

Thought games

Continually relaxing into the back or core of the body, we may find openness to explore the slippery, potent world of thought. Sometimes the busyness of the mind is interesting in itself.

We may wonder how weightless thoughts that seem to come out of nowhere can be heavy enough to move people in ways we regret.

Relax, receiving experience as it comes through.

Opening to sound, body sensation and the sense of space around us, we can also allow spaciousness to include thoughts as just one more kind of movement.

Sometimes just say very simply in the mind, “thought” or even “movie,” when you notice that thinking has taken over.

Then connect with a more direct experience for a while—contact with the ground or the movement of the breath—or just return to a sense of spaciousness and playfulness.

Letting thoughts pass through, notice how often they are habitual reactions. We can start to sense that they are not “ours,” not important, not a problem.

Helpful and inspired thoughts do bubble up every once in a while with a very different quality from the usual—receive them as gifts.

Occasionally, we can experiment playfully with thought to learn to live wisely with it as a tool. Some questioning games:



Investigating: What is a thought? What is it made of? Is image a thought? Numbers? What about the memory of smell?

Counting: In 60 seconds, how many thoughts pass through the mind? (Sometimes playing this game makes thoughts stop; sometimes we find that there are too many layers of thought to capture....)

Tracing back: When we catch ourselves in the midst of a train of thought, we can attempt to trace it back to its starting point. Even when we space out, there is something that records the sequence of thoughts, and we can sometimes access that recording. What we often find is that a sound or unpleasant sensation may have knocked us out of the present moment into reverie. Other times, it is just the openness at the end of the out-breath.

Emotional tone: When particular thoughts recur again and again, we may need to notice what emotion (or charged belief, interpretation, or energy knot) is fueling them. Then we can be with the emotion more directly.

Fantasy: Sometimes when a cycle of thinking repeats many times, we could try doing the opposite of what we think we are supposed to do: we could let the fantasy happen fully, without guilt. Our very resistance (often in the form of shame, guilt, or judgment) is what keeps the fantasy alive.

"Feeling" the thoughts: When the mind is relatively loving and quiet, we could try to sense thoughts in a different way. We could try to "feel" them, in a way that is more subtle than emotional feeling. If thoughts are ducks swimming on the water of the mind, then we try to feel how the legs are moving underneath the water.

Aha!: Notice and feel the quality of the many moments when we suddenly realize we have been lost in thinking. Every once in a while, we can let ourselves drop down into



that deeper awareness that is already going on, already at ease with the fact that the thinking mind is busy and the “I” spaced out. Who or what else is here?

