



MindfulLiving™ Module 3

Mastering Mindful Thinking

Chapter 10 - Resources

Freedom from Repetitive Thoughts **by Jack Kornfield (excerpted from “A Path With Heart”)**

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There are a few basic principles for learning how to release the contractions and stuck places we encounter in meditation. Expanding the Field of Attention is one of the most helpful of these principles.

A repeated difficulty will typically be felt in one of the four primary areas of mindfulness: the body, feelings, mind (thoughts and images), or our basic attitudes (grasping, fear, aversion, etc.). Expanding the field of attention requires becoming aware of another dimension of the stuck place rather than just noticing its predominant face. Often, we are stuck on a different level from the obvious one we've been seeing. Release occurs when we shift our focus from the obvious to another level of awareness.

In meditation, the most common insistent visitors are the repetitive thought patterns we call the Top Ten Tunes. Usually, when thoughts arise, we can simply acknowledge them, naming them softly as "thinking, thinking" in the light of loving awareness; they vanish like clouds.

However, the Top Ten Tunes—whether in words, images, or stories—persist and return no matter how often they are noticed. They play like old records, repeating a theme over and over. To gain perspective, we can number them one through ten. "Oh, that is number three on the hit parade this week." By doing so, when we notice them, we don't have to play the record through each time, making it easier to let them go. Another variation of this technique involves giving them a humorous name or title. I have named many familiar aspects of myself, such as The Hungry Ghost, Mr. Achiever, Attila the Hun, The Frightened Child, and The Impatient Lover. By doing this, the repeated stories and emotions of fear, sorrow, impatience, and loneliness become more familiar. I can listen to their tales in a friendlier, openhearted way: "Hello, nice to see you again! What do you have to tell me today?"

But more is needed. Suppose we encounter a painful, repeated story about the divorce of our parents. It talks repeatedly about which children got to keep which possessions and who said what to whom. This story can be replayed many times. As it does, we must expand our field of attention: How does this thought feel in our body? Perhaps there is tightness in the diaphragm and chest.

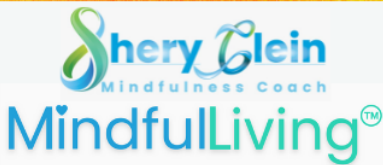
We can name this "tightness, tightness," and stay kind and attentive for some time. As we do, it may open to other sensations, releasing many new images and feelings. In this way, we release the physical contractions and bodily fear we have held. We can then expand our attention further to new feelings. What other feelings arise along with this thought pattern and tightness? At first, they may be half-hidden or unconscious, but if we sense carefully, the feelings will begin to show themselves. The tightness in the chest may become anger, sadness, and eventually grief. As we finally start to grieve, the pattern will release.

Similarly, when we encounter repeated physical pain or a complex mood, we can expand awareness to the level of thoughts, noticing the story or belief accompanying it with loving awareness. With careful attention, we may find a subtle belief about ourselves that perpetuates the pain or mood—perhaps a story about our unworthiness, like "I'll always be this way." The pattern can be released when we become aware of the story or belief and see it as just a thought—often untrue.

We must sometimes open to the feeling level to release the stuck pattern. Repeated thoughts and stories are almost always fueled by an unacknowledged emotion or feeling underneath. These unsensed feelings are what bring the idea back repeatedly. Future planning is often driven by anxiety. Remembering the past is often driven by regret, guilt, or grief. Many fantasies arise as a response to pain or emptiness. The task in meditation is to drop below the level of the repeated recorded message and sense and feel the emotional energy that brings it up. When we can do this and indeed allow and come to terms with the feeling, the thought will no longer need to arise, and the pattern will naturally fade.

Opening further, we can shift our awareness to the space around all things and experience the vast openness of mind that holds all these thoughts and feelings. This is an invitation to freedom.

Shery Klein, Personal Coach, would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your valuable participation. We appreciate your dedication and commitment. We aim to help you deal with uncomfortable issues and other obstacles. Most importantly, enjoy, chill out, and have fun! Please feel free to contact us with any questions or assistance. Blessings. Stay Healthy & Safe ❤️ Love, Shery



Mastering Mindful Thinking: Clarity in Every Moment

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This excerpt is taken from the book, "A Path With Heart."

