



Leaves on a Stream

(Adapted from Hayes, 2005)

Close your eyes and imagine a beautiful, slow-moving stream. The water flows over rocks and around trees, descends downhill, and travels through a valley. Once in a while, a big leaf drops into the water and floats downstream. Imagine you're sitting beside that stream on a warm, sunny day, watching the leaves float by.

Now, bring your attention to your thoughts. Each time a thought pops into your head, imagine that it's written on one of those leaves. If you think in words, put them on the leaf as words. If you think in images, put them on the leaf as images. If you think in feelings, put feelings on the leaves as words. The goal is to stay beside the stream and allow the leaves to keep floating by.

Don't try to make the stream go faster or slower.

Don't try to change what shows up on the leaves in any way. Allow whatever flows through your mind to land on a leaf and flow by on the stream.

If the leaves disappear, if you mentally go somewhere else, or if you find that you're in the stream or on a leaf, just stop and notice that this has happened. Once again, return to the practice of placing your thoughts, images, feelings and other internal experiences on leaves on the stream.

Watch a thought come into your mind, place it on a leaf, and let the leaf float downstream. Continue for the next few moments, just watching your thoughts float by.