

Mindfulness Walk



Supplies

- Paper or notebook
- Pen, pencil, or other writing implement

Purpose/Concept

- Mindfulness is being very aware of each second of every moment. It is slowing down to feel the sun on your face, to notice each part of your body that moves when you inhale and exhale, it's noticing how your mouth moves when you're talking or laughing.
- Mindfulness can be a very helpful tool for people of all ages. It can calm nerves and anxiety, promotes relaxation, helps with focus and attention, and can be helpful at school, at home, and anywhere.

Process

- Take a walk around your home, your neighborhood, a park, etc.
- Every few moments pause and focus on one of your senses. You can focus on the same sense throughout your walk, switch between the senses as you go, or take the time to focus on each of the five senses during each pause.
 - What can you see?
 - What can you hear?
 - What can you smell?
 - What can you feel?
 - What can you taste?
- After each pause, take a moment to write down your experiences and what you sensed.

Discussion

- What did you notice when you were doing this activity?
- Were there things that surprised you?
- Was there something you experienced or noticed for the first time?

Extension

- Use your notes to create a drawing or painting of one of your pauses. Think about how you can represent the things you were experiencing through your senses other than sight!
- Give a family member a "tour" of one of your pauses. Describe to them the things that you were experiencing with your senses during that moment.

Nature Mandalas



Supplies

- Container to gather items from nature

Purpose/Concept

- Mandala means “circle” in the Sanskrit language and has been used in various eastern traditions for meditation and it speaks to the idea that we are all connected and part of something larger than ourselves.
- Mandalas can be found in nature: in flowers, the rings on the trees, snowflakes, spider webs, fruit, and many more examples.
- Creating a mandala or focusing on a mandala can be healing and relaxing. It also includes connection to the cycle of life.

Process

- Walk around your neighborhood or outside and collect items that you find along your walk (stones, sticks, litter, flowers, etc.) – be respectful of others and make sure not to collect something that belongs to someone else!
- When you’ve finished collecting, find a spot on the ground to create your mandala.
- You may want to start by creating the outer circle of the mandala, but you don’t have to! There is no correct way of making a mandala.
- Some people use repetitive shapes, designs, or colors in their mandala, others use unique shapes, designs, or colors throughout. It’s up to you.
- When you are finished with your mandala, you can leave it there for others to enjoy. Mandalas are intended to be temporary.
- You may want to visit your mandala occasionally to see how it has changed over time.

Discussion

- What was it like to create your mandala?
- Why/how did you choose which items to include?
- Does your mandala tell a story? Express a feeling? A hope?

Extension

- Draw a picture of your mandala or a series of pictures as your mandala shifts and changes over time in the natural environment.
- Teach someone else about mandalas and help them create their own mandala.
- Watch a time-lapse video of the creation and destruction of a sand mandala – part of Buddhist tradition: <https://tinyurl.com/y9ygnp2k> (google “sand mandala”)

Cairns



Supplies

- Collected stones or rocks

Purpose/Concept

- The word cairn means a “mound of stones built as a memorial or landmark.”
- You might have seen them on a hiking trail, at the beach, or as a sign that a person reached the summit of a mountain.

Process

- Gather stones of different shapes and sizes
- Balance them on top of each other to create a small mound or tower
- You can build your cairn in honor or memory of a special person
- Traditionally, cairns are built without the use of glues or adhesives – stacking the stones so that they stay balanced can take a lot of time and concentration!

Discussion

- What was it like to create your cairn?
- Does your cairn represent a special person? A memory? An achievement?
- Why do you think that cairns are traditionally built without glue or adhesives?

Extension

- Try building more complex structures like arches (see: <https://www.demilked.com/gravity-glue-stone-balancing-michael-grab/>).
- Use rocks to make a nature mandala.

Little Drifters



Supplies

- Sticks, leaves, bark, grasses, and/or other natural objects
- Optional: biodegradable cotton or hemp twine

Purpose/Concept

- Small floating objects made from found items in nature

Process

- Create a floating object using items found in nature. Your object might look like a boat or it might not!
- You can use grasses/nature materials or twine to connect different materials together, or your drifter might be as simple as a single leaf.
- When your drifter is complete, release it into a body of water like a river, stream, lake, or even a large puddle and watch it move on the currents.
- Optional: before you release your drifter, imbue it with a wish, hope, or a message by thinking it in your head or whispering it as you send the drifter off into the water.

Discussion

- What was it like to create your little drifter? What was difficult or easy about it?
- Where might the drifter end up? What do you think its journey will be like?
- Have you ever felt adrift or like you were caught up in events, feelings, or emotions that you didn't have control over? What was that like for you?

Extension

- Use the image or metaphor of drifters to release feelings or thoughts.
- Find other ways or items to release or send off:
 - Write down a fear, memory, message, etc. on a piece of paper and burn it in a campfire,
 - Make a wish or send a thought as you blow the seeds of a dandelion, etc.