

## **Training Exercise: Leaves on the Stream**

This exercise, called "Leaves on the Stream" will help you to practice observing your thoughts.

Just get comfortable and close your eyes or fix your gaze on the floor in front of you. Now, first, start your mindful breathing. Just notice each breath in and each breath out. Come back to your breathing whenever you need to get centered.

Now, imagine that you are standing on the bank of a peaceful, flowing stream. Imagine that there are a bunch of leaves gathered by the bank of the stream, and you are standing on the bank, watching as the current continuously pulls the leaves into the gentle flow downstream. As the leaves become part of the flow, practice observing your thoughts by putting each thought you have in the center of a leaf.

Just watch the stream carry the leaves away with your thoughts on them. As you do this, notice that sometimes, the leaves will stop, or you will leave the bank and interrupt the flow of the stream, or sometimes this exercise will disappear from your mind completely. If that happens, just notice that the thoughts have pulled you in, or that you're struggling with the thoughts, and return to the bank, letting the leaves flow by again. Just keep putting thoughts on leaves.

The main thing is to notice when the leaves stop for any reason and see whether you can catch what happened right before they stopped. If the leaves aren't flowing at all, and you start thinking "it's not working," or "I'm not doing it right," then let that thought appear on a leaf, too. Just continue to watch the stream carry the leaves away with your thoughts on them. Putting each thought in the center of a leaf and watching the leaves become part of the flow. Just continuing to watch your thoughts flow down the stream on leaves.

Remember that any time that the leaves stop or the exercise goes away, just coming back up to the bank and watching the leaves flow down the stream with your thoughts on them. Just keep putting thoughts on leaves, noticing each time the leaves stop and just coming back to the bank, letting the leaves flow again.

Continuing to practice observing your thoughts, putting each thought in the center of a leaf. Just keep putting thoughts on leaves and watching the leaves become part of the flow. Just continuing to watch your thoughts flow down the stream on leaves, noticing each time the leaves stop and just coming back to the bank, letting the leaves flow again. Just coming back up to the bank, putting each thought in the center of a leaf and watching the leaves flow down the stream.

OK, when you're ready, open your eyes and come back to the room.