**This week’s exercise :** Listen to the Leaves on the stream meditation

Below is a website link to a recording of a classic ACT exercise, the leaves on the stream meditation. This exercise is recorded in a woman's voice and lasts about 13 minutes. It has an extended beginning that focuses on becoming present and creating the visualization before beginning the exercise. The focus of this exercise is to improve your ability to notice when you are hooked by thoughts and to practice getting unhooked. For homework, we’d suggest you to practice this as least once this week. If you’d like, you could practice it up to 2x/day. Written instructions for the exercise are below if you have problems with the audio recording.

<http://tiny.cc/leavesonthestream>

**Leaves on the stream meditation instructions**

(adapted from *ACT for Anxiety* by © Georg H. Eifert and John P. Forsyth, 2005

1. Get in a comfortable position in your chair. Sit upright with your feet flat on the floor, your arms and legs uncrossed, and your hands resting in your lap, palms up or down, whichever is more comfortable. Allow your eyes to close gently [pause 10 seconds].

2. Take a few moments to get in touch with the physical sensations in your body, especially the sensations of touch or pressure where your body makes contact with the chair or floor [pause 10 seconds].

3. It is okay for your mind to wander away to thoughts, worries, images, bodily sensations, or feelings. Notice these thoughts and feelings and acknowledge their presence. Just observe passively the flow of your thoughts, one after another, without trying to figure out their meaning or their relationship to one another. As best you can, bring an attitude of allowing and gentle acceptance to your experience. There is nothing to be fixed. Simply allow your experience to be your experience, without needing it to be other than what it is [pause 15 seconds].

4. Now, please imagine sitting next to a stream [pause 10 seconds]. As you gaze at the stream, you notice a number of leaves on the surface of the water. Keep looking at the leaves and watch them slowly drift downstream from left to right [pause 15 seconds].

5. Now, when thoughts come along into your mind, put each one on a leaf, and observe as each leaf comes closer to you. Then watch it slowly moving away from you, eventually drifting out of sight. Return to gazing at the stream, waiting for the next leaf to float by with a new thought [pause 10 seconds]. If one comes along, again, watch it come closer to you and then let it drift out of sight. Think whatever thoughts you think and allow them to flow freely on each leaf, one by one. Imagine your thoughts floating by like leaves down a stream [pause 15 seconds].

6. You can also allow yourself to take the perspective of the stream, just like in the chessboard exercise. Being the stream, you hold each of the leaves and notice the thought that each leaf carries as it sails by. You need not interfere with them—just let them flow and do what they do [pause 15 seconds].

7. Then, when you are ready, let go of those thoughts and gradually widen your attention to take in the sounds around you in this room [pause 10 seconds]. Take a moment to make the intention to bring this sense of gentle allowing and self-acceptance into the present moment … and when you are ready, slowly open your eyes.

**This week’s daily reflection: Noticing Hooks**

Before you go to bed in the evening or when you first wake up, take a few minutes to complete this form to increase awareness of how you get hooked.

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| When did you get hooked today? | Try to identify what hooked you. Was it in your mind or in your body? | What did you do when you got hooked? Did it move you toward suffering or toward what’s important to you? |
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