

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>

Invertebrates – Poetry

You will need

- somewhere comfortable to sit, preferably outside in your garden. If you do not have a garden, by a window is good.
- Pen, paper

Arrival activity	<p>STOP</p> <p>S – stop what you are doing, and bring your attention to here and now.</p> <p>T – take a breath – focus on your breathing, don't try to change it, just bring your awareness to your breath.</p> <p>O – observe – notice what is happening, within you, how are you feeling, what is your body doing? Where is your mind? Bring your attention to what is going on around you.</p> <p>P – Proceed – continue with the rest of the session</p>
Appreciate activity	<p>Poetry</p> <p>Select a poem such as those below. You may find some of the poems available online as audio.</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>Read the poem all the way through. Don't worry about understanding it yet. Think about how the initial reading makes you feel. Is it funny, serious, contemplative? Try reading it aloud. How does it feel when you speak it? It is easy to read out loud, or do you trip on up words? Are there any sounds that stand out? Bring your attention to the poems meaning. Is there something that means something to you now? Read it through again, if you want, or focus on a line, and think about how it is written, what does it mean? What does it make you feel? You are not judging or thinking about your poetry appreciation. You are simply experiencing.</p>
Focus on you	<p>Body scan</p> <p>Find somewhere to sit comfortably. 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>Start by bringing your attention to your toes, explore your toes, see if you can feel each one, are they cool, warm, moist or do you have no feeling at all? It doesn't matter what you feel, you are simply exploring what is there. When it feels right, expand your attention to your feet, then ankles, lower legs, thighs and pelvis. See if you can feel what is there inside and out. Spend as long as it feels comfortable doing this.</p>
Focus on nature	<p>Sit-spot</p> <p>Following on from the previous activity, open your eyes and now bring your attention to what is around you. We are going to do what is known as a sit-spot. This is both very simple and very hard. The aim is to open your senses to nature. Bring your attention to what you can hear, see, feel around you or even smell. How does the air feel on your skin, is there any movement – and insects or other animals? What plants are there near you? What colours are there? What does the earth feel like under your feet, or even fingers?</p> <p>Ideally a sit-spot lasts for 20 minutes or more, but it is good if you can do this for at least 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	<p>Write a poem</p> <p>Try writing a poem about what you have seen today. A haiku maybe a good place to start. These are poems with three lines, of 5, 7 and 5 syllables.</p> <p>For example, here's, A haiku about haikus To help write your own</p>

Assist and learn	<p>Set aside a bit of time to make your own contribution to nature. Today the focus is on insects. Maybe make a bug hotel, or simply create a log pile. Of course, the best thing you can do for insects if you have a garden is nothing. Just allow the grass to grow and the weeds to flower!</p> <p>Take some time to learn about some of the insects and other invertebrates you can see around you. Maybe identify them: https://www.buglife.org.uk/ is a good place to start. Each year there is a big butterfly count – see https://www.bigbutterflycount.org/</p> <p>Why not take part and start to identify the different kinds of butterflies around you.</p>
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Leisure

by William Henry Davies

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.

No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

Pied Beauty

By Gerard Manley Hopkins

Glory be to God for dappled things
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh fire-coal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

By William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Loveliest of Trees

A. E. Housman - 1859-1936

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.