

■ THE OBSERVER MEDITATION

Guide participants through a seated meditation. After 30 minutes or so, instruct participants to do the following:

In this moment, I want you to turn your attention to this room. Picture yourself in this room, seated exactly where you are. Now begin to move inwards into your skin. Try and feel your skin as you are seated in the chair.

Can you see the shape being made by the parts of your skin touching the chair? Notice any bodily sensations that you might feel. With each feeling, acknowledge its presence and allow your consciousness to move on from it (pause). If an emotion arises, acknowledge that it is there and allow it to move on at its own pace (pause). Now I want you to notice any thoughts you are having at this moment. Quietly observe them for a few moments (pause). As you watch your thoughts, I want you to become aware that you are noticing your thoughts. A part of you is watching yourself.

A part of you is now noticing your sensations...your emotions... your thoughts. We will call that part the “observer you”. There is a person in there, behind those eyes, who is aware of what I am saying right now. It is the same person you’ve been your whole life. In a deep sense, this observer is the you to which you refer yourself.

I want you to remember something that happened to you last summer. Raise your hand when you have an image in mind. Good. Now look around. Remember all the things that were happening then. Remember the sights . . . the sounds . . . your feelings . . . and as you do that, see whether you can see yourself noticing what you are noticing. See whether you can catch the person behind your eyes watching, hearing, and feeling. You were there then as you are here now.

I’m not asking you to believe this nor am I trying to make a logical point. I’m just asking you to notice the experience of this awareness and to ask yourself whether the person who was there last summer watching and feeling is also here now.

The person who is aware of what you are aware of is present here now as the same way as then. There’s an essential continuity where in some deep sense, at this level of experience rather than belief, you have been “you” your whole life—is this what you’re experiencing at this height of awareness?

I want you to remember something that happened when you were a teenager. Raise your hand when you have an image in mind. Good.

Now look around. Remember all the things that were happening then. Remember the sights . . . the sounds . . . your feelings...take your time with it. As these sensations become clearer, I want you to, if just for a second, find the person behind the eyes who was enjoying each moment. The person who was watching, hearing, and feeling. You were there then as you are here now. Remove logic and

fact from it. There is an essential continuity between the person who is aware of him/herself now and the person who was aware of yourself as a teenager in that situation. You have been “you” your whole life.

Finally, remember something that happened when you were a fairly young child, say, around age 6 or 7. Raise your hand when you have an image in mind. Good.

Now look around. Remember all the things that were happening then. Remember the sights . . . the sounds . . . your feelings...and again try and note the moment in which you were observing yourself seeing, hearing, and feeling. Notice that there was a person there behind those child eyes. You were there then as you are here now. You are now aware of what you were aware of as a child. You have been observing yourself at every stage of your life. This is the “observer you” who has always been watching you, taking in each moment. From that perspective, I want you to look at some areas of living.

Let’s start with your body. Your body is constantly changing. Sometimes your body gets sick. Sometimes your body is filled with energy and movement. Your body can feel rested and your body can feel tired. Your body can be strengthened or weakened. You were once a tiny baby, fragile and needing constant care, but then your body grew to stand on its own. Your body may have even faced challenges by having some of its parts removed in an operation.

The cells in your body have died, many of them staying with you from your infancy or adolescence and many dying over the last summer. Your cells come and go. These bodily sensations come and go. Even as we have spoken, sensations and cells have come and gone. Everything changes except the “you” that you have called “you” your whole life. It travels with you in your mind and emotions, adapting to its every change, existing beyond your body. Yes, you have a body, but this “you” only experiences your body but it is not part of it. Now notice your body again just for a moment. As you do this, every so often try to observe how you’re observing (give the client time to do this).

Let’s go on to another area, your roles. How many roles do you play? How many roles have you played in the past? Sometimes you play the role of a [fit these to the client; e.g., “mother . . . or a friend . . . or a daughter . . . or a wife . . . sometimes you are a respected worker . . . other times you are a leader . . . or a follower”, etc.

In this world, there is always a role to be played. Even if you try not to play a role, then you would be playing the role of a person not playing a role. Even now you’re playing a role, the role of a participant. Beyond each role you play, there is a role that is unchanging and unmoving. That is the “observer you”. The part that you call “you” that is always watching and it’s always aware of everything you are aware of. This ‘you’ does not change, it does not bend to fit other roles, and it is not affected by it. It stays in its form. The observer ‘you’ is not a part of your body and it is not part of a role you play, it simply experiences them and takes note. This

is not about creating a new belief for you. I'm not asking you to believe this. I'm just asking to distinguish between what you are looking at and the "you" that is watching you looking.

Now let's move on to another area, emotions. Your emotions are always changing. In a span of a few minutes, you can move from feelings of love, to hatred, to calmness, to joy, to happiness, to sorrow. Even now you may be experiencing emotions. You could be feeling interest, boredom, or relaxation. Think of things you may have liked before that you don't like anymore. Think of fears you had that have now been resolved. The emotions give you only the promise of impermanence. Waves of emotions come and go. And even then, the "you" does not change. The "you" observes every tiny moment of joy to emotional tsunamis that take over your thoughts and body. But they always go, and the "observer you" is always there, remaining unaffected. You are not your emotions, you are an experiencer of emotions flowing in and out of you. Realize that this is an experienced event, this is not a belief you must have. In a deep and important sense, your "you" is constant. You remain "you" through it all. So just notice your emotions for a moment and as you do, notice also that you are noticing them [allow a brief period of silence].

Now let's turn our attention gently to the most difficult area, your own thoughts. Thoughts are difficult because they hook us and pull us out of our observer role. If this happens, gently come back to the sound of my voice. Notice how your thoughts change restlessly. Your thoughts used to lack knowledge and then you went to school and you learned new thoughts. These new thoughts created in you new ideas and knowledge. Sometimes you think about things one way and sometimes from a different angle. Sometimes your thoughts make little sense. Sometimes thoughts enter your head automatically without your control. Sometimes thoughts keep you up at night even though your body is tired and ready to sleep. Thoughts constantly change. Look at what your thoughts were like when you came in today and how many different thoughts you had until now. And still, the "you" that watches you think is unchanging. Although you have thoughts, you are not just your thoughts. Don't believe this, just notice it. As you realize this, a stream of thoughts continues. You may get caught up in them, you may become consumed by them, but there's always a part of you that is standing back, watching each thought come in and leave again. So now watch your thoughts for a few moments—and as you do, notice also that you are noticing them [allow a brief period of silence].

As a matter of experience rather than belief, you are not just a body, a role to play, emotions, or thoughts. Although these things create experiences in your life, you are the arena...you are the context...the space in which they unfold. As you see that, notice that the things you've been struggling with and trying to change are not "you" anyway. As this war continues battling on, you will be there, unchanged and watching. Can you take advantage of this connection and let go just a little bit more? Notice these domains that show up and as you do, notice that

you are still “you”, watching and being aware of what you’re aware of [allow a brief period of silence]. Now again come back and picture yourself in this room. And now picture the room. Picture [describe the room]. When you are ready to come back in, open your eyes.