Thoughts are not Facts

1. Guided Visualisation Meditation

Welcome to this guided visualisation meditation intended to detach your mind from your thoughts. This visualisation will be supported by an imagery of clouds and a clear blue sky.

**Our thoughts are a product of how the brain interprets certain experiences. Whenever we find ourselves feeling anxious, stressed, or scared, our inner voice can become our worst enemy, as it always validates our emotional experiences through similar thoughts. In this way, we can enter a seemingly never-ending loop of negative thinking, which can amplify negativity within our being even more. It is important to understand that thoughts are not facts, and that, like clouds, they are only temporary, and solely hold meaning if we assign one to them. By merely noticing our thoughts, rather than engaging with them, we learn to see them for what they are, returning to a place of alignment and awareness.**

You may choose to lie down somewhere quiet, where you will not be disturbed, or in an open space, a field perhaps, or by a tree in the shade.

For this guided meditation specifically, you may keep your eyes open and look up at the sky to aid you with the visualisation. However, if you prefer to remain in the comfort of your room, you may close your eyelids and rely on your imagination.

As we begin this meditation, take your time to reconnect with yourself, by taking a few deep breaths. Try to hold your breath in between each inhale and exhale. As you inhale through your nose, feel the air flowing through your entire body, filling your abdomen. Hold your breath for a few seconds, and finally exhale through your mouth. This may sound like a relief, a gasp, or a silent whisper. Do this at your own pace, listen to your inner rhythm.

 As your body has come into contact with the ground, notice any sensations, which may arise. Maybe you feel scratchy or itchy in certain spots. Maybe you feel the impulse to adjust and change position. Or maybe you notice you feel comfortable exactly where you are. Whatever the case may be, listen to what your body wants to convey to you and know that your task, for this meditation, is to be open to all physical sensations and feelings, without expecting them to be any different from what they are right now. This is the ultimate act of kindness towards one’s self.

As you have befriended your bodily sensations, it is time to slowly shift your awareness to your thoughts. You may have already realised that specific thoughts have been brought to your attention.

 At first, it may seem that uncountable ideas rush through your head, clouding your mind. In the illusory attempt of gaining more control over your thoughts, you may notice yourself starting to engage with them. You may try to silence the mind, or even proceed with an idea. You may tell yourself that you will go back to certain thoughts at the end of the meditation. You may experience yourself overthinking a conversation you had, planning what you may have for dinner. Your thoughts may even gravitate towards your grocery list, certain sounds in your immediate environment, or even deadlines. You may have realised that the mind thinks and cannot stop thinking. The more you engage with it, the louder it gets.

Take a couple of deep soundful breaths. **[Inhale, exhale - Inhale, exhale]**

As you become aware of the nature of the mind, you may lift your eyes towards the sky, or envision a clear blue sky in your mind. Now put your thoughts into clouds. In this way, you can observe them much better, and detach from them.

If you notice that they still drag you along with them, kindly remind yourself that you are not your thoughts, rather you are the witness of these thoughts. Just like the clear blue sky, you can choose to simply become aware of them as they pass by.

Breathe. **[Inhale, exhale – Inhale, exhale]**

 Whenever you get caught up in your doing mind, rather than punishing yourself, see it as an opportunity to acknowledge that thought is happening. Then, gently stir your attention to your stomach as it expands and contracts, or to the sound and rhythm of your breathing. Whenever you feel ready, you may go back to looking at the clouds.

Breathe. **[Inhale, exhale – Inhale, exhale]**

Some clouds may be darker or lighter, denser, or more transparent than others. Some may stay for longer than expected, while others will travel smoothly through the sky, and through your mind. Regardless, try to be as open as you can towards all thoughts, without forcing or pushing them away. As you allow them to be, you allow yourself to remain in a state of undisturbed awareness.

Breathe. **[Inhale, exhale – Inhale, exhale]**

 As we head towards the end of this meditation, notice how you feel, whether your thoughts have slowed down, or become even more incessant. Whatever the case may be, know that all is well.

By Asia Charles