



My Leaves on a Stream Worksheet

Rate how you feel, read or play the script, then rate again and make notes.

01 Before: how much are my thoughts pulling at me?

A quick check. There's no right answer, just an honest number.

How much are my thoughts pulling at me right now?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all

Completely

What's on my mind, in a few words? (optional)

Before I start:

- ☐ I'm somewhere I won't be disturbed for a few minutes
- ☐ I know I can stop at any point and open my eyes
- ☐ None of the thoughts I'm having is about harming myself or about danger I need to deal with right now

02 The script (read slowly, or record it)

Sit comfortably and take a slow breath in and out. (pause)
Picture a gentle stream, in a place you like, a forest, a field or somewhere you make up. Watch the water move past.
(pause) Notice that leaves are floating on the surface, drifting slowly downstream. (pause) Now, for the next few minutes, whenever a thought comes into your mind, place it on a leaf and let the leaf float away. It does not matter whether the thought is pleasant or unpleasant, big or small. If it is a word, put the word on the leaf. If it is a picture, put the picture on the leaf. (pause) You are not pushing the leaves along, and you are not trying to make the stream go faster or slower. Let each leaf move at its own pace. (pause) If the stream seems to run dry, or the leaves stop coming, just watch the water for a while. Thoughts will come again. (pause) If a feeling comes, such as boredom or worry, notice it, say to yourself 'here is a feeling of worry', and place that on a leaf too. (pause) At some point your mind will wander off, or you will find you have been following a leaf downstream. That is fine. Notice it, take a breath, and come back to the bank of the stream. (pause) Carry on for a few minutes in your own time. (pause) When you are ready, let the stream fade, notice the chair under you and the sounds in the room, and open your eyes.

Thoughts I noticed floating by (a word or two for each):

Fill this in after the exercise, from memory. Write them as 'a thought about...'.

03 After: what did I notice?

Re-rate it. It doesn't need to go down. Write what actually happened.

How much are my thoughts pulling at me now?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Completely

What happened? Tick any that fit:

- ☐ I could see some thoughts as thoughts, not facts
- ☐ I kept getting caught up in a thought and followed it
- ☐ The leaves stopped coming, or I couldn't picture them
- ☐ A thought came back again and again
- ☐ It felt strange, flat or frustrating
- ☐ I felt worse during or after it

Notes: what was easy, what was hard, what I'd change next time:

04 Adjust it to suit me

You might picture a stream, a river, a conveyor belt or clouds in the sky. Work out what suits you. If a thought stays heavy after trying this, or the exercise made you feel worse, that is a sign to stop and get support rather than push on.

A scene I'd rather picture (stream, river, clouds, a train passing):

Where and when I could try this again:

Someone I can reach out to if my thoughts feel too heavy (a friend, my GP, Samaritans 116 123, 988 in the US):

05 My practice log

If you try it more than once, a short log shows you whether it helps you. Rate how much thoughts pull at you, 1 to 10.

When	Before	After	What I noticed
Date and place	1 to 10	1 to 10	
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

When you're done, a moment to reflect

- Which kinds of thought were hardest to place on a leaf, and why?
- What did it feel like to watch a thought go by without answering it?
- Did I notice the moment I got caught up in a thought? What was that like?
- Did anything about this exercise not suit me, and what would I change?
- Is there a thought here that I should act on, or talk to someone about, rather than let float past?

Free worksheet from selfgrowth.org. Free self-growth worksheets for real life. Fill it in online and it saves as you go: selfgrowth.org/worksheets/leaves-on-a-stream-worksheet



If things feel heavier than a worksheet can hold

These are self-reflection tools, not therapy. If you're struggling, especially if you have any thoughts of harming yourself, please reach out to someone now. In the US, call or text **988**. In the UK & Ireland, call **116 123** (Samaritans). Elsewhere, find a free helpline at findahelpline.com. If you're in immediate danger, call your local emergency number.