

Floating Leaves on a Moving Stream

This will be an eyes-closed exercise. First, read the instructions and when you are sure you understand them, close your eyes and do the exercise.

Imagine a beautiful slow-moving stream. The water flows over rocks, around trees, descends down-hill, and travels through a valley. Once in a while, a big leaf drops into the stream and floats away down the river. Imagine you are sitting beside that stream on a warm sunny day, watching the leaves float by.

Now become conscious of your thoughts. Each time a thought pops into your head, imagine that it is written on one of those leaves. If you think in words, put them on the leaf as words. If you think in images, put them on the leaf as an image. The goal is to stay beside the stream and allow the leaves on the stream to keep floating by. Don't try to make the stream go faster or slower; don't try to change what shows up on the leaves in any way. If the leaves disappear, or if you mentally go somewhere else, or if you find that you are in the stream or on a leaf, just stop and notice that this happened. File that knowledge away and once again return to the stream, watch a thought come into your mind, write it on a leaf, and let the leaf float away down the stream.

Confine doing this for at least five minutes. Keep a watch or a clock close by and note when you start the exercise. This will be useful in answering some of the questions below. If the instructions are clear to you now, go ahead and close your eyes and do the exercise.

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How long did you go until you got caught by one of your thoughts?

If you got the stream flowing and then it stopped, or if you went somewhere else in your mind, write down what happened just before that occurred:

If you never got the mental image of the stream started, write down what you were thinking while it wasn't starting:
