

Observing Our Thoughts

A 3-minute practice in noticing what we're thinking

Time	Where	You need
3 minutes, plus talk	Seated, quiet	This sheet, a pen

Thoughts come and go all the time, and we have little say over which ones arrive. In this practice we watch them with interest and curiosity, the way you might watch birds at a feeder. There are no bad thoughts here.

The practice

- 1 Settle.** Close your eyes or soften your gaze. Notice your posture, take three full breaths, and arrive in the present.
- 2 Watch.** For about 3 minutes, notice the thoughts that come. It can be like watching cars go by from a front porch, or clouds reflected in a pond.
- 3 Jot.** Write each thought in the table below. Not sure where it goes? Put it wherever seems closest. A task to do is probably future. A loved one may be past. A sensation or feeling right now is probably present.

Past	Present	Future

Talk it over

Share only what feels comfortable.

- 1 **What was it like?** What did you notice?
- 2 **Past and future.** Lots of past thoughts can pull us toward low moods, and lots of future thoughts toward worry. The past can also be grounding and meaningful, and the future can bring hope.
- 3 **The present.** The present is always here for us. When thoughts or feelings get carried away, we can come back to this moment. Nobody stays present all the time, and that's fine. Coming back to the present on purpose is one way to describe mindfulness, and it gets easier with practice.