

How to Notice Nature Using Mindfulness Techniques - *a Toolkit*



Noticing Nature

PAUSE, LEARN & CONNECT

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S. T. O. P.

MINDFUL STOP
—
Stop
Take a breath
Observe what is happening
Proceed with awareness

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Three Things

adapted from Chris Bergstrom

Take 3 deep breaths.

Notice 3 things you can see.

Notice 3 things you can hear.

Notice 3 things you can feel.

Finish with 3 deep breaths.

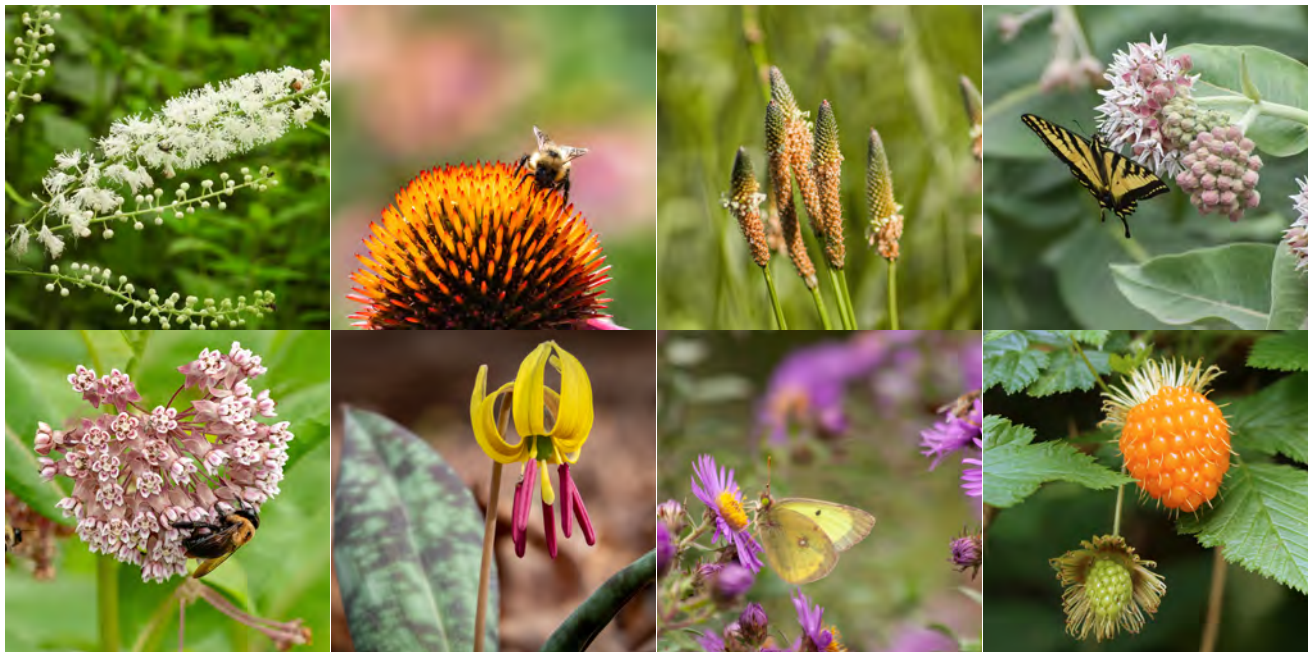


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Seeing with Fresh Eyes ... With the Eyes of a Beginner

- Move through your garden as if you are seeing it for the first time.
- What do you notice with fresh eyes?
- What do you take for granted but might marvel at if you didn't?
- How does your garden provide for you?
- Make a list of things you would find miraculous if you saw them anew.



Life is a Journey. So is a Labyrinth.



Labyrinth in Northwest Ohio, photo by Powers-Barker

A labyrinth might look like a maze from a distance, but closer inspection reveals that a labyrinth has a specific pattern and no dead ends. Unlike a maze that makes you concentrate and retrace your steps, the labyrinth is not a game or puzzle to figure out. Although labyrinths can follow different designs, the most common one has a single entrance and exit. This unicursal pattern is a single path that leads to a center and then back out. As the path winds back and forth, you turn in different directions, but it is not designed to be confusing. A labyrinth can be a tangible tool for mindfulness to heighten thoughts, reflection, prayer, meditation, or insight.

There is no right or wrong way

There is no right or wrong way to walk a labyrinth but there are some common practices. Walking a labyrinth can be done as a personal activity or with a small group. The time and space **before entering** the labyrinth can be used to take a deep breath, clear the mind of distractions, and possibly choose a topic, intention, quote, or mantra to focus on during the walk. This can be a time to quiet the mind and release any expectations. When **walking the labyrinth**, the act of placing one foot in front of another can be a metaphor for life. Move at your own pace. As mentioned, it is not a maze, and it is also not a race. Use the path to keep your mind in the moment. When you have **reached the center** take as much time as you want to focus on the moment. You might or might not have any new ideas or feelings. This can be a time to center or ground yourself with your intentions. When you have decided it's time to leave the center, **follow the path back** out. This walk out is symbolic for returning to daily life. **After exiting the labyrinth** some people choose to journal or take more time to focus on any thoughts, ideas, aspirations, inspirations, or feelings that have surfaced during the walk.

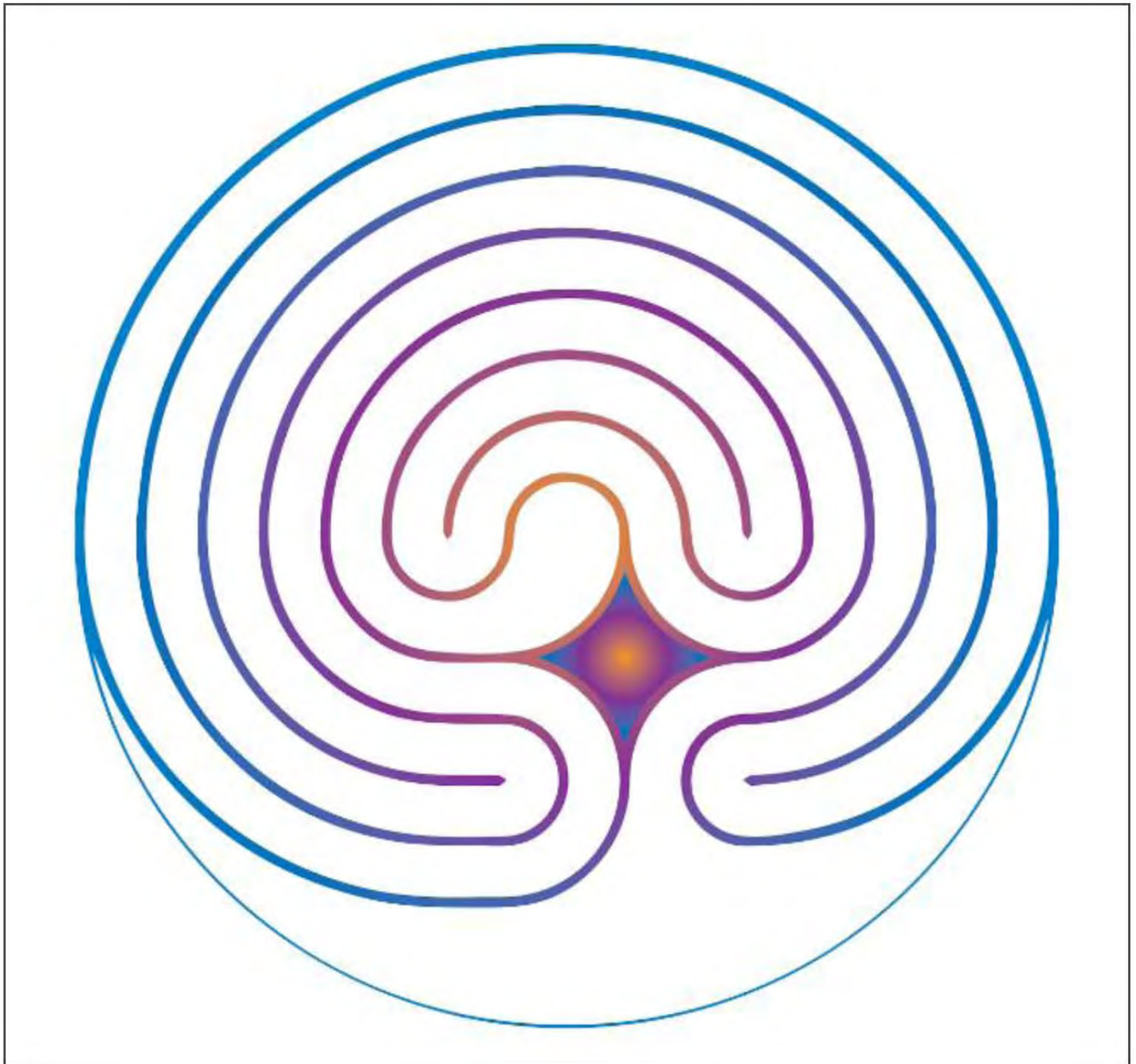
A labyrinth is a tool to help remember and understand that "Life is a journey, not a destination." Ralph Waldo Emerson. What type of labyrinth can you use to bring some mindful moments to your life?

- Is there a labyrinth near you? Check the World-Wide Labyrinth Locator online at labyrinthlocator.com
- Free app called Labyrinth Journey
- Download a copy of the paper labyrinth www.worldlabyrinthday.org/resources/finder-labyrinths

Full blog, additional photos and references can be found at go.osu.edu/labyrinth



Paper Labyrinth



Download a copy of this paper labyrinth www.worldlabyrinthday.org/resources/finder-labyrinths
Life is a Journey. So is a Labyrinth blog, and references can be found at go.osu.edu/labyrinth

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Easy Mindfulness Practices

Practice Focus to develop your skills to notice things large and small. Engage your senses one at a time as you experience something in nature. Choose a single activity and do it mindfully. For example, eat a tomato from your garden with full attention, noticing its taste, texture, and aroma. When distracting thoughts arise, let them drift away like clouds and gently return your focus to the moment. Be kind and patient with yourself—mindful focus takes practice.

Five Senses in the Garden reminds us to pause in any garden to notice 5 things we see, 4 things we hear, 3 things we feel, 2 things we smell, and 1 thing we taste (fruits/veg or something else safe if you are feeling adventurous). Repeat regularly. Practice in any natural space.

Stones - find flat stones in your yard and write a mindful words like “pause” or “breathe” on a them. Place them around your garden as a reminder to return your attention to the present moment.




~ MINDFULNESS PRACTICE ~

Breathing in Nature

One of the simplest ways to relax in nature is to go outside and practice slow, deep, conscious breathing. Meditate on the fact they you are inhaling the oxygen that the plants exhale, and they're inhaling the carbon dioxide that you exhale.

Practice the Three-Part Breath. Sit or stand in a relaxed position with an elongated spine. Fill up the belly with breath, then fill the rib cage, and allow the breath to fill your upper chest, even your collarbones. Then release the breath in the opposite sequence.

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Mindfulness Resources

Interested in learning more about mindfulness practices? Visit this site for links to resources, additional ideas, and references from today's mindfulness presentation.



go.osu.edu/MindfulNature

Here are other internet sources of mindfulness information.



Introduction to Mindfulness Factsheet — ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/hyg-5243



Nature Matters — warren.osu.edu/program-areas/family-and-consumer-sciences/healthy-people/nature-matters



7 Outdoor Mindfulness Activities, Exercises For Groups — healingforest.org/2020/11/27/mindfulness-activities-exercises-groups/

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– MINDFULNESS PRACTICE –

Benefits of Spending Time in Nature

Studies show that spending 2 hours or more a week in nature will significantly increase your health and well being. This can be accomplished over several visits or all at once.

- Increased feelings of calmness.
- Increased endorphin levels & dopamine production (promotes happiness)
- Restored capacity for concentration & attention
- Reduced symptoms of anxiety & depression
- Reduced irritability
- Lowered blood pressure & reduced cortisol (stress hormone)
- Reduced feelings of isolation

IT IS IN THE STILL SILENCE OF NATURE WHERE ONE WILL FIND TRUE BLISS.



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