

# Awareness of Thoughts Meditation

---

Date / Time

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

Thoughts?    Heart?    Body?    None of the Above

## PURPOSE/EFFECTS

By learning to watch your thoughts come and go during this practice, you can gain deeper insight into thinking altogether (such as its transience) and into specific relationships among your thoughts and your emotions, sensations, and desires. This practice can also help you take your thoughts less personally, and not automatically believe them. Additionally, this meditation can offer insight into any habitual patterns of thinking and related reactions.

## METHOD

### *Summary*

Observe your thoughts as they arise and pass away.

### *Long Version*

- By “thoughts,” we mean self-talk and other verbal content, as well as images, memories, fantasies, and plans. Just thoughts may appear in awareness, or thoughts plus sensations, emotions, or desires.
- Sit or lie down on your back in a comfortable position.
- Become aware of the sensations of breathing.
- After a few minutes of following your breath, shift your attention to the various thoughts that are arising, persisting, and then passing away in your mind.
- Try to observe your thoughts instead of getting involved with their content or resisting them.
- Notice the content of your thoughts, any emotions accompanying them, and the strength or pull of the thought.
- Try to get curious about your thoughts. Investigate whether you think in mainly images or words, whether your thoughts are in color or black and white, and how your thoughts feel in your body.
- See if you notice any gaps or pauses between thoughts.

Get more free mindfulness worksheets, talks, eBooks and meditations at

# Awareness of Thoughts Meditation

---

- Every time you become aware that you are lost in the content of your thoughts, simply note this and return to observing your thoughts and emotions.
- Remember that one of the brain's major purposes is to think, and there is nothing wrong with thinking. You are simply practicing not automatically believing and grasping on to your thoughts.
- When you are ready, return your attention to your breath for a few minutes and slowly open your eyes.

## *Optional:*

- There are various metaphors and images you can use to help observe your thoughts. These include:
  - Imagining you are as vast and open as the sky, and thoughts are simply clouds, birds, or planes passing through the open space.
  - Imagining you are sitting on the side of a river watching your thoughts float by like leaves or ripples in the stream.
  - Imagine your thoughts are like cars, buses, or trains passing by. Every time you realize you are thinking, you can “get off the bus/train” and return to observing.

## HISTORY

Awareness of thoughts and emotions is one of the areas of focus developed when cultivating mindfulness. In Buddhism, mindfulness is one of the seven factors of enlightenment and the seventh instruction in the Noble Eightfold Path.

## CAUTIONS

Please be gentle with yourself if you notice that you are constantly caught up in your thoughts instead of observing them. This is both common and normal. When you realize that you are thinking, gently and compassionately return to observing your thoughts.

If the content of your thoughts is too disturbing or distressing, gently shift your attention to your breathing, sounds, or discontinue the practice.

Get more free mindfulness worksheets, talks, eBooks and meditations at

# Awareness of Thoughts Meditation

---

## NOTES

- Remember that you are not trying to stop thoughts or only allow certain ones to arise. Try to treat all thoughts equally and let them pass away without engaging in their content.
- This practice can initially be more challenging than other meditations. As you are learning, practice this meditation for only a few minutes at a time if that is easier.
- It can be helpful to treat thoughts the same way that you treat sounds or body sensations, and view them as impersonal events that arise and pass away.
- Some people like to assign numbers or nicknames to reoccurring thoughts in order to reduce their pull and effect.

*thank you for your mindfulness practice*

May I continue to look deeply into  
my mind, my heart and body.

---

May I see things and meet things  
**AS THEY ARE**

---

and may this clear and sustained knowing free me  
**FOR THE SAKE OF  
ALL BEINGS.**

Get more free mindfulness worksheets, talks, eBooks and meditations at