

## A mindfulness activity you might like:

# Leaves on a Stream



Mindfulness skills help to focus our attention, especially when we are overwhelmed with strong emotions. This skill can help us stay calm and rational, allowing us to choose how we want to respond rather than automatically and impulsively reacting to situations. We want any thoughts (e.g. 'I blame myself'), feelings (e.g. 'I feel angry'), urges (e.g. 'I want to hurt myself') and physical sensations (e.g. 'I feel sick') that come up in this activity to float away, using your mind. Make your thoughts to be like leaves on a stream. Follow the instructions of this short mindfulness activity.

**Start by sitting upright in your chair, putting your hands comfortably on your lap. If you want to, close your eyes. Remember that your task is to simply observe any thoughts, feelings, sensations or urges that you may experience in your body.**

I want you to imagine that you are standing on a bridge above a stream. Floating on the stream are leaves from the surrounding trees. This may be a stream that you have actually been to before, or one that you have near your house, or it may be one that you just imagine. Take a few moments to observe what is going on around you and what is happening within you. Remember observing is just looking around, it is not attempting to label, describe or respond in any way.

### ... stay quiet for 20 seconds

Now I want you to label what you observe without letting judgments get in your way. For each observation that you make, I want you to label it as a thought, feeling, urge or physical sensation, put it on one of the leaves and let it float off down the stream. So you may have a thought about something, label it as a thought, put it on a leaf and watch it float away downstream.

### ... stay quiet for 20 seconds

Other things you might observe are body sensations, feelings you are experiencing, or distractions going on around you in the room, label each one, put it on a leaf and let it drift down the stream.

### ... stay quiet for 20 seconds

The important thing to remember is not to go down the stream with the leaf, but rather to stand back and let the leaf drift off.

### ... stay quiet for 20 seconds

If you notice your mind wandering off, gently notice where your mind was, what you were thinking about, describe this distraction, put it on a leaf and watch it float away downstream.

### ... stay quiet for 2 minutes

Now slowly bring your focus back to the room. Feel yourself sitting on the chair, listen to any sounds in the room... and slowly in your own time begin to open your eyes.

**Practice this activity often.** Allowing your distracting thoughts, feelings, urges and physical sensations to float away, helps you calm the mind. Our mind can be so full of past regrets and future worries that we never enjoy the current moment. Allow those worries and regrets to float away on a leaf on a stream. A calm mind allows you to focus on what is important for you right now, today.



The Project Air Strategy acknowledges the major support of NSW Health. The Project works with mental health clinicians, consumers and carers to deliver effective treatments, implements research strategies supporting scientific discoveries, and offers high quality training and education. Contact us at [info-projectair@uow.edu.au](mailto:info-projectair@uow.edu.au) or visit <http://projectairstrategy.org>