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ACTIVITY 4: Mindfulness

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CHALLENGE

Have you ever taken a moment to enjoy sunshine on your face? Watched birds looking for worms in the grass? Listened to the wind in the forest? Time outdoors and in nature can be calming, fun and good for your wellbeing. You can also learn how to be mindful while you are spending time outdoors. Mindfulness is paying attention to the present moment. It is a great way to enhance your connection with nature. Read on and give it a try!

MATERIALS

You and a comfortable spot to see or be in nature.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

When you spend time in nature, you can experience a comforting space that invites you to be with your senses. If you slow down, and focus on your breathing, you can be in the moment. "Being in the moment" or "being present" just means that you are not distracted by anything other than what you are doing, seeing smelling and hearing right now. Practicing "being present" allows you to enjoy yourself while you learn about and interact with the natural world.

Here is an easy way to connect with yourself and your surroundings by slowing down and learning how to be in the present moment.

1. Find a comfortable place to sit outdoors, on your balcony, in your backyard or in nearby nature. It is great if you can find a place to be where you have something nice to look at, like a tree or a plant, or a forest.
2. Now you can try a fun mindful breathing technique called Chocolate Breath. Cup your hands like they are wrapped around a mug of warm hot chocolate.
3. Breathe in slowly like you are smelling the hot chocolate.
4. Blow out gently as if you are cooling off your hot chocolate, and maybe even cooling off your own hot emotions in a moment of frustration. Try to breathe out slowly so that you do not blow away all of your imaginary marshmallows.
5. Repeat this 5-10 times.

Once you have tried Hot Chocolate Breathing 5-10 times, try this next technique of Mindful Breathing:

1. Close your eyes and listen to the sounds of nature. *Relax your body and breathe in and out slowly.* Bring your attention to your breathing.
2. Where do you feel the air coming in and out of your body? Is your mind wandering? If so, then focus on your breathing. Remind yourself that trees release the oxygen we inhale and absorb the carbon dioxide we exhale. As we breathe, we are borrowing air before returning it to nature.

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REFLECT

Mindfulness is not only about noticing the things around us, it is also about noticing what is happening inside yourself - connecting with your body to notice and feel what is happening inside.

Did you notice a change in how you feel? Did you notice a change in your breathing? Is there anything else that you noticed about yourself while doing these activities?

EXTEND

Time spent being mindful outdoors builds resilience to stress, helps you be in tune with your emotions, and gives you a sense of place in the world. Try to spend at least 5-15 minutes a day outdoors practicing Mindfulness in Nature. You can also try a mindful walk, where you walk quietly, without talking, instead of sitting still.

Resource: <https://www.mindfulschools.org>