

Week 3 - Dealing with Thoughts

Introduction to Yoga



Leave your front door and your back door open.
Let thoughts come and go.
Just don't serve them tea.
- Shunryu Suzuki -

Your River of Thoughts...

One scientist declared that we have an average of about 67,000 thoughts a day... The river of thoughts is not under your control [and] much of the river is composed of reruns.

...With mindfulness, you can stop taking them so seriously. You can come to know that your thoughts make a good servant but not a good master. ...It's true that you still need some thoughts to plan for the future and to problem-solve, but you could eliminate 90 percent of your thoughts and still have plenty to do the job.

...And then you can begin to realize that just because you have a thought doesn't mean you have to believe it — much less act on it — and certainly not get caught up in the whole stream of them. You can release the mind of some of its more dangerous patterns. Observing the mind with mindfulness brings liberation.

- Jack Kornfield, from [Your Mind: Friend or Foe?](#) -

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At this point in your practice, you may be noticing just how busy the mind is, with replays of past events, expectations/fears about the future, or evaluations of present experience (I like this, don't like that, when will this be over, etc.).

It can seem that the object of meditation is to get rid of all thoughts and distractions, and when that isn't happening, you may feel like you are failing at meditation and/or the meditation can turn into a struggle, wanting your experience to be different than it is. In fact, the kind of meditation you are learning is more about working skillfully with **any** internal or external experience, and isn't really about "getting rid" of thoughts and distractions. In fact, it can be said that wandering thoughts are the weights that train the muscles of the mind.

Videos

It's common for there to be a sense of pushing oneself in meditation, and the first video, **Non-Striving**, addresses the possibility of taking the striving out of meditation (and life!). The second video, **Attention, Intention, Attitude**, explores the attitude we take toward ourselves in meditation, which is often harsh, and the possibility of being gentler with ourselves. In the next two videos, **Your Thoughts are Bubbles** and **Dealing with Thoughts (in life and meditation)**, Jon Kabat-Zinn and Tara Brach each talk about the idea that meditation is not about getting rid of thoughts, but about changing our relationship with them. Finally, **The Samurai and the Fly** is a vivid dramatization illustrating how trying to stop thoughts or push away distractions not only doesn't work, it actually makes things worse.

Reading

The reading list this week begins with **Mindful Yoga** by Jon Kabat-Zinn. *Even if you are an experienced yoga practitioner, it's important to read this before beginning the Yoga practice that begins this week.* In **Meditation: It's Not What You Think**, Jon Kabat-Zinn points out that while meditation can often be accompanied by peace and relaxation, "*meditation is not relaxation spelled differently*", and as Erik Wikstrom says in the quote above, "*The moments of stillness are one of meditation's byproducts, not the practice itself.*" The last three brief articles, by Wes Nisker and Jack Kornfield, explore more deeply the relationship between meditation and thoughts.

Daily Practices

For the **formal practice** this week, we introduce **Mindful Yoga** ([Yoga 1](#)) into your 30 minute practice, alternating with the Sitting Meditation and choosing one day to do a Body Scan. This is all outlined in your Week 3 Practice Log, below. *Even if you are an experienced yoga practitioner, be sure to read "Mindful Yoga" in the reading below, before beginning the yoga practice. Mindful Yoga is different than many traditional yoga practices in that there is less of a focus on the exact posture achieved and more focus on body/mind awareness.*

The **informal practice** is about becoming aware of how we experience and process unpleasant events. Just as in previous weeks, allow a few minutes before going to sleep to complete the informal practices log.

Week 3 Materials

Video List

- ☐ [Non-Striving](#) - Jon Kabat-Zinn (3 min)
- ☐ [Attention, Intention, Attitude](#) - Shauna Shapiro (16 min)
- ☐ [Your Thoughts are Bubbles](#) - Jon Kabat-Zinn (5 min)
- ☐ [Dealing with Thoughts \(in life and in meditation\)](#) - Tara Brach (20 min)
- ☐ [The Samurai and the Fly](#) - Hanjin Song (3 min)

Reading List

- ☐ [Mindful Yoga](#) - Jon Kabat-Zinn
- ☐ [Meditation - It's Not What You Think](#) - Jon Kabat-Zinn
- ☐ [I Hadn't Thought of That](#) - Wes Nisker
- ☐ [Your Mind: Friend or Foe?](#) - Jack Kornfield
- ☐ [The Reality Below Thoughts](#) - Jack Kornfield

Practice Sheets

- ☐ [Formal Practice \[PDF\]](#) [or [WORD format](#)] - **Mindful Yoga (Yoga 1), Body Scan, Sitting Meditation**
- ☐ [Informal Practice \[PDF\]](#) [or [WORD format](#)] - **Unpleasant Events Calendar**

All of the guided practices can be found through the top menu

Supplementary materials related to this week's topic [optional]

- [Thoughts: "Real, but not True"](#) - video by Tara Brach (26 min)
- [Surrender to the Monkeys](#) - video by Tara Brach (4 min)
- [Hands off the Controls](#) - video by Tara Brach (14 min)
- [Freedom from Repetitive Thoughts](#) - article by Jack Kornfield
- ["Letting Go" in Meditation](#) - video by Peter Russell and Shauna Shapiro (15 min)
- [Autobiography in Five Short Chapters](#) - one-page "autobiography" by Portia Nelson
- [Transform Your Mind, Change Your Brain](#) - video by Richard Davidson [65 min]
- [Mindfulness, the Mind, and Addictive Behavior](#) - video by Judson Brewer [20 min]
- [You're Not Meditating Right If Your Mind Is Calm \(You're not meditating wrong either\)](#) - article by Mindfulness and Health Institute

Once you have done at least six days of practice (over a span of a week or more) and feel that you've gotten the essence of this "Week" through the videos and reading, you are ready to go to [Week 4](#). It's not necessary to read/view any of the Supplementary materials - these are totally optional.

Practice Log - Week 3

FORMAL PRACTICE: Read the [description of Mindful Yoga](#) (*this is very important, even for experienced yoga practitioners*). Practice at least six times this week, alternating [Mindful Yoga 1](#) with the [Sitting Meditation](#) (e.g., three of each). At least one of the days, do a [Body Scan](#) (this means that your six practices for the week would be 3 yogas, 2 sitting meditations, and 1 body scan). As before, don't expect anything in particular from the practice. In fact, give up all expectations about it. Just let your experience be your experience. **NOTE:** *One of your six formal practices can be one of the live meditations from a meeting listed on the [Zoom Meeting page](#).*

Record each time you practice. In the comment field, put just a few words to remind you of your impressions of that particular session: what came up, how it felt, etc. *Once you have done at least six days of practice and feel that you've gotten the essence of this "Week", you may go to the next week.*

INFORMAL PRACTICE: At the end of the day before you go to bed, recall one specific unpleasant event and record it on the [Unpleasant Events Calendar](#). The unpleasant event doesn't have to be major. It could be, for instance, impatience waiting in line or being mildly annoyed by some minor event.

NOTE: *If, at the end of the day, you honestly can't find an even minor annoyance or discomfort, you can take this time to celebrate that fact. We often don't take time to experience gratitude, so this could be an opportunity to do that. On the informal practice, sheet answer the questions with your current feeling in mind.*

Date	Comments (include whether Body Scan, Yoga or Sitting)
7th day & beyond is optional	

Informal Practice Log (Unpleasant Events Calendar) – Week 3

What was the experience?	Were you aware of the unpleasant feelings while the event was happening?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience?	What moods, feelings, and thoughts accompanied this event?	What thoughts, sensations, emotions do you notice now as you write this down?
EXAMPLE Waiting for the cable company to come fix our line. Realize that I am missing an important meeting.	Yes.	Temples throbbing, tightness in my neck and shoulders, pacing back and forth.	Angry, helpless, frustrated. "Is this what they mean by service?" "Those #@!\$#! – I can't afford to miss this meeting!"	I hope I don't have to go through this again soon. Mild anxiousness, tightness in stomach.
7th day & beyond is optional				