

Audio Exercise 14: Mindfulness of Difficult or Painful Thoughts

Start with a mindfulness of the breath. Sit with your breath for a few minutes.

Now bring your awareness to something that is difficult for you in your life. It may be thoughts of an event in the past that was painful or distressing, it may be something in your life in the present time that is causing you painful feelings, or it may be something you are worried about in the future. Allow yourself to bring your attention to focus on one of these worrying thoughts.

Notice what is happening in your body right now as you have these thoughts. Are there places or tension or tightness? What is happening to your breathing? Don't try to modify the sensations in your body, just allow yourself to notice them with curiosity.

Notice now the thoughts that are going through your mind; just notice them as thoughts. Remember, thoughts are not facts, they are simply what your mind is saying or creating at any given moment. They may be based in factual events, but they are simply the mind thinking. Think about the thoughts you are having. Notice them as they change and notice each new thought as it replaces the previous one.

As you continue to notice the sensations in your body, see if you can put words to some of the feelings that come with these difficult and painful thoughts. They may be feelings like sadness, hurt, anger, loneliness, fear or pain. Feelings may be difficult, they may be deeply uncomfortable, but they are not wrong or right. They are simply part of your present moment experience.

Allow your awareness to move between the thoughts you are having as you notice them, the physical sensations you are having as you notice them, and the feelings and emotions you are having as you notice them.

Finally, bring your awareness and attention back to your breathing for a while, noticing the physical sensation of taking breath into your body and releasing it.