

## Mindfulness in nature

Today, we are going to practice the act of mindfulness while being outside and connected with nature. Nature is a wonderful tool to help us to slow down, appreciate the beautiful things that surround us and to encourage us to breathe in wonderful, fresh air. You can do this meditation practice on your next dog walk, running or exercise session, or even taking five minutes in the garden or outside your front door. Remember that the breath is always there to ground you and every moment is a perfect moment to simply stop and be.

At first, walk around the place of your choice the way you normally might be in nature. Notice what it feels like in your body to be in a place while only casually connecting to it. Now, barefoot if possible, feel the weight of your body through your feet and toes. Let your feet sink into connecting with the earth, and pay attention to how it feels in each foot. Begin walking on the earth and feel the tickling grasses warmed in the sun.

After some time, reach down and dig your hands into the earth. Feel the texture of the earth in your fingers—is it gritty, muddy, or silky? Notice how it smells. Allow yourself to play with the earth, grasses, and stones, as a child might play in a mud puddle or a sand box. Rub the earth on your skin.

Continue your slow walk, exploring the plant life around you. Try rubbing fragrant bay leaves or lavender or other flowers and leaves in the palm of your hands and inhaling their fragrance. Feel the roughness of the bark of an old tree trunk with your hands, fingers and arms. Taste some wild, edible berries.

Sit down and open your awareness to sounds, letting your mind expand to the furthest sound, so your attention is receptive and open. Similarly, take some time to absorb this place with your eyes—not looking for anything in particular, just allowing whatever you see to touch you.

Take some time to sit quietly under a tree or bask in warm sunlight. Let your senses drift open and outward. Breathe through every pore of your skin and soak up the ambience, the cadence, and the spirit of this place. Feel the fact that you are a part of this living, breathing ecosystem.

While you are feeling open in this place, be aware that you are in a relationship with all kinds of life forms — including grasses, insects, birds, or animals that sense your presence but remain invisible. As you feel, engage in a relationship with this place, be aware of any shifts in your body, your breath, your heart, and your mind.

Have a wonderful day.