

## A14. Clouds in the Sky Exercise

First, 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 on your lap. [Pause.] Allow your eyes to close, or fix them on a point in front of you. [Pause five seconds.] Take a couple of gentle breaths in and out. [Pause.] Notice the sensation of your own breath as you breathe in and out. [Pause five seconds.]

Now, try to imagine you are lying on a grassy hill on a warm spring day. [Pause.] Imagine feeling the ground beneath you [pause], the smell of the grass [pause], and the sounds of nearby trees blowing in the wind. [Pause five seconds.] Now, imagine you are looking up at the sky, watching clouds pass by. [Pause.] Start to become conscious of your thoughts and feelings. [Pause.] Each time a thought pops into your head, imagine placing it on one of these clouds and allowing it to float on by. [Pause.] If you think in words or images, place these on a cloud, and let them float by. [Pause five seconds.]

The goal is to continue watching the sky and to allow the clouds to keep moving by. [Pause.] Try not to change what shows up on the clouds in any way. If the clouds disappear or you go somewhere else mentally, just stop and notice this happening, and gently bring yourself back to watching the clouds in the sky. [Pause.]

If you have any thoughts or feelings about doing this exercise, place these on clouds as well. [Pause.] If your thoughts stop, just watch the sky and the clouds. Sooner or later your thoughts should start up again. [Pause five seconds.]

You are just observing each thought or feeling as a word or an image on a cloud. [Pause.] It is normal and natural to lose track of this exercise, and it will keep happening. When you notice yourself losing track, just bring yourself back to watching the clouds in the sky. [Pause.]

Let the clouds float at their own pace, and place any thought, feeling, sensation, or image that comes to mind on a cloud and allow it to float on by. [Pause five seconds.] When a thought hooks you, place that on a cloud and let it float by. [Pause.]

Finally, bring your attention back to your breathing. [Pause five seconds.] Notice again the steady rhythm of your breath that is with you all the time. [Pause five seconds.] Then, bring your awareness back to sitting in the chair, in this room. [Pause.] Gently open your eyes and notice what you can see. Push your feet onto the floor and have a stretch; notice yourself stretching. Welcome back.