

Thought Meditation

It's helpful to come to this practice with a sense of kindness and care for yourself, not leaning into or moving away from anything. Simply being present and open to whatever is happening, without judgment, and with curiosity.

Starting by sitting in an upright position with your back straight and yet relaxed, dignified, embodying confidence. Feeling the floor or cushion beneath you, supporting you. Feeling gravity holding you. The earth receiving you. Finding a point of balance where gravity is holding you comfortably upright without straining.

Allowing the body to become still. And bringing your attention now to the sense of the body breathing. The breath entering and leaving the body. Bringing curiosity and freshness to this moment. Noticing where you feel the sensation of breath most vividly now and centering your attention there. Simply breathing in and out noticing there is a beginning, middle and end of an in-breath. And a beginning, middle and end of an out breath. If the attention has wandered from the breath, gently but firmly escorting it back making the breath the center, the focus of attention again. Realizing that no matter how many times the attention leaves the breath there is an opportunity to choose and to bring the attention back to this in-breath and this out-breath. Right here right now.

And now, when you are ready, expanding your attention beyond the breath to include also the entire body sitting. Becoming aware of sensation in the body. Perhaps sensations of contact with the chair or cushion, perhaps the touch of clothes on your body. Or how your hands feel in the moment. Being present with any sensations as they arise. Noticing sensations sometimes stay for just a short time, and other times they linger. Noticing how they change. Perhaps there are changes in intensity or they shift and pass away as new sensations arise. Like the breath they have a beginning, middle, and an end.

At some point you may notice your mind wandering and realize you are caught in thoughts. Once you become aware that your mind has become lost in thoughts, at that very moment you are no longer caught up in thoughts. There is more space to choose how to respond in that moment.

If you wish to, you might want to experiment with adding the phrase "I'm having a thought that..." in front of your thought. So noticing a thought and saying to yourself: "I'm having a thought that..."

The mind has a mind of its own. It analyzes, plans, and remembers. It compares and contrasts, it dreams and blames. When this happens simply adding the phrase "I'm having a thought that..." and noticing what that's like. Noticing what happens as if you are a curious scientist who has never encountered anything like this before. Just being curious. Less trying to make thoughts go away and more using the phrase to help you let them arise naturally, stay for a bit and then disappear. Like the breath and body

sensations, thoughts have a beginning, middle, and an end. Just experimenting with this and coming back to breath and body sensation as your anchor when you need to.

Pause

Noticing where the mind is. Coming back to the breath and the body as a focus whenever you want to.

Pause

Noticing where the mind is now...

You may also find it helpful to use imagery when you notice thoughts arising. If you wish to try this, just letting an image form of sitting in nature watching the clouds in a peaceful sky or the leaves on a gentle stream. Noticing your breath, noticing what your body feels like as you imagine yourself sitting in nature....Then the next time you notice a thought arising, just imagining the thought as a leaf in the stream or a cloud in the sky, watching the thoughts as they slowly float by.

So just noticing when thoughts arise, focusing awareness on them as they pass through the sky or the stream, and eventually disappear. Less trying to make thoughts go away. More just letting them come and go, arising and floating away.

Like the breath thoughts also have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Letting them come and go.

Still having the breath and body sensations as an anchor.

Pause

Now letting any imagery go and focusing on feeling the breath and body sensation, the actual physical sensations of the breath in the body. Staying fully present with body and breath. No place to go, nothing to do, just being here with your breath.

As this meditation session comes to a close, realizing that by practicing mindfulness, you are intentionally deepening your ability to be fully present in your daily life. If it feels right, perhaps congratulating yourself on having taken this time and energy to nourish and care for yourself. Remember that practicing in this way helps create access to a wider, deeper, more open way of being in your life in which you can see more clearly, and make more conscious choices for health, well-being, and freedom. Carrying a sense of presence, a sense of the power of just being, into the doing of your life moment by moment. Sitting for another minute. And when you're ready if your eyes have been closed, opening your eyes and bringing this meditation to a close.