

River Bank Meditation

Imagine a river or stream. You're sitting on the bank of this river, where boats and ships are sailing past. While the stream flows past your eye, I ask you to name each one of the "vessels" or thoughts floating by. For example, one of the boats could be called "my anxiety about tomorrow." Or along comes the ship "objections to my coworker" or another boat titled "I don't do that well." Every judgment that you pass is one of these boats. Take the time to give each one of them a name, and then let it move on.

For some people this is a very difficult exercise because we're used to jumping aboard our boats immediately; in doing so, we give them "gas"! As soon as we own a boat and identify with it, it picks up its own energy. We have to practice un-possessing, letting go, detaching from our thoughts and feelings, or they own us.

With every idea or image that comes into our head, we have the opportunity to say, "No, I'm not that; I don't need that; that doesn't serve me." This frees you to intentionally choose your identity and how to move forward instead.

Some of the boats that are accustomed to us jumping aboard immediately may head back upstream and return down the river, trying to catch our attention again. Some people feel the need to torpedo their boats. But you must not attack, hate, or condemn any idea or thought; rather remind yourself that you are not perfect and acknowledge it neutrally.

The point is to recognize thoughts and feelings and to say, "That's not necessary; I don't need that." But do it in a friendly way. If we learn to handle ourselves tenderly and lovingly, then we'll be able to carry this same loving wisdom into our other relationships.

So, the next time a ship passes by that carries with it a thought of anxiety or discouragement, notice the ship and politely watch it pass, only hopping aboard if you so choose.