

# Using Visualization to Observe Your Thoughts and Feelings without Judgment

## Objective

To use visualization to observe your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations without judgment.

## You Should Know

When you experience distressing thoughts repeatedly, you can get stuck in that negative space. In addition to criticizing yourself and your thoughts, you may become judgmental of your overwhelming emotions. When you observe your thoughts and feelings objectively, you are better able to determine which thoughts are useful to you and which can lead to harmful behaviors.

## What You Should Do

The following visualization exercise will help you observe your thoughts and feelings (both physical and emotional), without judgment, analysis, or rumination. The intention of this exercise is not for you to stop thinking – which is impossible to do – but to notice your thoughts as they come and go, without holding on to them.

Find a quiet, comfortable space to sit where you will not be disturbed or distracted and set your timer for five minutes.

- Take several long, slow breaths and close your eyes.
- Imagine yourself in a calm, peaceful setting, such as at the beach or in the forest.
- Picture your thoughts as leaves floating down a stream, as clouds drifting by, or as shells on a beach that get washed away by waves. You can also create your own scenario where you watch your thoughts disappear as new ones arise.
- Observe your thoughts as they come and go, one at a time, without judgment. If your thoughts come very quickly, do your best to notice each one and let them go.
- Do not try to stop your thoughts.
- If you discover that you are criticizing yourself for what you are thinking, it might be helpful to say, “This is just a thought. I am not my thoughts.” Or, “Thoughts are not facts.” You can also just state, “I am having a thought about X.”
- Observe any emotions or physical sensations that arise.
- Take several long, slow breaths and open your eyes.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe what it was like to notice your thoughts without judging them. Was it easy or difficult?

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What emotions did you notice as you observed your thoughts?

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What physical sensations did you notice as you observed your thoughts?

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Describe any urges or impulses that arose as you observed your thoughts.

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### **Reflections on This Exercise**

How did this exercise change the way you acknowledge your thoughts, including any self-judgment or criticism? Explain.

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How did this exercise help you understand the connection between your thoughts, your emotions, and your physical sensations? Explain.

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How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

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