

## **I am not my thoughts**

Welcome to the RelationKit mindfulness series. In today's practice we'll use the attention we have been developing in earlier practices to begin to 'be' with our thoughts differently and to have a better relationship with them.

We'll discover that we don't need to fight with our thoughts. And we don't need to be carried off by them. Mindfulness teaches us that instead, we can choose not to follow thoughts once we notice that they've come into our mind. And we can actually watch thoughts as they come, maybe stay for a little while and then flow on through our mind. We can watch them coming and going without being hijacked or taken by them.

To help us do this we can imagine that thoughts are like clouds floating through the blue sky of our mind. And we begin to realise that thoughts are not facts, thoughts are not us - we are not our thoughts. They are fluid, flowing, meaning they come and go. They are not stuck, so we don't have to become stuck by them.

Another way we can get our heads around this is to view thoughts like 'thought buses' that try to pull us on board and take us for a ride, but we can practice staying at the bus stop, staying present and grounded in our body with our breathing. Using the anchor of the breath and what's going on inside the body moment by moment to hold us present so that we are not carried away by our thoughts.

So today we are either going to imagine our minds like a blue sky and thoughts like passing clouds, or, our thoughts like visiting 'thought buses'. Just see which works best for you in the practice.

So, let's come into a comfy position now, sitting or lying down.

If you are sitting, make sure your spine is nice and upright, so your body feels awake but relaxed.

Close your eyes fully or just a little now.

Begin to notice any sounds near or far away, inside or outside of your room. Notice how these sounds come and go through your awareness, and how they have a flowing feel to them coming and going.

And now gently take your attention to your breath. Where in your body do you feel it?

So maybe where your breath enters and leaves your nostrils or your mouth, coming and going. Maybe it's the rise and fall of your chest or belly. See where your attention lands and stay with it. Be with the feelings of your breath in your body.

On the flow of your next out-breath bring your attention to your feet and the feelings that are present there. Begin to gently scan your awareness through your body: from your feet, to your ankles, into your lower legs. Notice what you notice there. Your attention passes through your knees, and then your thighs, feeling where your bottom meets the surface

beneath you, then feeling into your hips, lower back and belly, your middle back and and belly button area, then your upper back and chest. Feel into your shoulders and what you notice there, then down through your arms, and hands, and fingers, and then grow your awareness out to take in the whole of your body, sitting or lying here – so you have a sense of your whole body now.

Your body is still but you feel the flow and movement of feelings within it, coming and going.

As you sense your whole body, maybe you notice some tension that may be present, or areas that feel tight today. No need to judge or react: just notice them, and breathe your calming breath towards and into those parts of you.

Allow your breath to ground you here in the present moment. Feeling your in-breath and feeling your out-breath.

And as you stay with your breath, see if you can begin to imagine your mind as if it was a clear blue sky. So you're imagining your mind as a clear and open blue sky without the disruption of thoughts. Seeing if you can allow yourself to rest into this clear space of your mind, as you continue to feel the rising and the falling of your breath - its coming and going.

And after a while you will start to notice thoughts coming into the sky of your mind - and this is okay, it's natural - and as best as you can, just allow the thoughts to be there, without needing to change anything, building stories or being pulled into dramas; without getting caught up in fixing or problem solving. Simply notice that thoughts are there and see if you can allow them to float on through the clear blue sky of your mind, as if they are clouds, you return to your breath.

Allow yourself to watch your thoughts, rather than to become involved in them; letting your thoughts be floaty and cloud-like, passing through, and as best as you can, continuing to return your attention to the gentle rising and falling of your breath, recognising that thoughts are there, and allow them to float on by, just as easily as they came on in. Continuing to come home to the feeling of your breath in your body.

Sometime those clouds might feel more heavy or dark, maybe stormy. They may stay around a little longer, but as you come back to your breathing, back to the present moment, you can let those thoughts go, pass through the sky of you mind. Coming back to that clear blue space of your mind.

If you like, instead, you could see thoughts as they come like those thought buses trying to pick you up and take you off, but once you are aware of the thought you make a choice to stay in the present at that bus stop with your breath watching those buses move on by. Not getting on board with those thoughts, not buying into them.

Your thoughts are like passing events in the space of your mind. No need to fight with or push them away. As best you can, let them pass on by coming back to the gentle rising and falling of your breath.

You are seeing that thoughts are there, accepting them, and then letting them pass, or to float on by. Maybe if it feels helpful, saying to yourself, "*I am not my thoughts.*" "*My thoughts flow. They come and they go.*"

Returning to your breath, back to your felt sense of breathing in your body each time you notice the mind has been carried away by your thoughts. No bother, no need to judge; just choosing to come back.

Coming back to your breath and the blue sky of your mind.

And when you feel ready, start to take some deeper in-breaths and longer out-breaths. Feel your body resting into the seat or the ground beneath you. Start to notice the sounds going on around you, near and far. Slowly drawing your awareness back into the outside world, and when you feel ready, gently blinking your eyes back open.

Take a moment to notice how you are; how you 'feel' right now. Maybe the mind seems just a little calmer, more spacious.

See you next time.