



EXERCISE # 2 – BEGINNING WITH YOUR THOUGHTS

Sitting on a straight-backed chair or couch or on a cushion on the floor, allow your body to become still. The back is straight without being stiff; the posture is relaxed, awake, and dignified. The hands can rest gently on the knees or in the lap. Settling into this moment, begin watching the breath.

Become aware of the fact that you're breathing. Become aware of the movement of the breath as it flows into and out of the body. Feel the breath as it comes into the body and as it leaves the body. Simply remain aware of the breath flowing in and flowing out, not manipulating the breathing in any way. Simply being aware of it and noticing how it feels.

Allow yourself to be with this flow of breath, coming in and going out. Notice the feeling of the breath as the lungs fill with air on the in-breath and deflate as you breathe out, the chest expanding and collapsing. Perhaps feeling the breath in the abdomen, rising as you breathe in and flattening and sinking as you breathe out. Allow your attention to gently ride on the sensation of each breath, not thinking about breathing, without the need to comment. Simply watching your breathing.

As before, you'll probably notice that your mind wanders off to thoughts of the past, fantasies, memories, or regrets. Or it may move to

anticipation of the future, planning, wishing, and judging. You may find yourself thinking about what you'll do after this exercise, what you have to do at work, things that you have to do.

This time, become aware of thoughts passing through the mind, noticing them but not engaging with them, allowing thoughts to be like clouds, drifting through a vast, spacious sky. If you find yourself carried away by a stream of thoughts or you notice that you are no longer observing right here, right now, in this moment, return to the breath, anchor yourself in the awareness of the breath, coming now to this breath. When you feel steady in the present, you can return again to witnessing the thoughts in the mind, allowing whatever is there to be there. Thoughts of fantasies, desires, likes, dislikes, memories, judgments, pressures of obligations. Aware perhaps of feelings or emotions: sadness, fear, joy, peace. Allowing all of your thoughts to simply emerge, as they are. Witnessing. Observing. Thoughts coming. Thoughts going. Not being drawn into analysis of those thoughts. Not pursuing them. Not rejecting or engaging the thoughts but seeing them as clouds in the vast, still sky of the mind.

Don't think about thinking. Watch the thoughts as an old man watches children at play—observing without being involved.

And now, drop all methods. Drop all thoughts. Just...relax.

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