale, you can relax the thinking brain, like you'd relax a muscle.

Now can you let go of your thinking enough to re-center yourself on your breathing. Letting go of your thoughts, letting them recede to the background, and enter into the world of your breathing again. Feeling breathing. Staying with the gentle waves of breath flowing and releasing back out . . . again and again.

To conclude the meditation, take a couple of deep breaths, and when you're ready you can open your eyes.