

## Mindful Nature Connection

### What is Mindfulness?

There are many definitions of mindfulness and many ways to practice. I have found Jon Kabat-Zinn's descriptions most helpful in my understanding and practice.

**Mindfulness is a as an openhearted, moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness cultivated by making a choice to pay attention on purpose.**

**MINDFULNESS IS NOT** about avoiding, suppressing, or controlling our mind, thoughts, and emotions.

**MINDFULNESS IS** about *choosing* to cultivate the capacity for learning, growing, healing, and transformation in the midst of our moments.

Practicing mindfulness can help us realise who we really are, to choose to live our lives as if they really mattered—because they do—more than we may think.

It can remind us that we can make choices to support greater health and sanity. That we can be supported by cultivating resources we all already have, most importantly is our capacity to pay attention, especially to the areas of our lives we have not been paying much attention to, have been suppressing, or ignoring. To choose to return to life in this living, breathing moment...again and again and again.

### **Mindful Nature Connection**

Mindfulness and nature connection go hand in hand. A distinction for me is that I can practice mindfulness anywhere, under any circumstances, even if I am inside and not able to access the outdoors. When I can access the outdoors, here are some mindful nature connection practices I find beneficial:

#### Sit Spot

Find a place to sit comfortably outdoors for at least 20 minutes.

If you cannot be outdoors, then a spot near a window can suffice and if you don't have 20 minutes, any time is better than no time.

Once you are comfortable, simply be still and notice.

The object of this practice is to pay attention to what is real and happening in your surroundings and your body in that period of time.

When your mind wanders into stories about the past or the future, simply notice that your mind has wandered, then gently return your focus to paying attention to the present moment.

#### Sensory Connection

Bringing attention and awareness to each of the senses one by one.

Sight: What can you see in this present moment?

Sound: What sounds can you hear?

Smell: What can you smell?

Touch: What sensations of touch can you feel on your skin (fingers touching earth, air or sun on skin)?

Taste: Breathing air in through your mouth, can you taste the air?

Then allowing all the senses to remain open as you continue to experience your place in nature.

### Mindful Nature Connect Walk

Bringing your attention into the present moment as you walk, notice how it feels to walk upon the Earth with each step. What do you notice within you and around you? What is in motion? What is still? When your mind wanders to another time, a story or to-do list simply redirect your awareness to what is in the present moment as you walk.

### Why does this matter and how to practise:

- Mindfulness and nature connection can improve our wellbeing and the wellbeing of the world around us.
- Making peace with the Earth begins with making peace with ourselves.
- The present moment is our place of power, the place where we can make the most impact.
- Caring for ourselves is caring for nature, caring for nature is caring for ourselves. The relationship between self and nature is reciprocal

There are many ways to practice mindfulness and nature connection. I share here ones I am most familiar with that have been most helpful for me.

If this is an area of interest for you, I encourage you to explore, listen to and trust in yourself to find the ways that work best for you. Being mindful to choose practices and techniques that are most sustainable and supportive for your way of living.

These techniques can then be woven into any activity we are engaged in indoors or outdoors. Whether we are working in an office, engaged in conversation with family or friends, climbing a mountain, or gardening in our backyard...we can bring the practice of mindfulness into our lives by being present with the moment, with ourselves, the place, and the other beings. Developing and supporting a mindful relationship with ourselves helps us have healthier relationships with all that surrounds us, including the natural environment.

### Additional readings, authors, teachers:

- Jon Kabat-Zinn – Coming to our Senses
- Richard Davidson & the Center for Healthy Minds
- Nature-Based Therapy: A Practitioner’s Guide to Working Outdoors with Children, Youth, and Families by David Segal, Kathryn Rose, and Nevin J. Harper
- Richard Louv – Last Child in the Woods
- Florence Williams – The Nature Fix
- Robin Wall Kimmerer – Braiding Sweetgrass
- Forest Bathing – Dr. Qing Li
- Amos Clifford (the Association of Nature & Forest Therapy)
- Dalai Lama
- Pema Chödrön
- Daniel Goleman
- Tara Brach
- Rick Hanson
- Joanna Macy & the Work That Reconnects
- Thich Nhat Hanh
- Eckhart Tolle
- Rhonda V. Magee

Please feel free to sing out if you have any questions or want to share any thoughts or experiences you may have and all the best to you and your practice ☺

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