

Leaves Flowing in a Stream

In this exercise you will think whatever thoughts you think and allow them to flow, one thought after another. The purpose of the exercise is to notice when there is a shift from looking at your thoughts to looking from your thoughts. You will know that has happened when the stream stops, or you are down in the stream, or the exercise has disappeared.

Imagine that there are a bunch of leaves gathered by the bank of a peaceful, flowing stream. You are standing on the bank of the stream watching as the current continuously pulls the leaves into the gentle flow downstream. As the leaves become part of the flow, each thought you are having rests in the center of a leaf. Some people have a hard time putting thoughts into words, and they see thoughts as images. If that applies to you, put each image in the center of a leaf. (pause)

Allow yourself to get centered and begin to let your thoughts go by as the stream carries the leaves. Now here is the task. The task is simply to watch the leaves go by without having them stop and without you leaving the bank to interfere with the flow of the leaves. You are just supposed to let it flow. It is very unlikely, however, that you will be able to do this without interruption. And this is the key part of the exercise. At some point you will have the sense that the leaves have stopped flowing, or that you have lost the point of the exercise, or that you are in the stream with the leaves instead of on the bank watching them going by. When that happens, back up a few seconds and see whether you can catch what you were doing right before the leaves stopped flowing. Then go ahead and let your thoughts go back onto the leaves until they stop flowing a second time, and so on. The main thing is to notice when they stop for any reason and see whether you can catch what happened right before they stopped. One more thing, if the leaves never start flowing at all and you start thinking, "It's not working," or "I'm not doing it right," then let that thought appear on a leaf, too.

Now get comfortable, close your eyes, and get centered. (Spend 1 or 2 minutes getting centered). Now, begin allowing the stream to catch the leaves. Staying up on the bank and letting them flow. If they stop or you find yourself in it, noting that; seeing whether you can notice what you were doing right before that happened, getting back up on the bank, and letting the leaves flow again ... whatever you think, just putting it on a leaf. [Spend at least 2-3 minutes working on this exercise.]

And when you are ready to come back into the room, opening your eyes.