



Meditating on Nature

What is meditation?

Meditation is the act of noticing what's around you. It is also a practice in **mindfulness**, where you notice what is going on in your mind. Meditation is just noticing what you feel right now in your body, head, and all around you. When you start thinking about stuff that happened yesterday or things that could happen tomorrow, just come back to noticing what's going on right now. That's the practice!

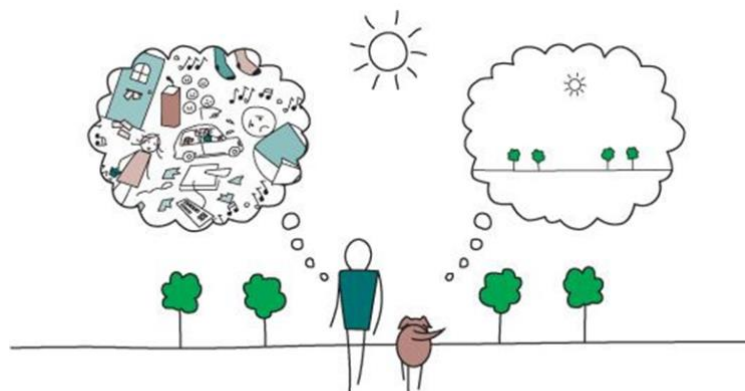


Why do people meditate?

There is a saying in meditation - "anywhere you go, there you are!" So often we spend the day thinking about things we did yesterday and wish we had changed, or focusing on what is going to come tomorrow, or in a week. We spend very little time focused on the present moment. People, including kids, meditate to help bring their focus to the present and calm down the mind. It's a way to relax your senses and appreciate the moment.

What does this have to do with exploring in nature?

Being mindful is an important part of being an explorer - it makes you more aware of your surroundings, and you will be amazed at how many more things you discover! Practicing meditation in nature will help you with your observations and connection with the world around you! It may be hard at first to focus, but every time you try, it gets easier and easier!



Mind Full, or Mindful?

Is your mind full or are you being mindful or the present?

Meditating in Nature

You will need:

- Help from someone in your family.
- A quiet place to sit outside.

Instructions:

Have someone in your household help you by reading this meditation outloud once you are sitting down in a comfortable position outside. A lot of people like to sit cross legged with their wrists resting gently on their knees.

Begin reading here *(speak slowly)*:

Close your eyes.

Begin to relax by taking a deep breath into your belly through your nose, then slowly exhale out of your mouth.

Keep breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.

With each exhale, relax more. Relax your shoulders away from your ears.

Let the muscles in your face relax. Let go of any tension in your jaw.

Relax your knees towards the floor if you are sitting cross-legged.

Begin to make your breath softer, breathing in and out through your nose now.

Start to become aware of what is around you.

You are now going to begin a mindfulness practice. Try your best to focus on each task and be aware of what is around you. If you ever get distracted. That is completely OK. Just come back to focusing on your breathing. At any time, you can raise your hand to tell me that you need a moment to focus on your breathing, before I read the next instruction.

Start by identifying 5 things that you can hear. Name each sound to yourself in your head. Maybe the sound of the birds, wind passing through the trees, or the buzz of insects.

(wait for 2 breath cycles then read the next line).

Now identify 4 things that you can feel. Maybe the ground underneath your sit bones, or the wind against your skin.

(wait for 2 breath cycles then read the next line).

Identify 3 feelings that you are having. Maybe you are tired, or hungry or anxious. Just become aware of your emotions.

(wait for 2 breath cycles then read the next line).

Identify 2 things that you can smell. Maybe the grass, the flowers, or someone barbecuing next door.

(wait for 2 breath cycles then read the next line).

Finally, identify 1 thing that you can taste. You can stick out your tongue and see if anything comes to this final sense.

(wait for 2 breath cycles then read the next line).

Take 1 final big exhale and inhale out your mouth.

Open your eyes.

Try somewhere new!

I hope that you enjoyed this meditation. It can be really exciting to try it in different environments – such as your backyard, then in the forest, then by a stream. Happy Exploring!



Thanks for conducting science with me for this Home Explorer activity from Umpqua Watersheds Education Program.
Join me for new activities posted every week!

- Ms. Robyn

