

## Counting the thoughts

# Observation Meditation based on Thoughts

This Meditation teaches you to be fully aware and in the moment by observing with all your senses.

Awareness, mindfulness and Vipassana meditations are all meditations that give us an insight into and an awareness of our mind. We become the observer, and as a result, the effect of our thoughts and emotions on our activities becomes less.

In this meditation we learn to observe our thoughts without being touched, influenced or distracted by their contents. This meditation looks a lot like an ordinary concentration meditation. We are fully aware, alert and present, and every time we are distracted we simply bring our thoughts back to the object of meditation.

The difference is that during this meditation we count each thought. As soon as a thought enters your mind you count it without paying any attention to the content of the thought.

This exercise is not easy, but you cannot do it wrong. If for a long time there are no thoughts entering your mind, that is fine. It means that you concentrate well and with full dedication. If there are a lot of thoughts entering your mind, that is also fine, as long as you are aware of it.

As is the case with every form of meditation we try not to judge, or to be too goal-oriented. If your mind wanders, just return to the exercise, and begin again.

## Count your Thoughts Meditation

<b>Kind of meditation</b>	Observation
<b>Degree of difficulty</b>	more advanced beginners
<b>Recommended duration</b>	3 to 30 minutes
<b>Posture</b>	Sitting
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It gives you an insight into your mental activity.</li><li>• It teaches you to accept thoughts without being carried away by their contents.</li><li>• It improves your concentration.</li><li>• It relaxes your body and your mind.</li><li>• It teaches you to live in the NOW.</li></ul>
<b>Remark</b>	A basic observation exercise for everybody that wants to get an insight into the functioning of his own mind. It is also a first step on the way to controlling your mind instead of letting your mind control you.

## Count your Thoughts Meditation Exercise

1. Sit down, close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing. Be aware of every breathing in and breathing out. Breathe automatically and freely, do not try to control your breathing.
2. Pay attention to how the air slowly passes through your nose, fills up your lungs and goes out again.
3. If, after taking a few breaths, you feel fine and at ease you focus all your attention to the object. This may be a mantra, a candle or your breathing.
4. Breathe deeply and steadily and focus on the object as you always do. If you start to think of something else than the object, be aware of this, count one and calmly return to the object. Do not pay any attention to the content of the thought.
5. Breathe easily and focus on the object of meditation as you always do.
6. If all of a sudden you notice itching or twitching in your body or relaxation reactions in your muscles, that is fine and you also count them... "two"
7. Continue doing this until the time that you have set apart for this exercise is over.
8. Now slowly take your thoughts back to the rest of your body and the sounds in the room. Move a little, stretch your muscles a little and open your eyes.
9. Finished!

**An alternative to counting may be...**

- For many people, noting or naming what is happening can be helpful in connecting the awareness directly with moment to moment experience. For example, when a strong sensation arises you might note "tension", "tightness", "hot", "cold", "pressure", "ache", "tingling", ... and if there is much pain or pleasure...."unpleasant", or "pleasant". Similarly, emotions can be labeled "sadness", "happiness", "fear", "grief", etc.

*Let the noting be soft and in the background, with most of your attention directly experiencing what is happening.*

