**Thought Traffic Mindfulness Practice**

So let’s practise **bringing our attention to traffic that’s coming and going in our minds right now**, and see if we can bring a greater awareness to those thoughts.

Beginning by sitting comfortably in the chair –upright but also relaxed… Feeling the sensations of your feet on the floor and the weight of your body on the chair… Allowing your eyes gently to close…

And turning your attention first to the **sounds that are coming and going.**

You may notice the mind wanting to label them, picture them, or tell you what they are. Exploring instead what it’s like to direct your attention to the **texture** and **qualities** of each sound. Noticing how **sounds arise** –they fizz, vibrate, flicker –and then **pass away**. Perhaps noticing their **volume**[whether they’re loud or soft]… their **pitch**[whether they’re high or low]… whether they’re continuous or intermittent... letting all sounds come and go…

*[This next passage of instructions –outside the room, inside the room, inside the body –can provide structure for the practice, but it is not essential. Stay with a more open awareness of ‘sounds’ if you prefer.]*

Playing with directing your attention to sounds coming from **outside the room**. What sounds can you hear?... just allowing these sounds to arrive at your ears without going out to find them… receiving them…

Then, when you’re ready, drawing your focus closer in... to sounds from **inside this room**...

Again, letting these sounds come to you...no need to go and find them… focussing as best you can on the texture and qualities of each sound rather than any label or picture of what you think might be making it.

How about drawing the focus of attention even closer? Can you notice **any sounds inside your own body,** perhaps sounds you’ve never listened to before?

•…your heart beating, or pulsing softly in your ears?

•…any sense of a high-pitched back-ground sound, sometimes called “the sound of silence”, that’s often in our ears…

• ….The normal sound of your body breathing

If you can’t hear any of these sounds, don’t worry. Just notice as best you can sounds from inside and outside the room, coming and going.

**Something else that comes and goes is thoughts**. As you sit here you may notice that thoughts appear in the mind, stay for a bit, and then go. If this is happening, you can practise just letting them come and go, allowing the traffic of thoughts to flow through your mind. No need to interfere, or try to direct the traffic.

No need to hold onto some thoughts and push others away. Just letting the thought traffic flow, and if there’s no traffic, enjoying the quiet…And then when you’re ready, coming back to a sense of the room and gradually opening your eyes.

How was that? What did you notice? How did that feel? What can you learn from this exercise?

*In the enquiry, try to draw attention to any pupil comments about stepping back from thoughts or not getting carried away with them.*

*What did you notice? What was your experience? How did it feel?*