

THE SUMMER MINDFULNESS CHALLENGE

Week 1—The Great Outdoors

With this wonderful weather it feels only appropriate that our first week is all about being outdoors. There are so many benefits of playing and being outside and research has shown that just being outside can reduce stress and anxiety, lower blood pressure and boost the immune system.

What can you hear?

Standing or sitting outdoors, take three deep breaths before gently closing your eyes. Spend time (a minute per year of age) noticing all the sounds around you. How many did you hear? Were they natural or man-made sounds? Were there any sounds that surprised you?

What does it feel like?

When out for a walk, I invite you to touch objects around you. Notice the different textures and feelings. Perhaps it's tree bark, a post, a leaf, a flower, the seat of a swing. What do you notice? Is it hot or cold, smooth or hard, bumpy or scratchy? Is there anything that surprises you?

Tree Pose

Without a doubt, tree pose is my most favourite pose for mind-body awareness. I simply cannot hold the pose if I let my mind be swept away by a thought! Find a point to focus on. Slowly lift up your foot, bend your knee, turn it to the side and let your foot connect at the foot, calf or thigh. Imagine your standing leg pressing into the ground like tree roots, press your foot into your leg and leg into your foot. Bring your hands together then slowly raise them above your head like branches reaching up to the sky. Then try on the other side!



Week 1—The Great Outdoors (cont...)

Nature & craft

There are so many amazing craft activities you can do with objects that you can collect from outdoors. Perhaps make a nature mandala, leaf impressions, a nature mural, or even a wind-chime using shells. I've saved lots of ideas on my Pinterest page!

Mindful walking

Taking a mindful walk is one of the best ways to relax and de-stress. There are so many different mindful activities that you can do during a walk. Try a simple mindful walking exercise by slowly and carefully walking and paying close attention to how your foot feels as it connects with the ground. Or set an intention for the walk such as to notice five different types of tree or to notice as many colours as you can.

Clouds in the sky

This timeless activity is fun for everyone from 2–100! Laying on your back, simply watch the clouds drift overhead. For younger children invite them to notice shapes, animals, faces in the clouds. For older children, invite them to attach a thought to each cloud and watch it float past.

Gratitude

I invite you to imagine being in your favourite place outside, or imagine your favourite thing from the natural world. Perhaps it's a park, woodland, beach, an animal or tree. Send thoughts of thanks and gratitude to this place or part of the natural world. Think about how special it is to have this in your life and send thanks and gratitude to the world for having these amazing things in it.

