



Walking Through the Library Halls

When you feel overwhelmed with your thoughts and feelings, your natural instinct will be to revert to unhelpful behaviors (avoidant and compulsive behaviors).

This exercise will help you practice observing and acknowledging your internal experiences (e.g., thoughts, feelings, sensations, urges) instead of being hooked by them.

Sit in a quiet place to practice for at least five minutes. Close your eyes after reading the instructions (if that is comfortable for you). If you'd like, you can also record them on your smart phone so you can listen to them regularly.

- Imagine that you are walking inside a large library. This library has rooms and halls with bookshelves containing thousands of books and magazines and newspapers stands.
- This is a peculiar library. As you walk between the bookshelves and stands, whatever thought or other internal experience (e.g., thought, judgement, memory, image, feeling, sensation, urge) comes to your awareness, imagine placing it on a book, magazine, or newspaper.
- Do not force anything, just imagine walking along the library, notice the internal experience (e.g., thought, image, feeling) that shows up in this moment, and place it on any publication.
- Then acknowledge it, "I see that thought." Then continue to imagine walking through the library halls. As soon as you notice another internal experience, acknowledge it again. ("I notice it. Thanks, Mind!")
- Continue walking along the library noticing and acknowledging the internal event ("Did I hurt that child when I was babysitting her? There is the *babysitting memory*.") and placing it on another publication.
- There may be times that you notice a thought such as, "I don't know what to think about." No big deal, that thought can also be placed on a publication. If images show up, imagine placing them on a magazine, book, or newspaper.
- Continue imagining that you are walking in this library and noticing any internal experience that shows up and then acknowledge it. ("There is the tax story. I'm super anxious. I see the *tax story* printed on the title of a book. I'm noticing a feeling of shame. I see that title on the headline of that newspaper.")

At the end of this practice, write down what this experience was like for you. What did you learn about yourself and your internal experiences? Engaging in this exercise regularly will enhance your awareness and ability to respond to any unpleasant internal or external experience with flexibility.