

# Observe Walk #2

**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 walk is one way you can begin to bring mindfulness into your life.

This Mindfulness Walk will help you engage with nature and with loved ones, helping to bring you into the present moment. Do this walk alone, with your child, or with another companion.

The recommended trail is the **Four Seasons Trail**, but you can use it on any trail by reading the prompts whenever you want during your walk. Please read slowly, with pauses.



Find a spot a little way from others where you can gaze out at the pond. Put away distractions. Zip phones into pockets.

Sit with your parent or friend. Each of you take 3 deep breaths. Take 30 seconds sitting quietly trying to be aware of your senses (sight, sounds, smell, touch). Describe what you experience to your partner.

Tip: As you walk, use your senses to notice and experience colors, textures, smells, and the sounds around you...

Take the first left past the trailhead and heads towards the **prairie**.

Look at the prairie grasses blowing in the wind. Think about the person next to you, share one favorite story/memory of the person/people that came with you today. (30 seconds per person). Now for 30 seconds try to put those thoughts away and only focus on only what you see and hear in the prairie. Describe it to each other.

As you leave the prairie, take a right and head past the large white cedar tree. This tree is called the Arbor Vitae, the tree of life. Let your gaze be pulled up the trunk, and the branches to the sky. Adults and kids both have positive and negative thoughts about ourselves. Sometimes the negative thoughts outnumber the positive thoughts and lead us to feeling bad. Try taking one thought and changing it from "I'm not..." to "I wish..." In doing so, perhaps there is someone who can help us work on that thing. For example, if the thought is "I am not very good at basketball", change it to "I wish I was better at basketball". See if there is something you can do together work on that wish.

Sometimes we focus more on what we CANNOT do than what we CAN. While walking, take 1 minute for each of you to list all of the things that you CAN do with your group. At the end quickly describe how you felt after that sharing.

As you reach post #21, take a right turn back towards **Turtle Pond**. As you walk back towards the pond, pick up a pebble. In that pebble, as you walk, put something that has been holding you back or weighing you down. Future worries, past regrets, grief, loss.

When you arrive at Turtle Pond, look at the pebble in your hand. Pretend you can put that worry or regret into the pebble. When you are ready, drop the pebble into the pond.

As you get ready to leave take a moment to say thank you to your walking buddy. Saying "thank you" can be harder than you think, but is important for relationships. Choose one of the following  
Look the person in the eye and thank them for one thing they did for you in the past. Look the person in the eye and simply say "Thank You". In both cases, think about how it was to say those words and also to have those words said to you.

As you walk out of the Preserve think about your favorite part of the walk today.