



Syracuse Integrative Psychiatry

Comprehensive care. Transformative outcomes.

Week 14: Mindfulness in CBT

Noticing Without Judging

CBT asks us to change thoughts. Mindfulness asks us to watch them. Both are essential. Before you can challenge a thought, you have to notice it's there—without getting swept away by it.

Mindfulness isn't just "clearing your mind." It's paying attention to the present moment, on purpose, without judgment.

The "Leaves on a Stream" Exercise

This is a classic visualization to practice detaching from thoughts. You can read the steps below or listen to the guided audio.

 **Guided Audio Practice (1 min 20 sec)**

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1. Visualize the Stream

Sit comfortably. Close your eyes. Imagine you are sitting beside a gently flowing stream. Leaves are floating down the surface of the water.

2. Notice Your Thoughts

For the next few minutes, take every thought that pops into your head—words, images, worries—and place it on a leaf.

3. Let It Float By

Do not try to change the thought. Do not argue with it. Just watch it float down the stream until it disappears.

4. Return to the Stream

If you get stuck on a thought, or the stream stops flowing, just notice that too. Gently bring your attention back to the water.

Why Practice This?

This teaches you that **you are not your thoughts**. You are the observer of your thoughts. This distance gives you the power to choose which thoughts to engage with and which to let go.