



BLAZER
MINDFUL
Outdoor Experience

Wellness Journal

Slow down and connect with nature.



*Mindfulness
Meditations*



In nature, nothing is perfect and everything is perfect. Trees can be contorted, bent in weird ways, and they're still beautiful. ~ Alice Walker

Today's exercise is not about covering a lot of miles. In fact, let's see just how slowly and mindfully we can put one foot in front of the other. We have nowhere to run off to and social media can wait. Look around you and find a tree. You could be in an urban area or in the middle of the forest. Just focus on one particular tree. Move closer. And then closer still. Before you reach out a hand to feel bark, imagine what the tree will feel like. Will the bark be rough? How would that feel? Will the tree feel warm or cold? What would that feel like? Allow yourself to imagine the sensations that would arise if you simply touched the tree.

Now send your attention to the whole of the tree. What can you see? Are there exposed roots? Is the tree reaching straight up towards the sky or does the trunk curve to one side? Does he have many branches or just a few? Are there places on the tree that look as if it has a scar or lost a limb? Is the tree healthy and thriving? What can you observe about the tree? Begin to widen your gaze. Are there more trees that you can see? Assess them in the same way.

Walk slowly and mindfully, sending your awareness and attention to a handful of trees.

Observe them before you physically touch them. Perhaps you can find a tree friend to sit with for a few moments. Feel free to lean against the trunk. Touch any exposed roots that you see. Take a deep breath in through your nose and take in the fragrances and scents that you smell.



Read the following poem by Ram Dass and give yourself a moment to understand and appreciate his words, and then spend a few moments in silent mindful meditation noting phrases that stood out to you as you read:

When you go into the woods and you look at trees, you see all these different trees... and some of them are bent, and some of them are straight, and some of them are evergreens and some of them are – whatever. And you look at the tree, and you just – allow it. You appreciate it. You see why it is the way it is, you sort of understand that it didn't get enough light, and so it turned that way, and you don't get all emotional about it, you just allow it. You appreciate the tree. The minute you get near humans, you lose all that, and you're constantly saying, "You're too this," or "I'm too that," – that judging mind comes in. And so I practice turning people into trees, which means appreciating them just the way they are.

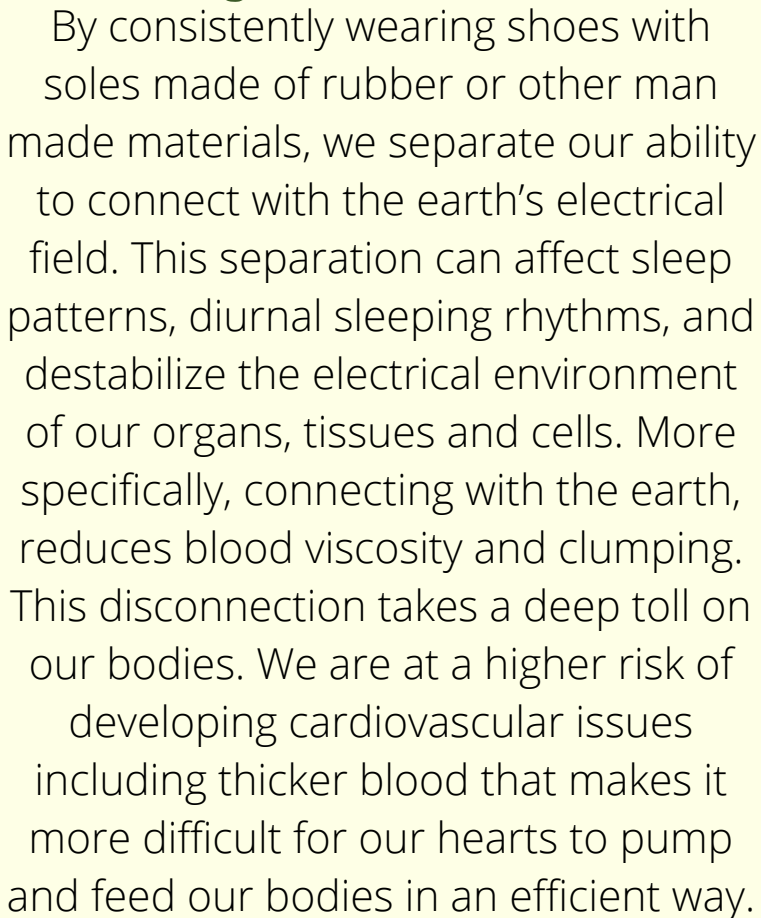
Call back in the images and feelings associated with each tree that you spent time with on your walk. Spend a few more moments looking at the tree that you are currently spending time with and continue to notice any imperfections that you noted earlier. How can you see your own imperfections in the same way that you noted the ones in the trees? How can you practice turning people into trees?

YOU ARE GROUNDED

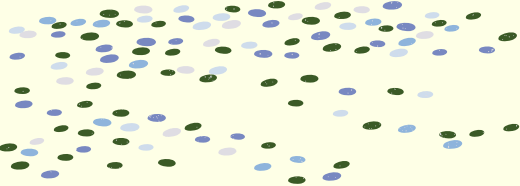
Nature provides a multitude of opportunities to see, smell, taste, feel and hear our way into a deeper meditative state.

There is a belief that humans are of nature and not separate from it. In his book, *The Biophilia Effect*, Clemens G. Arvey states that “not only are we a part of nature, but nature is a part of us. The boundaries are blurred, and being human does not stop at the surface of the skin”. Our human bodies benefit in a multitude of ways by being in contact with the earth.



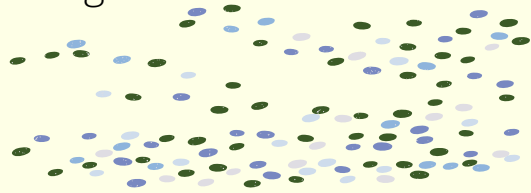


By consistently wearing shoes with soles made of rubber or other man made materials, we separate our ability to connect with the earth's electrical field. This separation can affect sleep patterns, diurnal sleeping rhythms, and destabilize the electrical environment of our organs, tissues and cells. More specifically, connecting with the earth, reduces blood viscosity and clumping. This disconnection takes a deep toll on our bodies. We are at a higher risk of developing cardiovascular issues including thicker blood that makes it more difficult for our hearts to pump and feed our bodies in an efficient way.



Studies have shown that “the ground's abundant free electrons are able to enter the body, which is electrically conductive. Through this mechanism, every part of the body could equilibrate with the electrical potential of the Earth, thereby stabilizing the electrical environment of all organs, tissues, and cells”.

Spend at least 15 minutes a day over the course of the next few days with your bare feet connected to the earth. This simple process of grounding, allows the earth's free electrons to enter your body and give you the reset that you feel that you need. Pay attention to how you mindfully move throughout your days. Have your sleep patterns changed at all?



MY



WELLNESS




JOURNAL

THE HEALING POWER OF WATER

*Water does not resist. Water flows. When you plunge your hand into it, all you feel is the caress. Water is not a solid wall, it will not stop you. But water always goes where it wants to go, and nothing in the end can stand against it. Water is patient. Dripping water wears away at a stone. Remember that, my child. Remember that you are half water. If you can't go through an obstacle, go around it. Water does. ~ Margaret Atwood, *The Penelopiad**


Find a comfortable place near water. Perhaps it is outside while it is raining or by a creek or river. Maybe the best you can do today is to be near a puddle or simply a glass of water. Whatever you choose, send your awareness to your breath and inhale and exhale deeply with your eyes closed. As thoughts come and go, allow them to do so. Cling to no one thought. If you get off track, simply turn your attention back to your breath. Allow your breath to begin deep in your pelvis and let it flow all the way up to your collar bones before letting it exhale back down to your pelvis. Imagine that is a wave cresting up and then receding back down within your body.





Reread today's entry about water by Margaret Atwood, and then spend a few moments thinking about how and what that means to you personally. How can you be more like water? What are you grateful for when it comes to water? Are you grateful for the ocean or rain? For places to swim or clean water to brush your teeth? What are your personal experiences that you connect with water? When you think about your connection to water, where do you feel it in your body? Do you become more relaxed through the face and shoulders? More at ease as you connect with the flow and ripple of water? Identify any feelings, thoughts, or physical signs within your body. Spend a few moments to write them down on the next page.

At any time during your writing, send your attention to whatever water is in front of you. Does looking at the water allow your thoughts and gratefulness for it to increase? If so, why and how? Use simple words and phrases to explain your connection. If you have a fear of water for any reason, name the fear here and begin to reflect on ways that you still are able to enjoy water in its most simplistic form.





Now close your eyes and imagine yourself diving or jumping into a body of water. How does the water feel on your skin? How do you feel within the water? Do you feel lighter? Do you feel more free or liberated? Refreshed? Spend a few moments visualizing yourself in the water and then reflect on it here.

Before you conclude your exercise for the day, look at the water and simply say “thank you”. Allow yourself to be mindfully aware of your gratefulness for the water. As you move about your day, notice if you are more aware of water around you. Savor each sip of water that you drink. Note ponds and lakes that you may pass by. Take a moment in the shower or bath today to appreciate the cleansing properties available to you.



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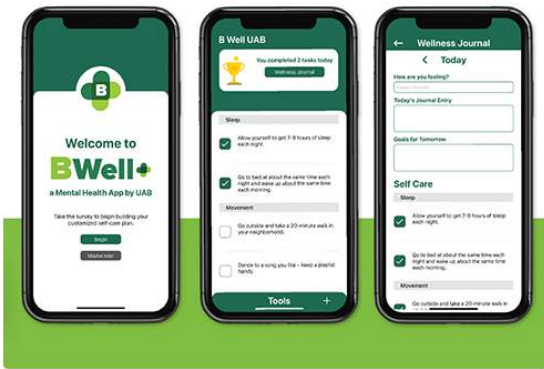
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RESOURCES



DOWNLOAD B WELL FROM THE APP STORE OR GOOGLE PLAY.

B Well helps students easily access resources on mobile devices and build a self-care plan that encourages healthy habits. Self-care plans in the app are tailored to each student and focus on good habits in sleep, movement, nutrition, routine and resiliency, and users can create private habit checklists and wellness journals to monitor their health journey. Plus, B Well includes self-help tools that put mental health services, mindfulness resources and related campus events at your fingertips.

BECOME A PROMOTER OF WELLNESS

Wellness Promotion coordinates the Promoter's of Wellness (POW) Peer Educators. To learn more about the POWs, follow us on Instagram and take CHHS 426. CHHS 426 is a peer education course with a focus on self-care. Students who complete this course are eligible to apply to become a POW, which is a paid campus position.

CREDIT

All photos and mindful experience exercises were provided by Ashley Clarke, UAB Alum.



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