

An extract from Mindfulness Exercises:

2. Freeing the Mind

Expelling Negativity

When it feels like the world is conspiring against us, we become susceptible to negative thought patterns and self-limiting behaviours. We forget how much has previously gone our way and, in our emotional state, forget how many people love and care for us and how lucky and privileged we are compared with millions of others in the world. We also forget that we have the power to make a difference by seizing the moment, and that the way in which we respond to this moment will directly affect the next.

The following exercise will assist in removing your preoccupation with negative past experiences by encouraging your mind to realise the abundance of opportunity presented in the now. Once the mental fog begins to clear, you will see the bigger, more positive picture and start attracting positive energy back into your life.

Step 1:

Find a comfortable seat and sit down, either indoors or outdoors. Don't do anything except sit down: Don't make a drink, don't turn on the television, don't look at the clock and don't look at your mobile phone. Do nothing. Just be as you are in mind, body and soul.

Step 2:

Close your eyes and turn your attention to the stream of thoughts running through your mind. Visualise the water flowing along, carrying the constant projections of your mind in its constancy. See that bank on the side of the stream? Take a seat there and watch the stream for a while

Objectively observe your thoughts as they are carried past. Once you have fully visually engaged with the stream, begin identifying your negative thoughts. Because these negative thoughts have recently been dominating your awareness, they may appear to tread water in the stream, craving your attention and seeking to dominate your awareness. Single them out from the positive thoughts by labelling them as "negative". When you identify one, or one makes itself known by trying to dominate your awareness, don't struggle with it. Don't allow the thought to penetrate your objective viewpoint or to annoy or anger you. Simply stay seated on the bank and label the thought for what it is.

Now, once labelled, fish the thought out from the stream and place it on the bank to your left-hand side. Do this with each negative thought you identify. Each time you place a negative thought on the bank, return to the thought stream and again observe the flow objectively, allowing positive thoughts to pass by untroubled.

Step 3:

Now, take a minute to notice that all the thoughts in the stream, whether positive or negative, have something in common. When seen from a neutral perspective.... [end of extract].