Noticing Thoughts

Recommended for Grades:

6-12th grade

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 our thoughts and naming them helps take the power from them so we can manage the underlying difficulty.

Transcript:

Welcome to the noticing thoughts exercise.

- *Pause for 2 seconds*

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.

- *Pause for 2 seconds*

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.

- *Pause for 2 seconds*

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.

- *Pause for 2 seconds*

Begin by bringing your attention to your breath wherever you feel it best.

- *Pause for 5 seconds*

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,

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sad, or unimportant. Try not to judge your thoughts, but to just allow them to come and go.

- *Pause for 15 seconds*

When a thought arises, you may choose to experiment with naming the thought as “pleasant” or “unpleasant”

- *Pause for 10 seconds*

Or if you’d like, “past”, or “future”

- *Pause for 10 seconds*

“happy, sad, or angry”

- *Pause for 10 seconds*

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.

- *Pause for 15 seconds*

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.

- *Pause for 15 seconds*

As you practice noticing your thoughts coming and going, it may be easier to find a place of calm and harmony.

- *Pause for 10 seconds*

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

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