

SPEAKER: For this practice of meditation or mindfulness of thoughts, take up a posture that allows the spine to be upright. Gently closing your eyes. Maybe sitting up a little more straight or more alertly than you normally would.

And that alert spine will perhaps allow you a core or some inner strength around which you can relax the rest of the body. Taking in a few long, slow, deep breaths, allowing the rib cage to expand with the in-breath. And as you exhale, just allowing whatever you can to relax around the core of the spine.

Softening the muscles of the face. And softening the shoulders and the belly. Allowing the breath to return to normal.

Perhaps scanning through the body right now to just notice if there's any tightness or holding. And see if you can allow the body to be at ease in those places. So staying upright with the spine and letting the body be at ease.

Notice how the body is experiencing breathing right now, and seeing if you can let go of any thoughts or planning or preoccupation so that you can feel an experience breathing. Aware of the inhalation, a slight pause, and the exhalation.

And then either letting go of the thoughts, or letting them recede to the background so that the breathing remains in the foreground of your attention. Breathing in and breathing out.

And allowing the breath to settle you and calm you. Centering yourself around the breath. And if you notice yourself thinking, just letting go of that, letting the thoughts recede to the background and reestablish yourself in the breathing.

Letting the body be full of ease. The shoulders, the hands, and the belly. And with a degree of calm and ease, let go of paying attention to the breathing and just notice what you're thinking. Looking directly at your thoughts, and whatever they are at this moment.

Sometimes in watching the thoughts, they seem to evaporate or disappear. And if that happens, just wait until they come back again or go back to your breathing until a thought occurs. And when it does, see that it's happening. Be aware of your thinking.

And very softly, you can whisper in the mind as you're aware of thinking occurring, labeling it with a word, thinking. Very softly, light as a dragonflies' wings. And at this point, what's in the content of your thoughts is not important. Instead, noticing other aspects of thinking.

So you might notice, for example, whether you're thinking in words or with images. And what's the quality of this image or of the inner voice? Is it soft, gentle? Harsh or adamant? Critical, accepting? Easygoing?

And is there much energy in the thinking or is it subtle? And you might notice if there are any emotions connected to what you're thinking about.

For example, if there's a lot of planning that may be arising out of anxiety or fear. So just notice if the process of thinking is connected to or is coming out of an emotion and just quietly noting what that emotion is, including it in the awareness.

See if it's possible to notice the physical side of thinking. So where is it felt in the body? Any feelings states that have arisen with the thoughts.

And if the thinking goes away as you watch it, just relax into the space that's left behind. Relax into the spaciousness of a quiet mind. And when thinking returns, you might also see if there's some energy with the physical piece of thinking.

Sometimes, there's a sense of pressure somewhere in the body or some tension with the thinking. So just noticing, is there tightness? Where is it located in the body?

Perhaps in the forehead or tension around the eyes, the eyebrows, the mouth, or a tightness in the jaws. And for some, there may be some holding in the shoulders or in the muscles of the neck or in the chest or the pelvic region.

So just seeing if there's any part of the body that feels activated in support of thinking or as part of the thinking. And then, see if it's possible to relax or to soften any tension or pressure that's connected to the thinking, perhaps seeing it like a muscle, a thinking muscle, seeing if, as you exhale, you might relax that thinking muscle wherever it's located.

And now, see if you can let go of the thinking enough to come back to your breath. Letting go of thoughts or allowing them to just recede to the back of the mind. And allow the attention to be focused on breathing.

See if you can stay connected to a whole series of breaths in a row. And then, taking a couple of deep breaths.

Relaxing the body. And returning to the breath once more.

[RHYTHMIC CHIMES]