



Vision, Focus & Perspective

Labelling Thoughts Technique

Mindfulness can be useful in detaching from the constant stream of thoughts, judgements, concerns, ruminations, and “clutter” of the mind, and getting to a place of inner peace.

The following technique enables you to observe your thoughts and let go of them, which can allow you to create some space between yourself and the thoughts that trigger the stress response. This technique allows you to examine your regular thought patterns, take a step back, and get some perspective. It also simply breaks the cycle of rumination.

Get Comfortable

Take a few minutes to get comfortable, ideally, in a quiet, distraction-free place, and allow yourself some time to focus on this exercise. You can practice this anytime you have some free time alone with your thoughts, like doing mundane tasks, or getting ready for sleep.

Clear Your Mind

Notice your thoughts. Within minutes, or even seconds, you will notice thoughts drifting into your mind. I'm cold. I need to make dinner tonight. I wonder what he meant when Joe said that thing earlier. The thoughts will creep in. The idea is to simply observe them and refrain from engaging. Simply notice them, and let them go.

Label Your Thoughts

While simply observing your thoughts and letting them go is an effective meditation technique, it can be helpful to take things a step further and “label” your thoughts before you let them go. Labelling your thoughts does two things:

- (i) It raises your awareness of the kinds of things you think about, which is especially helpful if you are trying to change your customary thought patterns to become more empowering and positive.
- (ii) It gives your mind something to do while still maintaining detachment. There are several different ways that you can label your thoughts:
 - **Useful / Not Useful** – You can simply label whether a thought is constructive or not. Simply just label them “useful” or “not useful,” and let them go.
 - **Types Of Thoughts** – You can label your thoughts with greater depth by classifying them according to their function. Thoughts that can be labelled as “judgement,” “planning,” “fear,” and “remembering,” for example, may drift into your awareness. Label them, and let them go.

There are other ways in which you can label your thoughts, but this provides you with a starting place. As you practice, you may find methods that work better, one of the above techniques may become a favourite, or you can rotate. Whatever works for you is the “right” way.