

Mind Your Mind

Meditating on What Is

Activity Summary

A meditation technique that develops and nurtures positive thoughts, thereby assisting in increasing individual and organizational productivity.

Goals

- To create awareness of mind activity.
- To introduce a technique to produce resilience and positive thoughts.

Group Size

Any number from one to twenty or more.

Time Required

30 minutes: 20 minutes for the activity and 10 minutes to debrief. Can be adjusted from 5 minutes to 1 hour based on needs.

Materials

- One 3 × 5 card for each participant to serve as a reminder to keep noticing what is, and avoid thinking about what should be.

Physical Setting

Any indoor or outdoor setting where participants will not be distracted by excessive noises and disturbances, weather conditions, or any other external factors. Either sitting on the floor or in chairs.

Facilitating Risk Rating

Low.

Facilitator's Note

This activity should be done gently and passively. It is not very active or aggressive. The participants can see the mind activity as amused and interested observers. They can just keep watching.

Process

1. Ask the participants to sit comfortably in chairs or on the floor and relax.
2. Say that the activity involves focusing on mental activity in a certain way. Explain that they will take a break from the tendency to think about "what should be" and notice what actually is. Emphasize that nothing is wrong with thinking about "what should be," but noticing "what is" gives you a joyful balance.
3. Determine and announce the time for the activity, for example 20 minutes. Give one 3 x 5 card to each participant, stating that it is to serve as a reminder to keep noticing "what is."
4. Begin by having them focus on and count their breaths for about 3 minutes. Tell participants to count 1 for in-breath, 2 for out-breath, 3 for in-breath, and so on up to 10, and then start again at 1.

(5 minutes.)
5. After about 3 minutes, direct the participants to start to think about "what is." Suggest that they could meditate on any of these:
 - What their work actually is, and not on what it should be.
 - What their life actually is, and not on what it should be.
 - The actual state of the organization, city, country, or the world, and not on what it should be.
6. Tell them that they should not strain, but to allow their minds to take them wherever they go. Their task is simply to stay on "what is" and away from what should be or what could be. Suggest that they stay away from wishful thoughts.

7. The participants may experience subtle happiness during the activity, and the effects can last for the rest of the day. State that, over time, this happiness can become a part of their personalities.
8. Decide how much or how often you need to verbally guide the participants. Every 5 minutes or so is a good way to begin. Take care that you do not speak too much, leaving several minutes of silence between comments so the participants have a chance to develop the skill.

(15 minutes.)

9. Announce the end and bring everyone back to focus. The following questions can be used for group discussion, depending on how much time is allocated for a debriefing:

- What was your experience? How did you feel?
- What are some practical ways (times, places, trigger events) in which this activity could be used during the day.
- Under what circumstances can this activity be misused or become harmful?
- How would this activity compare with other methods of developing a sense of humor and achieving happiness? (A drink or proving another wrong, for example.)
- What would the effect be of this activity on group communication, trust, productivity, and creativity?
- How would you adapt this activity to your own personal preferences and style?

(10 minutes.)

Submitted by Gaven Khan.

Gaven Khan, MBA, has practiced in Zen and other wisdom traditions for many years. He was a marketing director with San Francisco area startups, and before that in strategic marketing with IBM's Software Group. He completed his undergraduate degree with honors in Virginia and received his MBA from MIT Sloan School of Management. He says: "The work was rewarding, but something was missing. So I sought help to figure out how to enjoy myself. When your mind is pure, all that exists is beautiful, and you have happiness bubbling from within you constantly."

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