

# Aid for the Wandering Mind

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Recent research with a sample of more than five thousand participants shows that most people's minds wander at least half the time—whether engaged in a pleasant task or in having quiet “downtime.” Mind wandering appears to be the default mode in most people's minds—and it comes at a high emotional cost.

Think about it. *“Unlike other animals, human beings spend a lot of time thinking about what is not going on around them, contemplating events that happened in the past, might happen in the future, or will never happen at all.”* \*The ability to think independently of any stimulus is certainly an evolutionary achievement so that we can learn from experience, figure things out, and plan ahead. But, the study reveals that mind wanderings greatly reduce our experience of personal happiness. The extensive analysis in the study concludes that a wandering mind is an unhappy mind because the unfocused mind is the cause, not just the consequence, of unhappiness. Put another way, thinking about what is not happening at a given time is a better predictor of your happiness index than your present activity, your intentions, or the feeling state you desire.

Learning to be fully present to yourself for a chosen period of time is the most honored way, in philosophical traditions, to achieve personal happiness and a sense of inner peace. Here, I would like to weigh in on some suggestions from the centering practices used in Healing Touch and other energy medicine therapies to help the wandering mind. If you have difficulty falling asleep you may also wish to explore these suggestions.

- Set aside a time at least once a day, more if possible, to have ten to fifteen minutes just to observe what your mind does.
- Note the zigzags from one scene to another which often linger over an unpleasant scene or a worry. If possible, speak your “*mind trips*” into a recording device, or jot them down.
- After several times of observing, take a deep breath and release it fully, blowing out slowly to a count of ten. This is best done when you are fully awake and alert.
- Allow the in-breath to come to a count of five, hold the breath for a count of five, and release to a count of ten. Repeat at least three times.

- Now, add a body posture that further increases mindfulness by crossing the right ankle over the left ankle and the left hand over the right .
- Let the tongue go to the roof of the mouth as you inhale and let the tongue drop down as you exhale.
- Add internal words to the breathing activity such as “*releasing tension*” with the outbreath and “*bringing in peace*” with the in-breath.
- Feel the energetic rhythm of the breath throughout your entire body—let every cell resonate with this natural rhythm. Feel gratitude for the body's innate wisdom.
- If your mind wanders, gently guide it back to the breath and its pattern of bringing in and letting go.
- Repeat for the time you have set (use a timer if needed) and note how you feel at the end. Variations of this mind-body energy pattern are to sequentially tap or hold specific acupoints or one of the energy centers while thinking of a specific wish or intention such as “*loving relationships*,” “*confidence in reaching out*,” or “*joy of being alive*” with each in-breath and each outbreath.

In my study groups, I have found this pattern to be a wonderful time of rejuvenation, and an honoring of one's inner strengths. It could also be helpful in attracting a sense of competence in reviewing the past or anticipating a future event. Being in the here and now with ourselves supports our sense of joy and appreciation for what exists in our lives. It is a key to successful aging— living without unpleasant mind wanderings, guilt, or regrets.

You may wish to affirm, “*With each breath, I affirm my opportunities to create the joy and peace I desire.*” €

We are honored to publish this article from Dorothea. It was sent to us just days before her passing. Dorothea was a true friend and enthusiastic supporter of Energy Magazine. She often shared her thoughts and ideas with us. Many of her articles can be found on our website ([www.EnergyMagazineOnline.com](http://www.EnergyMagazineOnline.com)) under the Archived Issues tab.

\* Killingsworth, M.A. & Gilbert, D.T., “A Wandering Mind is an Unhappy Mind” *Science*. Vol 330, Nov. 12, 2010, 932.