

Wellbeing Breaks: Directed Walk

Developed by the Sustainability Ambassadors in the Climate and Movement Cohort, the series of Wellbeing Breaks is intended to connect students to nature through movement of various kinds. If students are connected to nature even in brief moments like this, we hope they will feel more inspired to take sustainable action in their lives as well as promote it generally.

by Quinlan Cyr, Natasha Lim, & Patrick McCullough

Introduction:

In this break, you will take a directed, meditative walk in the area just outside this building to observe the nature that exists around us in an urban setting. Following the activity, we will briefly reflect on our observations. Our hope is that you can replicate this break in your own life as a way to destress and connect to nature.

Location:

Anywhere outside

Accessibility Accommodations:

Walking is not required, one could observe their surroundings from a stationary position. Allow participants to modify their participation in any way they require.

Dialogue Guide for Leader

Once outside and after Introduction has been read.

Walk around and spread out in this space.

Take a deep breath and feel the fresh air fill your lungs.

Breath

Look up. Take note of what is above you. Is it the trees? The sky? Do you see buildings?

Give participants a moment to reflect and observe.

Look down at the ground you are standing on. What is it made out of? Take a moment to think about the ground and its connection to the Earth.

Pick a direction and take fifteen steps.

What do you see around you? Are there plants? Can you touch them (gently)?

Look closely at the nature around you. How do you think different plants are connected?



Look for the nearest tree. Observe its bark. Let your eyes follow the web of branches all the way to their tips. Look at their leaves. Study their shape, their colour. What else is living in the tree? Animals, insects, birds?

Pick a new direction and walk another fifteen steps.

Look around you. How are the plants you are near now different or the same to where you were before? How many species of plants can you count? Can you name any of them?

If participants are engaged, you can repeat some of these steps again to prolong the activity.

Five Minute Reflection/Journal

Give students five to ten minutes to journal and reflect on their experiences. Here are some prompts:

This journal can be open ended. We find that writing can help direct your thoughts, but if you'd rather just think about it, that works too. We want you to reflect on the nature that you saw around you. Was there more or less biodiversity than you expected in an urban setting? Did moving about in a small area allow you to recognize new aspects of the nature that surrounds us at all times? How can you use this to feel more connected to the Earth in your daily lives?

Conclusions:

Allow students to share if they desire to do so.

Thank you for participating in our wellbeing break! We hope that this brief movement and reflection has grounded you and connected you to the nature of our campus (or wherever you are). We hope that you can repeat this break or something similar to it in your own lives at home. It is a great break from studying to stand up, step outside, and study the Earth.



Wellbeing Breaks: Guided Meditation

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by Quinlan Cyr, Natasha Lim, & Patrick McCullough

Introduction:

The purpose of this break is to slow down our lives and take a moment to reconnect with nature through a guided 15 minute meditation that incorporates movement flowing from within ourselves to our surroundings.

Location:

A garden on UBC's campus such as Nitobe, rose, or the botanical gardens or any other location with pleasant and calm surroundings. Ideally outside - undercover if it's raining.

Accessibility accommodations:

If we have a sign-up Google form, add a section regarding accessibility to see if anyone needs additional support. Otherwise, this break requires low effort and mobility.

Playlist:

If indoors - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AImuCtIokl0>

Guided meditation script:

15-minute timer begins

First, find a sitting posture that is comfortable for you and gently close your eyes if you feel comfortable to do so. Let yourself really rest into this posture, really land into the sense of your body sitting, noticing the sensations that let you know you're here, in the body.

Feel the connection of your body to the Earth. What does it feel like? The texture? Underneath your feet or your body? Are you sitting on a stone or rock? Grass? Are you leaning back against a tree? Sense how it feels in your body. Sometimes there can be a little sense of relaxation. Let this feeling come alive for you.



Notice what scents around you: Is the scent of spruce around you? What do you smell? Is it fragrant, floral, piney?

Now, begin to sense the movement around you. What can you hear? Is there a rustle of the leaves with the breeze of the wind? The sound of birds chirping? What do you hear in the motion, in the movement of nature? Imagine the trees moving, the sunlight shifting. Birds flying. Notice this motion, this movement, and let yourself feel it gently around you.

Sense your breath moving your body: another aspect of movement is in this inner nature. This breath connects your inner nature with outer nature. This breath that moves and fills you, and moves in your outer environment as well.

Sense how your being is a part of this natural movement. Resting in the breath, like resting in the swell of the ocean, rising and falling. Sensing, in your body, sensations like tingling, perhaps in the feet or the hands. Like ripples of the waves on the lake, or the pulsing of the heart. Feel this pulse and movement throughout your body.

Sense the change of temperature in your body, warm and cool. All of these changes are part of this natural movement, internally, externally. Sensing thoughts that rise and pass, like clouds rising and passing in the sky. Emotions, like the rhythm of day and night, or the seasons. We're resting in nature, this movement, internally and externally. Peaceful and relaxed, resting in the midst of movement and change.

Let yourself rest as best as you can in the sense of ease and being carried, being a part of this movement and change.

For the remaining minutes, let participants have a moment of silence to reflect and reawaken themselves.

Take a moment now to slowly open your eyes. Gently bring some movement back to your body as you stretch your muscles after this moment of stillness.

References:

Befriending eco-anxiety: A practice of deep adaptation <https://ethical.net/health/eco-anxiety/>
12-minute meditation to rest in the movement of nature
<https://www.mindful.org/a-12-minute-meditation-to-rest-in-the-movement-of-nature/>



Wellbeing Breaks: Art Outside

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by Quinlan Cyr, Natasha Lim, & Patrick McCullough

Introduction:

In this well-being break, we will aim to curate mindfulness through the art of sketching. Our end goal for this activity is to combine the therapeutic aspects of mindfulness, art, and nature, providing a meaningful, accessible, and cost-efficient experience for everyone involved. If you enjoy this activity, you can replicate it on your own time as a brief study break, etc.

Accessibility Accommodations:

While we do not anticipate that any modification will be necessary, please allow participants to modify their participation in any way they require.

Materials Needed:

Sketch pads

Pencils

Clipboards or a flat surface for sketching

Optional: Small containers for collecting natural items like leaves, flowers, or twigs. Only those that have already fallen on the ground. Do not instruct participants to harm plants in any way!

Location:

Find a peaceful outdoor spot: a park, garden, or even a quiet corner of your backyard. Ensure there's enough space for everyone to spread out comfortably.

Art Supplies:

Distribute sketch pads and paper to each participant. If you want, encourage them to collect a few natural items that catch their eye.



Set the Intention:

Begin with a brief mindfulness exercise. Ask participants to close their eyes, take deep breaths, and focus on the sounds, smells, and sensations around them. Set the intention for the activity: to mindfully observe and express the beauty of nature through art.

Sketching:

Provide each person with a pencil and ask them to sketch the natural elements they've collected or the scenery around them. Emphasize observation and detail. It is not about perfection but about capturing the essence, relaxing, and focusing on the natural world.

Reflection (optional):

After 15 minutes, gather everyone together. If time allows, invite participants to share their thoughts or feelings about the experience. What did they notice? How did it feel to express themselves through art in nature?

Clean-Up:

Ensure to collect all the art supplies and encourage participants to dispose of any natural items they collected respectfully.



Wellbeing Breaks: Scavenger Hunt

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Introduction:

Climate change has become a prevalent issue in nearly every aspect of life. As the change that is required to rectify these issues seems enormous, it can be very stressful to think about or take action against climate change. That said, taking notice of the natural world around us - whether in an urban setting or not - can be calming and also inspire us to take action.

This quick and engaging outdoor activity is designed to raise awareness about climate and nature by moving around in the environment. This scavenger hunt encourages participants to connect with their surroundings and discover the importance of preserving the environment.

Materials needed:

List of nature-related items or clues (included at the end of the document but write your own if you're feeling extra creative!)

Stopwatch or timer

Instructions:

Team Formation (if desired but not necessary):

Divide the participants into teams.

Setup:

Distribute the clues to individuals or teams. If you don't want to write the clues down, display them on the projector inside before leaving the building to allow participants to take a picture of the clues. They are attached at the end of the document.

Rules:

There are 10 minutes to find as many items as possible.

Items should be observed and recorded without causing any harm to the environment.

Whoever collects the most items on the list within the time frame wins.



Scavenger Hunt:

Start the timer and let the teams explore the area to find the specified items.

Reflection and Discussion:

After the 10 minute scavenger hunt, gather all participants for a quick discussion. Ask each team to share their experiences, what they learned, and how the activity relates to climate and nature conservation.

Recognition and Rewards:

Acknowledge the efforts of each team and reward the team with the most items collected. You can use small prizes or candy to recognize their achievements.

Conclusion:

After a set time, gather the teams for a debriefing session. Discuss the challenges, share experiences, and emphasize the key environmental messages learned during the activity. Feel free to end with this quote from Albert Einstein —“The most beautiful gift of nature is that it gives one pleasure to look around and try to comprehend what we see.”



Scavenger Hunt Clues

- A face on something that's not an animal.
- Something in your favorite colour.
- An interestingly shaped leaf.
- A flower in bloom.
- A bug.
- A plant that is not native to the region.
- A plant that is native to the region.
- A bird in flight.
- Nature prevailing over the built environment.
- A pebble.
- Something soft. Something hard. Something round. Something square.
- A plant that's taller than you and one that's shorter and one that's the same height.
- A squirrel.
- A seed or seedling.
- A puddle that forms with the rain.
- A plant planted by people and a plant that grew by itself.
- Something you could eat (but don't eat it!).
- An animal's home.
- Anything that shows harmony between the built and natural world.

