Week 30: Mindful Mantras

Thoughts, by their very nature, are always present, to the tune of 60,000 thoughts per day. Some will cause overwhelm and stress. Others will linger and create long-term issues. Focusing is one of the very best ways to corral a wild mind or “monkey mind.” By consciously bringing our thoughts to a center point, we can begin to take charge of them and slow their pace.

Though it may not seem like it, the mind can only focus on one thought at a time. It may feel as if we are having several thoughts at once, but actually there is only one. Others follow in rapid-fire succession. It is up to us to take charge of our thoughts; to become pro-active and determine how much we are willing to be run by them. Using a mantra can help.

The word “mantra” is Sanskrit in origin and literally means “mind protection.” When you say a mantra—a word or string of carefully chosen words—the mind becomes stable. Your thoughts and emotions settle down. When a mantra is repeated, your attention is drawn back to the present moment where peace is possible.

Years ago, when I was struggling with anxiety, I heard a song by Kenny Loggins. It contained a lyric that felt like a mantra to me: “*I am safe. I am loved. I am free*.” When feelings of anxiety would strike, I’d take a few deep breaths and begin repeating these comforting words. They worked.

Is there a word that naturally calms you? Is there a phrase that holds special meaning for you? This could be anything: a line from a poem, a song lyric, or scripture. It could be a sound like “Ah” or “Om.” It could be a phrase of your own creation like “All is well.” Or, “Everything’s fine.”

Select the word or phrase that speaks to your heart. Set an intention that it will focus and calm you. Begin by centering yourself, breathing in and breathing out, gently and evenly. Say the mantra slowly, silently or aloud. Focus your attention on the words themselves and what they mean to you.

At first, your thoughts may continue to race. It may feel as if you are saying the mantra too quickly. Notice this and slow the pace of the repetition. Continue to breathe, creating a gentle dance of breath and words. Repeat the mantra as long as you need to come back to center.  Don’t be surprised if after a few repetitions your mind has wandered off again. That’s alright. Simply repeat the phrase, connect it to your breath, and begin again.

Affirmation

*My emotions are not me. They are something I experience. I am learning to observe them with non-judgmental awareness so I can ride them more easily and return to inner peace more quickly.*

*Excerpted from Portable Peace: A Weekly Guidebook*

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