

Awareness Experiment

This short experiment gives you a taste of *mindfulness*. The instructions are very simple.

1. Sit in silence for 2-3 minutes.
2. Notice thoughts, sensations and emotions.
3. Simply watch and rest.

Don't worry about whether you are doing it right or not. What you are doing is practicing *open awareness*. This means being awake and present; not controlling or directing your experience, just noticing it.

Open awareness is like coming home after a long, busy day; plopping into your favorite chair for a while and simply *being*...not doing anything at all other than resting (not sleeping), being alert and relaxed (yet aware of what is going on) and feeling open to what is going on inside you and around you.

This may seem difficult at first, though just like learning a new skill like playing the piano or hockey, but it gets easier with practice.

Perhaps you notice when you try this that thoughts flood your mind almost immediately, like a rushing waterfall. This happens to many people. Don't worry, it is not a sign of failure...it is actually a sign of success! It's an important step to recognize just how many thoughts typically pass through your mind without you even noticing them. You may also have experienced what some people call "Puppy Syndrome:" Noticing a thought, then following it over the hill and yonder, just like a puppy following something of interest. Again, not a failure. In fact, when it comes to open awareness there is no such thing as failing.

If you were to keep up this experiment for a fragment of time, you would discover that thoughts come and go, feelings come and go, and by simply looking at what goes on in the mind, without judgment, you will begin to notice changes. Below the surface, where all the mental chatter and drama goes on, there is a natural clarity that is never disturbed or disrupted. It's kind of like a lake on a stormy day: The surface may be all churned up, big waves might be crashing against the shoreline and the water may look muddy and grey, yet underneath it all the water is calmer and clearer the deeper we go. In the same way, when we allow the mind to rest naturally in a state of relaxed awareness, we will find calmness and clarity.