

Hello

Thank you for signing up to participate in these activities. They have been based on the principals of mindfulness, which has been defined as “paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.” It is hoped that the activities aim to help you connect to nature, which has been shown to increase wellbeing.

When starting the activities set aside some time, an hour is good, for yourself, so you can focus on your own wellbeing. You may want to do this with other members of your family, or alone. Whichever it is, let people know that this is your time. To help this, it is recommended that you turn off phones and computers and other distractions.

Find a space where you are comfortable, ideally outside in a garden, but by a window is good as well. Wherever you are, remember to follow government guidance on social distancing. There may be some simple resources that are needed for the sessions such as pen or paper. These are listed at the start of each activity so they can be gathered before you start.

Finally, a quick note on your wellbeing, which is very important, especially at this time. These activities are designed to increase your wellbeing. However, you are the expert on you – you know yourself, and if any of the activities make you uncomfortable or uneasy, stop. If you need extra guidance on your own wellbeing you can find this by visiting some of the following places:

- Livewell in Essex <https://www.livewellcampaign.co.uk/article-categories/mental-well-being/>
- Generic advice - <https://mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak>
- NHS links - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/>, <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/>
- NHS Apps - <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>
- Mind help lines - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helplines/>
- Samaritans - <https://www.samaritans.org/scotland/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>
- Current government guidance - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19>

Birds - Music

You will need

- Somewhere comfortable to sit, preferably outside in your garden. If you do not have a garden, by a window is good.
- Pens, pencils, paper
- If you have them, binoculars.
- Access to some nature inspired music such as
 - The Carnival of the Animals - XIII, The Swan: opus - Camille Saint-Saens (1886) performed by Seattle Youth Symphony from musopen.org
 - Swan Lake Op.20 - Act II Part 1 opus Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1875-1876) from European Archive; musopen.org
 - Flower Duet from Lakme (string quartet arr.) opus Léo Delibes (1883) performed by Quatuor Quatre Saisons from musopen.org
 - In Nature's Realm - OP.91.opus - Antonin Dvorak (1891); European Archive - from musopen.org

<p>Arrival activity</p>	<p>Senses</p> <p>Stop what you are doing and bring your attention to what is here and now. Ask yourself how you are. Bring your attention to explore your body and mind.</p> <p>Focus on what you can see, maybe think about the colours, the shapes, movement, the contours. What you see isn't important, you are just bringing your attention to your ability to see.</p> <p>What can you hear? What the noise is doesn't matter, you are just bringing kindness and curiosity to your ability to hear</p> <p>What can you feel? Think about what is next to your skin, your clothing, the air, your body, and how you feel it.</p> <p>Focus on your breathing. The sensations of your body as air flows in and out. Wherever you can feel your breath focus on there, you're your breath in your attention, not trying to change it or judge it, just being aware.</p> <p>Widen your attention from your breath, to your torso, then whole body, and finally whatever is around you.</p>
<p>Appreciate activity</p>	<p>Music</p> <p>Select a piece of music</p> <p>Make sure you are comfortable. If it feels right, close your eyes and focus on your breath for 3-5 breaths.</p> <p>Bring your attention to the music. How are the notes wound together, what does it make you feel? Just notice the sound. You are not judging or thinking about the music here. You are simply listening.</p>
<p>Focus on sounds</p>	<p>Listening</p> <p>Find somewhere to sit comfortably, preferably where you can see or hear birds. By a window inside is good, or out in your garden. You will need a pen and pencil. You may even want to bring a tea or coffee. If it feels comfortable close your eyes, then start by bringing your attention to your breath.</p> <p>Expand your attention out to what you can hear, tune into the noises. Don't worry about what they are, just listen. For this exercise there are no good or bad noises, they just are. When you feel you have tuned in to the environment then try creating a sound map. On a piece of paper you can draw what is around you. You may like to draw yourself as in the centre, then as you listen draw the sound from where it comes in relation to you. Each sound can be represented by different symbols, or drawing, or squiggles which you can make up, or if you prefer a word to describe the sound. It can be surprisingly hard.</p> <p>Especially trying to describe the noise in word or in pictures. You may end up with strange lines and squiggles as you try to capture the sound on paper!</p> <p>Spend as long as it feels comfortable doing this.</p>

Focus on nature	Bird Watch <p>Following on from the previous activity, open your eyes and now bring your attention to what you can see, again this is mostly about birds, but you may find something else to watch. If you have binoculars you may like to use them, but you don't have to. This activity is about choosing what you want to pay attention to. Maybe first watch what birds there are, focus on their colours and plumage. Then focus on a particular bird and what it is doing, expand your attention to everything in the area, and any behaviours of nature, or just stay tuned into their song.</p> <p>Ideally this will take 20 minutes or more, but it is good even if you can do this for 5 minutes, as it allows your body and the natural world to get used to each other and you start noticing more and more.</p>
Create	Sounds <p>Make a noise. You maybe musical, and if so spend a bit of time playing or singing something that you like. Otherwise, you can make any sound. Even tapping your teaspoon on the side of the mug! Bring your attention to what you can hear, to the way you are causing sound waves that travel to your ear.</p>
Assist and learn	<p>Set aside a bit of time to make your own contribution to nature. Today the focus is on birds. Maybe feed the birds, or put up a bird house, or find somewhere you can watch birds. Take some time to learn about some of the birds you can see around you. Maybe identify them. https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/birdwatching/ is a good place to start. You can also join other in a big breakfast bird watch – find out more at: https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw/join-gbw</p>