

## Strategies for dealing with unwanted thoughts and emotions

Below are several options (not necessarily in this order ) when a thought stream or emotion is persistently tugging at you.

These options have been compiled from a number of teachers.

The underlying principle is that we use these options to help us *to be with* the thought stream or emotion that is persistently tugging at our attention rather than helping us to get rid of the part of ourselves that is tugging. Google Internal Family Systems for more information about parts.

1. Label the thought stream or emotion  
For example, thinking, planning, worrying, blaming
2. Be curious about where you feel the thought stream or emotion in the body  
For example, chest, jaw, tongue, shoulders, stomach. You might feel tightness, tension, or other discomfort, or you might feel a difference in energy in your body.
3. Softening  
Bring the intention to relax on each exhale. Sometimes this helps the thought stream or emotion to relax a bit, to soften, to become less intense. We're not trying to get rid of the thoughts or emotion, but rather to hold it with care and tenderness.
4. Soothing  
You can do this by placing one or both hands over your heart and just feel the gentle touch of the hand or the warmth of the palm or perhaps imagining warmth and kindness flowing through your hand into the body.
5. Allowing  
Can you let it be, make room for it, which might release the need for it to go away?  
Can you allow yourself to simply feel how you feel right now, perhaps breathing slowly and more deeply?
6. Talk to the thought stream or emotion: for example, "thoughts are not facts, they are only true some of the time;" "I am more than my thoughts," etc.
7. See the thought stream or emotion as parts of yourself who are struggling and meet them with kindness.  
"May you be happy, may you be peaceful, may you be free from suffering."  
You might choose comforting words to say to the thought/emotion, words you might say to a friend: "I'm so sorry you feel this way," "May you be kind to yourself."  
From Thich Nhat Hanh: "you poor thing, come here and sit with me."
8. Ask that thought or emotion a question, for example:  
What is going on?  
What am I needing to notice or not noticing?  
What can I learn from this thought stream or emotion?  
Why do I tend to gravitate to these kinds of thoughts or emotions?  
If any of these questions feels possibly helpful, ask it and see what happens.