

Observe Walk #3

Parents with Children up to age 12

We have all heard that living mindfully increases happiness, but what is mindfulness? Mindfulness is... experiencing and participating fully in the present moment, without judgment. One of the ways mindfulness can be developed is through observation and conversation about what it is your senses are telling you, especially when walking in nature.

It sounds fairly simple, but how is it done? Why is it that when I try to clear my mind, it fills with thousands of thoughts immediately? The answer is that mindfulness is a practice, just like practicing any other skill. When you do it more frequently, it becomes easier. Part of practicing mindfulness is not judging yourself for your imperfect mindfulness practice. When your mind wanders, simply and gently bring it back.

This Mindfulness Walk will help you to use the beauty of your natural surroundings. You may do this walk alone, or with others. Follow the directions or you can use it on any trail by reading the prompts whenever you want during your walk. Please read slowly, with pauses.



Put away distractions. Zip phones into pockets. Now take several deep breaths, breathing out as slowly as you can.

Turtle Pond - Find a spot a little way from others where you can gaze out at the pond Breathe in slowly, letting your breath out slowly, focusing on your body. Spend several silent moments of appreciation, noticing sights, smells, and sounds before you. As you gaze out onto the pond, think about one word that describes the pond best to you. Tell your walking buddy your word and why you chose it.

From the pond, take a **right** and follow it until you reach post **#21**.

Walk a little way down the trail. Pick up a leaf or stone. Carefully look at the object paying attention to all of the physical characteristics. Notice the texture....the color...the weight of it in your hand. Now pick up another leaf or stone. Look at the differences between them. Try to give your full attention to these observations.

Head towards the **right** down a grassy trail past the bluebird houses.

As you continue to walk, take a moment to listen to the sounds that your feet make as they hit the trail. Notice how your feet feel as they make contact with the ground. What are your arms doing? Has your breathing changed? Tell your walking buddy how the walk makes you feel – happy, relaxed, excited, tired?

Head towards the **right** and **continue down the road** through the prairie and past **Quarry Pond**.

As you are walking with your buddy, share with him/her your favorite color. Notice all the things along the trail – plants, trees, bugs, etc., that have your favorite color.

Continue past the gazebo and before you head back to the building take a moment to once again stop at **Turtle Pond**. Gaze out onto it again. Do you notice something new that you did not see the first time? Share that with your buddy.