

Thoughts and feelings are ceaselessly arising in our minds. And when they do, we are usually unaware of getting "hooked" by these mental objects, largely because it seems so natural to identify with them. When these thoughts and feelings are unpleasant, we're often quick to respond by rationalizing, blaming others, or trying desperately to push them down.

By cultivating mindfulness, we can learn to notice the bait without getting "hooked" on it. Rather than *react* to fleeting thoughts and feelings, we can learn to *respond* in a more balanced, controlled way. We can acknowledge what we're thinking and feeling, label these objects of our awareness, and find compassionate, self-respecting ways to move forward.