



# Connect to the Natural World: Practices for Daily Connection

Note: [Click here to submit your work anonymously](#) for your mentors to read. This will help us improve our program for future students and track your volunteer hours, which will be added to your certificate at the end of the program.

## Purpose:

To discover daily practices for strengthening our connection and relationship to the natural world and ourselves.

*“To develop earth-connected, or ecological, consciousness we move beyond the perceptual limitations of the human-created level of the world that is foremost in most of our minds and experience in Western culture. We expand our sense of self and awareness to include the realm of the life-world: A level of knowing that emanates from parts of our bodies and brains that are subconscious most of the time. (Elizabeth Meacham, Earth Spirit Dreaming, p. 58-59)*

## Table of Contents

<a href="#">1. Connect to the Natural World: Practices for Daily Connection Introduction</a>	3
<a href="#">2. Earth-Connecting: Find and Return to Your Sit Spot</a>	11
<a href="#">3. Unstructured Time and Musing</a>	17
<a href="#">4. Earth Connecting: Small Moments in Nature</a>	19
<a href="#">5. Earth-Connecting: Connecting Our Bare Skin to the Earth (Earthing)</a>	21
<a href="#">6. Earth-Connecting: A Grounding Meditation</a>	25
<a href="#">7. Earth-Connecting Through Art and Creativity</a>	26

# 1. Connect to the Natural World: Practices for Daily Connection Introduction

## Introduction:

This guide will introduce you to some key concepts and perspectives before offering you an opportunity to practice connecting to the Earth in your daily life! Your goal will be to start small and complete the practice daily for at least 2 weeks, and to notice any changes in how you feel. When it comes to practicing a connection to nature, it is important to find ways in our daily lives that not only help us connect, but also help to build a habit of connecting. Over time, we train our body and mind to connect deeper and more automatically, while expanding our sense of connection and identity with the world. A deep connection will not only empower your changemaking work and give you more energy to do it, it will also enhance your life, your health and how you feel more generally.

## How Connecting to Our Ancient Senses Can Bring Us Good Health and A New World:

Within all life is a consciousness seeking to grow, complexify and find harmony to survive and thrive -- an essential force inside all beings seeking to protect, advance and enhance the continuation of life. This is why the very first bacterial organism, which appeared on Earth some [3.5 billion years ago](#) (LiveScience, 2011), was able to eventually break into the [8-10 Million species](#) (CAS, 2011) which have lived on Earth (though there is [debate](#) this number could actually be closer to 1 Trillion (ScienceDaily, 2016)). Humans are part of that story -- we came out of nature, not into it. As we evolved, we developed senses and abilities to survive and flourish in the complex interconnected web of nature. We are meant to connect to nature through all five of our senses, and when we do, we experience the well-being of mind, body, emotion and spirit. At the root of our relationship with nature is the same consciousness which drove Earth's earliest life-forms to self-organize in complexity to survive and thrive through evolution. Let's look at some examples of our ancient, Earth-connecting senses and how they bring us wellness, as explored by Florence Williams in her book [The Nature Fix](#) (2017).

Walking through the forest (known as Forest Bathing, or Shinrin Yoku in Japan) has been shown to reduce stress and anxiety, decrease sympathetic nerve activity, blood pressure and heart rate (Williams, p. 23).<sup>1</sup> Forest Bathing, “based on ancient Shinto and Buddhist practices, is to let nature into your body through all five senses.” (Williams, P.19). Check out [research](#) from *Forest Bathing Central* on the ways spending time immersed in or with nature are beneficial to our body, mind, emotions and spirit.

Through sight of nature alone, we experience benefits too. In studies where participants simply looked at images of nature (as compared to urban images), they found higher alpha brain waves, which are associated with relaxation, meditation and increased serotonin (a happiness neurotransmitter) (Williams, p. 26).<sup>2</sup>

Our nose and body respond to the aromatic essential oils produced by plants and trees such as evergreens called Phytoncides -- Terpenes, pinenes, limonenes for example. Among many benefits, these have been shown to reduce heart rate, blood pressure and stress indicators like cortisol in the body. In one study, they found participants exposed to Hinoki Cypress oil in a hotel room experienced a 20 percent increase in Natural Killer (NK) immune cells<sup>3</sup> and 40 percent when having spent three days in nature<sup>4</sup>. NK cells are a white blood cell, which are part of our

---

<sup>1</sup> “To prove that our physiology responds to different habitats, Miyazaki’s taken hundreds of research subjects into the woods since 2004. He and his colleague Juyoung Lee, then also of Chiba University, found that leisurely forest walks, compared to urban walks, deliver a 12 percent decrease in cortisol levels. But that wasn’t all; they recorded a 7 percent decrease in sympathetic nerve activity, a 1.4 percent decrease in blood pressure, and a 6 percent decrease in heart rate. On psychology questionnaires, they also report better moods and lowered anxiety.” (Williams, p. 23)

<sup>2</sup> “When subjects were hooked up to an EEG brain scanner, when viewing pictures of nature scenes, as opposed to utilitarian urban buildings, they showed higher alpha brain waves, associated with relaxation, meditation and increased serotonin. In another experiment, he stressed out 120 students by showing them movies of bloody accidents in a woodworking shop. He knew they were distressed because he measured their sympathetic nervous activity- the sweat glands on their skin, their heart rates and their blood pressure. Afterward, some students were assigned to watch a ten-minute video of nature scenes and some to watch videos of urban scenes, from a pedestrian mall to cars on the road. The results were dramatic: within five minutes, the brains-on-nature returned to baseline. The brains-on-built-environment recovered only part way -- as indicated by those nervous system measures -- even more than ten minutes later.” (Williams, p. 26)

<sup>3</sup> “To test the phytoncide theory, Li locked thirteen subjects in hotel rooms for three nights. In some rooms, he rigged a humidifier to vaporize stemp oil from hinoki cypress trees, which are common in Japan; other rooms emitted eau-de-nothing (...) The cypress sleepers experienced a 20 percent increase in NK cells during their stay, and they also reported feeling less fatigued. The control group saw no changes.” (Williams, p. 29)

<sup>4</sup> Scientists brought a group of middle aged businessmen into the woods in 2008. For three days, they spend a couple of hours each morning hiking. By the end, blood tests showed their natural killer cells had increased 40

immune system -- they protect us from disease agents and send self-destruct messages to tumors and virus-infected cells (Williams, p. 27-28). Coniferous essential oils have also been shown to fight atopic skin diseases, mitigate stress and symptoms of asthma (Williams, p. 65). Aside from plants, humans can detect Geosmin, a soil aromatic, equivalent to seven drops in a swimming pool, an aromatic compound of soil organisms like streptomyces, which are key to antibiotics. They reflect an evolutionary adaptation that allowed our ancestors to find water (Williams, p. 64).

Our ears and brains also evolved to benefit from the sounds of nature. [One study](#) (Praag et al. 2017) showed exposure to sounds of nature positively activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for rest, relaxation and digestion ([Science Daily](#)). Urban sounds on the other hand, like trains and traffic have been shown to stress our sympathetic nervous system, which is associated with stress and survival (Williams, p. 88).<sup>5</sup>

Even simply touching the Earth with our bare skin (“Earthing”) has been shown to produce a whole slew of health benefits, including reduced inflammation, healing of disease and sickness and clarity of mind. It is suspected this is because by connecting our skin to the Earth, we connect our body’s own electrical circuit to it, which stabilizes the electrical charges in our body. This happens through “grounding” (similar to how electrical wiring in a house must be connected to the Earth for safety) to the Earth’s own electromagnetic charge. Doing so clears electron deficiencies in our cells, which can cause inflammation and therefore disease. Watch [Earthing Documentary](#), or read [Earthing](#) by Clint Ober, Stephen Sinatra and Martin Zucker.

Since we have evolved from nature, as nature, and from a life-force consciousness seeking to grow, complexify and thrive, we now possess many ancient ways to positively connect to Earth for greater health and well-being. The greater the

---

percent. Moreover, their boost last for seven days. A month later, their NK count was still 15 percent higher than when they started. In contrast, during urban walking trips of the same duration, NK levels didn’t change. (Williams, p. 28)

<sup>5</sup> “In fascinating studies, people have been hooked up to electrocardiogram monitors while sleeping through plane, train and traffic noise. Whether or not they woke up, their sympathetic nervous systems reacted dramatically to the sounds, elevating their heart rates, blood pressure and respiration. In one study that lasted three weeks, the subjects showed no biological signs of habituating to the noise, and in another study that lasted for years, the biological effects only got worse.” (Williams, p. 88)

connection, the healthier we become on all levels.

Through dedicated practice, we can over time connect more automatically to the natural world around us, we get access to all the benefits our physiology gives to us when it senses a connection (thanks evolution!) and we find a greater sense of connection to nature. This is especially important, for those of us who live in cities or urban built environments with less nature around us, if any at all.

How disconnected are we from the natural world today, especially those of us who live in a city? We are most often connected to our technology, screens and the virtual world. We spend more time inside built spaces for our jobs, school, and clubs. We rarely watch the food we eat grow, it appears in the store already grown, picked, washed and ready to put through the computerized till to pay for. Since the industrial and technological revolutions, we have been moving further and further away from our natural connection with Earth and the life-world (living things). Our culture, economy, politics and society more generally reflects this departure from an earth-connected society.

It is easy to see the damage our disconnected relationship is causing to the natural world. Acknowledging the nature of our interconnected relationship to Earth and the dependency of those relationships to keep us healthy and alive, we realize how the damage to our ecosystems and climate is actually self-destructive. If disconnection is what created our situation on Earth, then the creating the desired world we imagine requires us to heal our relationship to the Earth on all levels of our experience as individuals and society. Simply practicing your connection as an individual is doing work to heal the collective expression of our relationship with Earth. A society is made of many individuals and shared cultural values. As members of the society begin to shift in values, behaviour and relationships, so too does the collective they are a part of. The social, political and economic structures of our world begin to organize into different forms over time, in the same way that nature self organizes and complexifies in response to its environment over time.

*“To change the world, most, if not all, of us will need to commit to an earth connecting practice of some sort, because while culture is expressed outside of us, it originates within and among us in the embodies psych-spiritual fabric of community” (Elizabeth Meacham, P. 37)*

*“As we come to find our fulfillment and connection through connection with Earth systems, and our communities grow to define meaning, status, belonging and well-being in the context of connection rather than a model of use and consumption, we develop the emotional and spiritual ground necessary to transition to an earth-honouring global civilization. (Elizabeth Meacham, P. 58)*

An emergent strategy, according to Adrienne Marie Brown, is a strategy for change that recognizes how the complexities of life have emerged over time through changes in small parts that make up the whole. “[E]mergence notices the way small actions and connections create complex systems, patterns that become ecosystems and societies. Emergence is our inheritance as a part of this universe; it is how we change. Emergent strategy is how we intentionally change in ways that grow our capacity to embody the just and liberated worlds we long for” (*Emergent Strategy*, p. 3).

We can work toward this world of connection by employing “ecomindfulness” techniques to help us live deeply and consciously with our ecology in our personal lives (Elizabeth Meacham, p. 24). These practices can help us develop what Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess calls the “ecological self.” The ecological self means expanding our sense of self beyond our body and mind to include all of the natural world. The premise here is that everything in the natural world, including our bodies and minds, are interconnected and defined by being in relationship, rather than being separate. Imagine the shifts in values and behaviour in our world if we collectively began to identify in this way. This would be the very opposite of the common beliefs and values in our world, which are dominated by a view that we are separate from one another and the natural world. Check out the Deep Dive section below if you’re interested to learn more.

*“When we cultivate mindfulness of the life-world, and our place in it, we shift from focusing on the world as objects to focusing on relationships and interconnection between beings and things. We come to hold as a daily aliveness- through study, contemplation and practice- our relationship with one another and with all of life on Earth. As we engage in this transformation of our self-perception, the felt experience of separateness begins to fall away. As we come to feel the depth of our intimate connection with all of life, our experiences and our actions begin to radically change.” (Elizabeth Meacham, P. 72)*

**Instructions:**

Visit the practice *Earth Connecting: Small Moments in Nature* in the guide below. Complete this simple practice every day in whatever way works for you for two weeks.

Throughout these two weeks, be sure to journal or take a note in your phone to keep for later if you experience anything new or different in your life as you practice. At the end of the two weeks, write a short journal entry on your overall experience of performing a daily practice. But don't let your commitment end there -- do your best to continue the practice, which should be easier now that you've built a habit. The longer we practice consistently, the more benefits we will get back!

**Deep Dive:**

The links below are complementary resources for you to explore topics of interest in greater depth.

*Areas of Academic Study and Concepts:*

- [The Ecological Self](#) (Wikipedia)
- [Ecosophy](#) (encyclopedia.com)
- [Ecofeminism](#) (Science Direct)
- [Eco Spirituality](#) (encyclopedia.com)
- [Deep Ecology](#) (Ecospherics)
  - [Foundation for Deep ecology](#)

- [Environmental Ethics](#) (Science Direct)
- [Ecopsychology](#) (Wikipedia)
- [Ecophysiology](#) (Science Direct)
- [Ecophenomenology](#) (Wikipedia)

Einar Strumse, THE ECOLOGICAL SELF: A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON ANTHROPOGENIC ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE European Journal of Science and Theology, June 2007, Vol.3, No.2, 11-18

<http://www.ejst.tuiasi.ro/Files/10/11-18Strumse.pdf>

### References:

Adrienne Marie Brown (2017) *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*, AK Press, ISBN: 978-1-84935-260-4

Elizabeth E. Meacham (2020), *Earth-Spirit Dreaming: Shamanic Ecotherapy Practices*, Findhorn Press. ISBN: 978-1-62055-987-1

Forest Bathing Central (2017), *Forest Bathing Studies, Why You Need to Start Today*. Web. Retrieved from <https://www.forestbathingcentral.com/forest-bathing-studies/> Sept 30, 2020

Gould van Praag, C., Garfinkel, S., Sparasci, O. et al. (2017) Mind-wandering and alterations to default mode network connectivity when listening to naturalistic versus artificial sounds. *Sci Rep* 7, 45273. <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep45273>

Science Daily (2017) It's true: The sound of nature helps us relax, *Science Daily*, web. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/03/170330132354.htm> Nov 11, 2020



LiveScience (2017) What Was the First Life on Earth? Live Science, Web.  
Retrieved September 17, 2020  
<https://www.livescience.com/57942-what-was-first-life-on-earth.html>

CAS (2011) How many species on Earth? California Academy of Science, Web.  
retrieved from  
<https://www.calacademy.org/explore-science/how-many-species-on-earth>  
on November 11, 2020

Williams, Florence (2017) [\*The Nature Fix: Why nature makes us happier, healthier and more creative\*](#), W. W. Norton & Company, New York

Science Daily (2016) Earth may be home to 1 trillion species, Science Daily,  
Web. retrieved from  
<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/05/160502161058.htm> Nov 11,  
2020

Ober, Clint. Sinatra, Stephen. Zucker, Martin. (2014), [\*Earthing\*](#), Basic Health  
Publications

[\*The Earthing Movie: The Remarkable Science of Grounding\*](#) (Full  
Documentary), Youtube

## 2. Earth-Connecting: Find and Return to Your Sit Spot

*“You didn’t come into this world. You came out of it, like a wave from the ocean. You are not a stranger here.” (Alan Watts)*

**Purpose:** Find and return to a place in or with a view of nature that you can access easily and return to often for a period of weeks or months.

### Introduction:

In today’s world, we often talk and experience nature as something outside ourselves, separate from our daily lives, that we visit when we can. However, our human brains and bodies evolved through a deep connection with the natural world and as an element of the natural world. Would we say a spruce tree, a living organism, evolved *with* nature over time? The spruce tree is nature and evolved as nature. Humans evolved as nature in the same way. In earlier times, almost all of our sensory stimulation came from cultivating deep knowledge of birds, plants, trees, animal tracking, wilderness survival skills, and the stories of our elders to pass on the learned experiences of our ancestors, which allowed them to survive and thrive in the natural world we came out of. This means that for thousands of years as [hominids](#), our entire being - our brain, body, nervous system, mind, etc- has been evolving to live and function best in the natural environments we’ve been a part of.

Human bodies have been sculpted through evolution to thrive in our interaction with nature, so much so that many of these processes are automatic! Consider if you’ve ever practiced something for a period of time, you watched your skills, knowledge, abilities and body grow to do that activity easier, more efficiently, more skillfully and more automatically. This is thanks to our body and brains ability to learn and be programmed like an organic computer. Now, imagine if you practiced an activity over thousands of years. Do you tell your body when you are hungry and that you need food, or does it tell you you are hungry and compel you to seek food? The response in the body, mind and emotion to hunger are one of the many ‘programs’ in our DNA that come from our long evolutionary history. Spending time with nature activates all the natural systems of our body and brain that we evolved

to have, to survive and *thrive*. And, through practicing connection often, we program our bodies for good health.

Some research-based benefits of spending time in Nature:

- Stress reduction
- Reduced emotions like sadness and anger Increased positive emotions
- Lower blood pressure
- Strengthened Immunity
- Heightened and improved attention
- Improved memory and focus
- Increased self-esteem and self-discipline

Check out this short video by Brian Mertins, [Nature Mentoring](#). Also check out [research](#) from Forest Bathing Central on the ways spending time immersed in or with nature are beneficial to our body, mind, emotions and spirit. Find more at [Nature Mentoring](#).

### **What is a Sit Spot?**

A sit spot is a place in nature that you enjoy, visit regularly, and where you can spend time being slow away from distractions of your busy life. In our sit spot, we cultivate awareness of our senses and the rhythms of the natural world, reflect and process our life events, breathe and quiet the mind, or even take a nap! We allow nature to calm our nervous system through our natural sensibilities.

*“By choosing one place outside that you visit over and over again, it teaches you to develop the most ancient parts of human awareness and gradually acquire enhanced sensitivity to nature. With practice, this routine will facilitate a complete transformation of your ability to observe patterns through all aspects of the outdoors and even in your everyday life.” (Nature Mentoring)*

Check out [Nature Mentoring's](#) complete guide to a sit spot!

## **Where Do I Find My Sit Spot?**

Your sit spot should be somewhere you can return to easily and often for the greatest benefits. It is also important that you choose a place you enjoy, where you feel safe, comfortable and undistracted (as much as is possible). This means turning off, silencing or putting away your phone or other technology when in your sit spot. Try going for a walk around your neighborhood, yard, a local park to find a place you'd like to return to. If you find a spot that feels safe and comfortable, that is a sign the space is inviting you to be in it. If you find a spot but something feels 'off,' or you see signs of danger, find another spot instead. You might even ask the space if you can make it your sit spot and it will answer you through your inner feelings. Keep in mind, this place should be somewhere you can return to in different types of weather, not just sunshine! So take yourself on a walk and find that sit spot! Here are some examples of sit spots:

- An isolated bench in a park with life and natural objects such as a single or many trees, a creek, a garden, shrubbery, a field.
- An elevated place with a view of nature.
- Under a tree in a park, your yard, or next to a field.
- A place you can observe a natural landscape, like a field, tree-line at the beach, a river, lake or pond.
- A garden space in your backyard, on your balcony, or in an indoor plant space.

Get creative with whatever you have access to. The more nature you can observe, touch, smell, feel, hear and maybe even taste, the better!

## **How Long Should I Stay in My Sit Spot, and How Often?**

You can visit your sit spot every day if you like, but for best results, commit to visiting it at least 3 times a week. If you choose a convenient location, it will be easier to return to it often. Thirty minutes is a good length of time for sitting, as it gives your brain and body time to calm down from your busy life and to reach deep relaxation and focus. However, you can start with just ten minutes. The longer you sit the more you'll experience. The more you experience, the more you'll learn. Don't be surprised if you learn some interesting things about yourself during the process as well.

## What Do I Do in My Sit Spot?

There are many ways to reap the benefits of your sit spot. Just being in natural space is beneficial so trust it will work. Feel free to mix it up and try different things. While we want to find time to quiet down the mind and body, other times feel free to do something like homework, journaling, listen to music or exercise. No matter what you choose, always start with doing nothing but breathing and letting your mind be calm for 5 minutes. If you like, you can bring something to sit on, a blanket, tea, rain gear, whatever you need to make it feel comfortable and special.

### Practice Instructions:

Here is a practice you can perform in your sit spot.

1. Find your sit spot
2. Spend 10-30 minutes in your sit spot each session, starting small your first few sittings if you like, and gradually increasing your time spent with each sitting.
3. At the start of each sitting, start with 5 minutes of deep, slow breathing and allow your mind to find calm by focusing only on your breath and surroundings and letting your other thoughts about your day, week, past, and future take a break.
4. During your sitting, practice mindfulness. Relax, breathe and tune into your body, feelings and emotions. Become aware of each of your senses, one by one, and listen to them as you sit. Practice observing nature and your surroundings: the plant life, the weather, animals, insects, birds, anything you can observe. As you move your body, move slowly and maintain awareness of your body as it moves in the space. Doing this practice mindfulness practice regularly will calm your nervous system, build stronger senses of your body and mind, and grow your abilities to sense and understand nature and yourself. You will also eventually begin to experience a deeper daily connection to nature, a calmer state of being in your life, deep and meaningful introspective thoughts and realizations and activate all the great functions of your body to stimulate growth, repair and better overall health.
  - a. Check out Nature Mentoring's [four practices](#) explanation for more depth on the practices in step 4 (these are great to do a bit of, each time you visit your sit spot for best results):

- i. Relax, Breathe & Tune Into Your Body
    - ii. Sensory Awareness
    - iii. Practice Nature Observation
    - iv. Move Slowly!
  - b. You might also choose from the other exercises in this Daily Practices for Connecting to the Natural World Guide, to do in different sittings.
5. Commit to visiting your sit spot at least 3 times a week for 4 weeks. Feel free to visit more if you like, for greater benefits, as long as it does not put extra stress on you. Build a routine in small steps, rather than immediately practicing everyday. Build a practice that works for you and that excites you to want to continue. You may do less than 3 times a week if your life requires it, but try to make time where you can. A sit spot close by can make this much easier.
  6. Bring a journal with you, in case you experience anything magical or meaningful you'd like to write down. As you begin a new week in your sit spot, take a moment to reflect on how visiting your spot went for you the last week and if you noticed any changes in your life - mind, body, emotion, stress levels, spirit and so on. Keeping up a log will help you look back and see improvements, even if you didn't notice them as they happened for you in the moment.

## References:

In My Nature (2016), *Start a Sit-Spot Practice For a Happier You*, Web. retrieved from <https://inmynature.life/ideal-sit-spot/> Sept 30, 2020

Nature Mentoring, *Complete Guide to Using a Sit Spot in Nature*, Web. Retrieved from <https://nature-mentor.com/sit-spot/> Sept 30, 2020

Forest Bathing Central (2017), *Forest Bathing Studies, Why You Need to Start Today*. Web. Retrieved from <https://www.forestbathingcentral.com/forest-bathing-studies/> Sept 30, 2020

[Brian Mertins](#) (2017), *Earth Brains! Your Brain is Designed for Planet Earth*, Nature Mentoring. Video. Retrieved from <https://nature-mentor.com/earth-brains/> Sept 30, 2020

## Deep Dive:

The links below are complementary resources for you to explore topics of interest in greater depth.

[Nature Conservancy Canada](#), (Aug, 2020) *Nature therapy (part three): Sit spots, sound walks and yoga*,

### 3. Unstructured Time and Musing

**Purpose:** *Spend time doing nothing but allowing the mind to wander.*

This activity comes directly from *Earth-Spirit Dreaming: Shamanic Ecotherapy Practices*, by Elizabeth E. Meacham, Ph.d (p. 68-69) ([More info here](#)):

“One way to slow down and get in touch with our connectedness with the life-world is through unstructured time, the forerunner of musing or being deep in thought and contemplation. Or rather, good old-fashioned boredom. There are certain kinds of work that our brains and “beings” do when we are “bored,” and when our minds are just wandering, that they don’t do at any other time. Boredom and musing are the times when our brains build connections and links between our disparate experiences and create stories and meaning. Downtime is connection and creation time.”

“To begin slowing down, make dates with yourself to do nothing for 15 minutes at a time. Try to create moments of quiet: leave your phone, computer and other tasks that are pulling on you in another room, and make sure that they are silenced completely. It is helpful to set an alarm on your phone or clock (left in another room) so that you don’t have to check the time. Find a place to sit or lie down where you feel comfortable and relaxed, aware from any work or chores that are pulling on you. If you can, find a window to look through, or gaze at a plant, a splash of natural light on the wall, or even a lovely piece of cloth or place in the room that seems attractive, orderly or beautiful to you. If you are able to, take this doing “nothing” time outside.”

“Commit to doing nothing for at least 15 minutes on a regular basis. Since challenges will come up at first, with both time and attitude, plan to make this commitment to doing nothing as easy as possible. It can be tempting to ‘achieve’ results, this is part of the ‘producing’ consciousness that’s caused this lack of quiet time to begin with. As you move out of the dominant consciousness of the surrounding culture, there will often be a kind of drag on you; you may feel a resistance to the shifts that you are seeking. Step through them and continue.”

“Whatever feels most doable is what will work. Once a week is better than once a day if you feel less stressed with this level of commitment. During this time, don’t meditate, don’t watch your breath, don’t do yoga; as much as you can, allow yourself to make nothing happen. Achieve absolutely nothing. This is a time for complete cessation of all accomplishment, activity, achievement and productivity.”



**References:**

Elizabeth E. Meacham (2020), *Earth-Spirit Dreaming: Shamanic Ecotherapy Practices*, Findhorn Press. (p. 68-69) ISBN: 978-1-62055-987-1 ([More info here](#))

## 4. Earth Connecting: Small Moments in Nature

**Purpose:** Create simple reminders and moments to connect with life in your daily routine.

This activity comes directly from *Earth-Spirit Dreaming: Shamanic Ecotherapy Practices*, by Elizabeth E. Meacham, Ph.d (p. 74-75) ([More info here](#)):

“With this simple practice, our connection with all of life progresses day by day. As we connect with nature in small moments on a regular basis, our bodies begin to wake up to our embeddedness with our ecological community.”

“I [Elizabeth] try to be very diligent about creating moments of reflection outside. I build these moments into my daily routine in ways that become habitual. Every time I step outside, I try to take a moment to stop and take in the sights, smells and activity of nature all around me. I remind myself that every breath I take is courtesy of the biosphere. I stop to experience profound gratitude for the systems and being on the planet that make my life possible. The more I do this, the more I notice the support of the life-world in every moment of my life.”

“By noticing nature more and more, increased mindfulness of the ecological fabric of our lives can become self-perpetuating. To begin, find something that you often pass that can act as a trigger to notice nature. Set a subconscious reminder to galvanize this practice. Find something that is part of your regular landscape and tell yourself that every time you see this you will stop what you are doing and remember that you are part of the life-world. An example is to commit to do this every time you see a certain tree, or every time you see or hear a bird. During these moments, intentionally wake up your senses and feel this moment and the nature being that inspired it; allow yourself to become suffused with gratitude that your life is possible because of the combined life systems of the planet.”

“Another way to create daily mindfulness of your ecology is to choose a specific time each day when you will take a moment to notice nature. Try to find a place in your daily routine to fit in a small moment to relate to nature. Make this ritual something that feels manageable within the framework of your life. I try to actively sense nature every time I walk from my house to the car [or bus].”

“Make a habit of touching nature when you can. When I notice something in nature, I often stop to gently touch it. I run my hands across my bushes on the way out the door, I press my palm against the bark of the tree by my driveway, I pick up a small rock as I walk into my office and put it back when I leave.”

“Another possibility is to decide on a specific number of breaths that you will take to consciously immerse yourself in your ecological context during your small moments in nature. I know that no matter how busy I may be, I always have time for three breaths to be with the sign and sounds of the natural world. You have time, too, and these three breaths will add up to many breaths over days, and months and years. The world’s problems seem so big; it’s hard to imagine that we can make changes in three breaths. But we can. The thought-shifting, the dream-changing, that we do in these small moments become part of a chain of ripples across the planet. Envision your three breaths, your small moments, blending with millions of other people’s small moments across the Earth.”

“These moments matter, they grow and shift the story. To increase your understanding of the scope and magnitude of the communities all over the world that are creating change through the ‘small moments,’ see Paul Hawken’s book *Blessed Unrest*. Together, we are growing a very large movement of Earth healers across the planet; each seed planted contributes to the very large and growing garden that is the origins and the result of an emerging healing dream of the Earth.”

**References:**

Elizabeth E. Meacham (2020), *Earth-Spirit Dreaming: Shamanic Ecotherapy Practices*, Findhorn Press. (p. 74-75) ISBN: 978-1-62055-987-1 ([More info here](#))

## 5. Earth-Connecting: Connecting Our Bare Skin to the Earth (Earthing)

**Purpose:** Practice Earthing, connecting your bare skin to the Earth, a few times a week for two weeks or more.

Spending time with our body on the Earth has been shown to offer us many benefits such as: improving sleep, reducing pain and inflammation, strengthening the immune system, reducing risk of heart disease, regulation of the nervous system and reduction of stress and anxiety, loosening tension in muscles and alleviating headaches. Check out [Power of Positivity](#) and [Earthing Institute](#) for links to some studies. Connecting our body directly to the Earth is commonly referred to as “[Earthing](#)” and in essence is the process of connecting the body electrically to the Earth, similar to “grounding” electrical wires.

There are many ways to practice Earthing. This activity is about exploring some options and trying out at least one. Commit to an Earthing practice at least twice this week. If you find you are a busy person, you might find it helpful to schedule that time in your planner, calendar or journal, so you are more likely to do it. Earthing may also be a practice you work into your Earth-connecting habits: perhaps Monday you sit on the Earth and Wednesday you are going to your sit spot (See Activity [Earth-Connecting: Find and Return to Your Sit Spot](#)).

Be sure to take notice of how this practice impacts your daily life. Sometimes we experience benefits like mental clarity or a positive mindset, but almost forget that we might have created that through a practice such as this because we’re not thinking about it, we’re just clear and happy! Staying mindful of what you experience, and tracking some observations in your journal about how you feel in mind, body and emotion, before and after, will help you see benefits more clearly over time.

As Elizabeth Meacham notes in her book *Earth Spirit Dreaming: Shamanic Ecotherapy Practices*, we should also be mindful of the blockages we face in touching the Earth with our bare skin. Where we are so accustomed in a modern world to wear clothing, shoes, sit on built objects, stay clean and avoid all injury, it makes sense why we may have aversions to Earthing practices. Other times our

aversions are because we are injured or face our own physical or health issues, and that's OK too!

If you find blocks, ask yourself why that block might be there. Many people are afraid of such close contact with the Earth, but doing the work of reconnecting with the natural world invites us to reprogram those fears and reap significant benefits. Keep in mind that many of the benefits of Earthing come from our skin being in direct contact with the Earth, with no barrier.

“Throughout virtually all of history, humans have mostly been barefoot or used animal hides (leather) for footwear and bedding. We evolved with this lifestyle over countless millennia. The resultant contact with the Earth allows the ground’s omnipresent natural energy into the body. Specifically, this means the conductive body is able to receive free electrons present in virtually limitless quantity in the ground. Research since 2000 has shown that this influx of electrons, through being barefoot outside or inside in contact with conductive products, produces significant benefits for our physiology and for health.” -Earthing Institute, [Getting Started](#).

### **Here are some ways you can practice Earthing:**

- Walking barefoot on the ground
- Sitting or laying on the ground, in soil (get dirty if you want!), on grass, on sand, on rock.
- Sitting or laying (with a ground cover if you like) and placing your bare hands on the ground, in the dirt, in the grass.
- Exercise! Simply do an exercise routine outside, in which you are in direct contact with the Earth (electrically grounded), rather than indoors! Running with shoes for example puts a rubber, non-electrically-conductive barrier between your body and the Earth so grounding is not achieved. Running bare feet in sand or grass, or doing exercises with bareskin on the ground, like push ups, work great. Here's more from Earthing Institute on [what does and does not ground you](#):
  - **Surfaces that ground:** Walking, running, standing, or sitting barefoot, with stocking feet, or conductive shoes on the following surfaces will ground you.

- Outside: grass, soil, gravel, stone, sand, brick, concrete.
- Inside: unpainted/unsealed concrete or tile floor built directly on the Earth (best to test the floor for conductivity).
- **Following surfaces will not ground you:**
  - Outside: asphalt, vinyl, wood (such as wooden decks).
  - Inside: wooden floors, painted/sealed concrete or tiled floors, carpets.

### **Instructions:**

1. Choose an Earthing practice you are comfortable starting with from above. Make sure your skin can directly connect to the Earth, whether your whole body or just your hands or feet.
2. Spend 15-30 minutes Earthing.
3. In your journal, make any notes you'd like on how you felt before and after. You may find patterns as you practice more over time.
4. Complete an Earthing Practice two times a week for at least two weeks. Feel free to practice longer and make it a habit in your life if it works for you. Trust that you will see and feel benefits eventually, even if it doesn't happen immediately or when you want them to.

## References:

Power of Positivity, 10 Surprising Benefits of Walking Barefoot, Web. Retrieved from

<https://www.powerofpositivity.com/10-surprising-health-benefits-of-walking-barefoot/> Oct 1, 2020.

Elizabeth E. Meacham (2020), *Earth-Spirit Dreaming: Shamanic Ecotherapy Practices*, Findhorn Press. ISBN: 978-1-62055-987-1 ([More info here](#))

Ober, Clint. Sinatra, Stephen. Zucker, Martin. (2014), [Earthing](#), Basic Health Publications

[The Earthing Movie: The Remarkable Science of Grounding](#) (Full Documentary), Youtube

## 6. Earth-Connecting: A Grounding Meditation

**Purpose:** Practice grounding your body and mind to Earth and its consciousness through a calming meditative practice.

This activity comes directly from *Earth-Spirit Dreaming: Shamanic Ecotherapy Practices*, by Elizabeth E. Meacham, Ph.d (p. 77-78) ([More info here](#)):

“Begin with your feet planted firmly on the ground, in a standing position. [This can be done with or without shoes -- connecting skin-to-Earth will bring added benefits (See activity *Earth-Connecting: Earthing: Connecting Our Bare Skin to the Earth*)]. Slowly and deliberately, begin rolling your feet around on the ground so that every surface of your toes and feet make contact with the Earth at some point. It is okay to do this through your shoes, but barefoot is ideal.”

“Feel each part of your foot begin to wake up. Imagine breathing in and out through the bottom of your feet, feeling the energy of the Earth meeting the soles of your feet, and eventually your energy body. When breathing out, imagine that you are reaching with the breath from your body down to meet the interiors of the Earth, through levels of dirt, maybe aquifers, through layers of old and older rock to the searing heat of her molten heart. Imagine that you can feel the fullness and steady thrumming, the pulsing energy, of the Earth.”

“Imagine that there is one beat of the heart of the Earth for every breath that you take. Once you can clearly imagine that you are reaching down with roots to touch the inmost bass notes of the rhythm of the Earth, let that heavy thrumming move slowly up your body. Roll your ankles, move your knees, swing your hips slowly around in a circle, undulate your spine up and down, roll your shoulders, reach in large circles backwards, and then forward, with your arms, roll your head sideways, forward and back, then in a circle. Once your body is awake, return again to the feeling of your body reaching down through your feet to touch the powerful beating of life. Send gratitude and love through each breath, say a prayer of gratitude for all the Earth does to allow you to exist and to support your learning in ways that intertwine with her dreams.”

### References:

Elizabeth E. Meacham (2020), *Earth-Spirit Dreaming: Shamanic Ecotherapy Practices*, (P. 77-78) Findhorn Press. ISBN: 978-1-62055-987-1 ([More info here](#))



## 7. Earth-Connecting Through Art and Creativity

*“You can support your connection with your special place, or with any place, by creating small nature structures. When building in nature, the act itself becomes a ritual of connection with the world around you. Touch, feel, smell, vision and embodied awareness of space become sacred movements celebrating life. Creating structures in nature also connects us with archetypal and instinctual memories of making our lives outside. Often, when building or creating in nature, deep feelings of connection, memory and ‘home’ can emerge. These feelings can feel new and powerful to those who haven’t experienced them before. They can also feel extremely normal in the moment, only showing their transformative power when we return to our ‘normal’ world and realize that we are siding and experiencing differently. Art works in nature can be big or small. As the creation and building emerges, be sensitive to the natural habitats and other visitors of the area. It is important that the impact is respectful, and even reversible if that is necessary.” (Elizabeth Meacham, *Earth Spirit Dreaming: Shamanic Ecotherapy Practices* (p. 94)). ([More info here](#))*

Explore the various activities below for earth-connecting art practices!

### 7.1 Earth-Connecting: Simple Sacred Nature Art

**Purpose:** Collect natural objects and build simple creative structures, while in nature.

*Note: the term “sacred” here and through Y4CA guides is used as a secular, not a religious term.*

This activity comes directly from *Earth-Spirit Dreaming: Shamanic Ecotherapy Practices*, by Elizabeth E. Meacham, Ph.d (p. 94-95) ([More info here](#)):

*“Creating nature art in your own sacred nature place, inside or out, expands atrophied natural senses. Touching, smelling, arranging and otherwise relating to patterns and rhythms in nature, we find our own natural rhythms as they are intertwined with life. If you can’t get to your special place, you can do this activity anytime and anywhere to help you slow down and realign with life. These activities do not require any artistic abilities. Often, simple, quick and easy shapes are the best place to start. Just making circles and circles within circles is healing and enriches*

our participation with our ecological community.”

“Creating very simple shapes can bring unexpected balance, healing and clarity. This happens because it taps into parts of our mind/body/spirit that are often neglected. Collect any natural objects/beings that are pleasing to you. Place them into piles, sculptures, circles or spirals. This is one of the kinds of activities, mentioned earlier in the book, that seem too simple to achieve much, but because we are fostering something unrelated to achieving we find our way to completely different kinds of results. As you work, remain conscious of respecting the growth and homes of living things.”

“If you are creating nature art in a sacred space in your home, go on a foraging expedition for nature beings to bring inside, or create simple nature art with collections that you already have. For example, if you have a set of stones that are sacred to you, making circles and mandalas, or other arrangements, with them is a quick and easy daily practice to remain grounded to the Earth and maintain contact with the stone beings in your care.”

## References:

Elizabeth E. Meacham (2020), *Earth-Spirit Dreaming: Shamanic Ecotherapy Practices*, (P. 94-95) Findhorn Press. ISBN: 978-1-62055-987-1 ([More info here](#))

## 7.2 Earth-Connecting: Working with Ancient Symbols

**Purpose:** Build common shapes with natural objects to bring peace to body and mind.

This activity comes directly from *Earth-Spirit Dreaming: Shamanic Ecotherapy Practices*, by Elizabeth E. Meacham, Ph.d (p. 95-97) ([More info here](#)):

“Nature art rituals often begin with ancient symbols that reflect humans’ understanding of and relationship with the world and the cosmos. Stacks, circles, spirals and mandalas are highly effective symbols for healing and integration, and have been throughout known human history. They are symbolic ‘messages from the gods.’ remind us that we are in the cosmos and the cosmos is in us. They capture the essence of our place in community with all of life.”

**“Stacks:** Stacking leaves, or sticks, brings simple joy and develops many aspects of community relationship with the Earth and, if done in a group, with others. Working with pebbles, stones, pine cones, leaves, of either all the same or different colors and shapes sensitizes us to rhythms, consistencies and natural patterns and cycles of growth and decay. You can build in a creek, with care to not overly disturb the creek bed. Stacking in water, building small dams and waterfalls, watching what you create change in relation to the Earth, air or water opens channels to ancient archetypes of the human psyche.”

**“Circles:** Circles can add an element of order and aesthetic meaning to nature art projects. Tiny circles, many tiny circles within circles, overlapping circles or larger circles big enough for a person or a group to get inside creates an energy center that can be used as the end in itself, or a ‘container’ for ritual and shamanic work. Circles are an ancient representation of the self and deepen the reflective experience of building in nature. Immerse yourself in the experience of creating and allow your mind to wander freely. Often, unexpected insights and integrations will occur during or after this process as creativity and nature come together.”

**“Spirals:** spirals are another symbole to work with in nature (think labyrinths). Building spirals adds an element of complexity that can turn collecting and building projects into symbolic experiences. Each spiral is an energetic imprint and has its own relationship with the landscape. Each spiral tells a story, and often strong feelings come up during the process of creating them. Spirals can be any size, large or small. Spirals can be arranged using leaves, sticks, pine cones, pebbles, rocks or dirt, or can be drawn into soft sand or stepped into the snow. Begin your spiral from the inside and work out, creating the spiral with your hands, feet or sticks used as tools. To deepen the experience, create a spiral large enough to walk into and out of. Large spirals can be walked on, like labyrinths, in a meditative fashion.”

**“Mandalas:** To make an even more complex image, use either similar or different objects and create a mandala. Mandalas have profound symbolic and spiritual significance, and can support our evolving awareness and sensations in relation to nature. To create a mandala, start with a circle of some kind, made from any natural objects/beings that you have collected. To deepen the connection of the mandala with natural cycles, orient the four ‘corners’ of the mandala in what we call the cardinal directions (north, south, east and west). Put something that you have collected directly in the center and create four quadrants, evenly spaced around the circle.” [Check out more on the traditional significance of mandalas in Asian cultures! [Mandalas for the Soul.](#)]

Another insightful perspective on circles comes from Chris Carson:

“The circle is the most natural form known to mankind. The universe is made up of planets, stars, moons and the sun---all spherical in shape. The sun rises and sets in a never-ending circle; seasons pass in an annual circle. Trees, rocks and raindrops are circular, and most fruits and flowers are spherical. The cells and atoms that make up everything within the universe are circular.” ([Chris Carson](#))

**References:**

Chris Carson (2017) *History of the Mandala*, Classroom, Web. Retrieved from <https://classroom.synonym.com/the-history-of-mandala-12079525.html> on Oct 2, 2020

Elizabeth Meacham, *Earth Spirit Dreaming: Shamanic Ecotherapy Practices* (p. 95-97). ([More info here](#))

Mandalas for the Soul, Web. Retrieved from <https://www.mandalasforthesoul.com/mandala-meaning/> Oct 2, 2020

## 7.3 Earth-Connecting: Spiral Meditation

**Purpose:** Create a large spiral shape with natural objects to use as a meditative tool and to connect to nature.

This activity comes directly from *Earth-Spirit Dreaming: Shamanic Ecotherapy Practices*, by Elizabeth E. Meacham, Ph.d (p. 97-98) ([More info here](#)):

“Creating large works of art in nature allows interaction with our bodies within the structure of the art works. [You can] create large spirals that can be used for personal or group walking meditation. Create spirals with leaves, rocks, sticks and pine cones, or by making tracks in the dirt or snow. Making the spiral is healing when alone and builds community in a spontaneous tribal way when done in a group. When working with others, you can build one spiral together and take turns walking that spiral as a meditation while standing to witness the process for each other, or each build your own spirals near one another.”

“Creating walking meditation spirals in this way is a simplified form of labyrinth work. Through creating and walking the spirals in nature, we become embodied and embedded in an ancient symbol of the path of spiritual awakening in human form. Moving to the center of the spiral is a way of returning to our spiritual center, to the center of life and the cosmos. It embodies the trust that there is a map to help us through the challenges of our lifetimes on Earth, and the guidance of how to walk this path is often given in symbols.”

“Locate a place in a natural area where you feel safe and connected. [Visit the instructions in the exercise *Find and Return to Your Sit Spot*, for help finding a place]. Once settled and comfortable, identify something to create a spiral with. You can create spirals with large rocks, small rocks, sticks, leaves, pine cones, in the dirt or in the snow. In the snow, [you can use your] boots to stamp down the snow, starting in the center and moving out. Alternatively, you can begin in the center, using your hands to arrange the natural beings, or to move leaves or dirt into the shape of a spiral. [You can] aim to make the spiral at least as big across as [you are] tall, with a pathway wide enough to walk into and out of the spiral.”

“Once the spiral is built, enter the path from the outside. With your forest step into the spiral, acknowledge that you are entering sacred space and set intention for this walk to be for the healing of your life and the world. Then, beginning on the outside, walk slowly toward the middle, walk slowly toward the center, taking one step for each breath. In the middle, you can take some time to set intentions, ask questions, make prayers of thanks, make blessings or just feel the Earth beneath your feet. When you are ready, go back to the outside just as you came, slowly and in line with your breath. Say a prayer or blessing of gratitude as you exit to honor this experience and the spiral as sacred.”

### References:

Elizabeth Meacham, *Earth Spirit Dreaming: Shamanic Ecotherapy Practices* (p. 97-98). ([More info here](#))

## 7.4 Earth-Connecting: Nature Collage

**Purpose:** *Create an artistic collage or ensemble made of natural objects you collect.*

This activity comes directly from *Earth-Spirit Dreaming: Shamanic Ecotherapy Practices*, by Elizabeth E. Meacham, Ph.d (p. 99-101) ([More info here](#)):

“Sometimes the best way is the simplest way, especially when our hearts and minds feel overwhelmed by complexity. Making a nature collage is a very simple way to slow down and reconnect with ourselves and nature. Creating nature collages is ideal if you do not have access to a natural area large enough for a nature art ritual. “You can do this exercise either using items collected from nature or by cutting out pictures of nature. Like any nature art, collages begin with collecting, a ritual of joy and reverence in itself. Seeing a reflection of aspects of ourselves within the image that we are creating, we become more aesthetically sensitive and creatively ordered, put together in a new way.”

“Making art collages can be joyful and fun, bringing up memories of being a child. Making art is a gift we all have for shifting into our feeling perceptual selves, and our “childlike” senses, which are actually our atrophied natural senses. We are born with them, but many of us forget them over time. These senses are essential for developing ecological consciousness(...)”

“Your supplies for the collage can be as simple as leaves and grass, small rocks and sticks, and some basic art materials such as paper and glue. Before making your collage, spend some time watching for beings in nature that stand out to you. Allow yourself to intuit the right time, place and materials for your project. Watch for natural correspondences or patterns that are attracting you. Try not to second-guess a ‘feeling’ about your nature art ritual, even if your feelings seem foolish to you, or too simple to be meaningful.”

“Once your collage is complete you can meditate with it, watching with a soft gaze for correlations, relationships, colors and shapes while opening your heart to any messages or feelings that emerge for you.”

[You can use your creation as decoration for your room, home or work space and it will serve as a reminder of the process of connection you went through to find the materials and create it, which brings depth of meaning to your space.]

[Instead of creating something on paper, you might also simply create an ensemble of natural objects you find in a natural space you have access to. Visit the activity *Nature’s Artist*, for more detailed instructions. This could be done while in your Sit Spot (visit the *Find and Return to Your Sit Spot* activity, if you do not have one yet).]

### References:

Elizabeth Meacham, *Earth Spirit Dreaming: Shamanic Ecotherapy Practices* (p. 99-101). ([More info here](#))

## 7.5 Earth-Connecting: Nature's Artist

**Purpose:** *Enjoy and connect to a natural space, while allowing your creativity to free-flow in the form of art. Access inspiration from nature and practice playful self-expression.*

**Instructions:**

You are going to visit an accessible natural space to be inspired and create art! Visit any safe space you have access to with natural life such as a park, backyard or garden. Find a comfortable spot in that space, as close to nature as possible. If you don't have access to a natural space, you could also look out a window or spend time with a plant you have at home. You, the artist, have now reached your temporary creative space among other natural beings, who are artists in their own way.

While being considerate of the life in that space and respectful not to destroy what is alive, make a piece of art using natural objects available to you, such as loose leaves, sticks, rocks, grass, pinecones and so on. Can you make a drawing with what you find? A stack of objects? Some pieces laid on the ground or some standing up? A sculpture? If you cannot touch or move natural materials in your space or if you are choosing to observe a view of a natural landscape, bring along any art materials of your choice and create with those instead.

Let your mind roam free and without judgement for what you make. Consider how all the natural objects in your artistic creation relate to one another. How were they made? How do you think your objects came to be where you picked them up?

Feel free to leave your art for someone else to find, or if you want to disassemble it to be respectful of others, take a picture or simply "erase" it!



## 7.6 Earth-Connecting: Create Your Own Art in Nature

**Purpose:** *Bring your own method of artistic expression to a natural space and create while spending time with natural beings.*

### **Introduction:**

Creative expression is essential to a good life. This does not mean you must be a skilled artist, just that stepping into the space of creativity will benefit you on many levels. When we are able to be creative, we often lose track of time, our brain waves change, our body calms and we may experience increased energy and focus.

All of life is in a constant process of creation, expression, destruction and re-creation. A tree drops a seed and creates a new tree which will grow and express itself through its leaves, bark and branches. It will produce more seeds and eventually decay and crumble into the soil where other organisms like fungi will break it down and use it for their own creative process. The essential force of life is creation.

As humans we are skilled, conscious, thoughtful, emotionally expressive beings. We have conscious access to our infinite imagination and dreams, which we can see in the form of thought, images, understandings or revelations in our mind. Often we don't even ask for them, they just come to us. In this non-physical realm of imagination and dreams, we may see and interpret symbols of meaning that we can choose to materialize, manifest, or bring into your physical world. This is the basis of many art forms, but is also true in creating the life you want to live. Dreams and visions of a life aligned with your values, purpose and passions can be manifested into your reality, similar to a vision of a great painting or song you will create. Your life is your canvas for a masterpiece.

So, let yourself look within to bring out meaning in a form of an artistic expression you enjoy. Practice connecting to and expressing your internal world, by creating in your external world.

### **Instructions:**

Find a special place in nature you can visit either once or often. Visit the [Find and Return to Your Sit Spot activity for help finding a spot](#). Make sure this place feels good to be in, is attractive to you and safe and comfortable to be in. Bring any blankets, mats, trinkets or personal special objects you would like to bring to the space. You might also create a more meaningful special space through arranging rocks, sticks, dirt, pinecones or other natural objects you find.

If you do not have access to a natural space you can go to, you can also: choose an



at-home space with a plant or garden, create a natural space inside with any special natural objects you have collected or have in your possession such as rocks, sticks, driftwood, crystals or plants. You might also simply find a place to look out a window at nature. The main thing is to be exposed to nature in the best way you can and to create a space that feels safe and meaningful to you.

Bring your chosen artistic form of expression to this natural space. This can be an art form you are already familiar with, or one you want to practice. You might bring an instrument to write or play songs, music to sing over if you don't play an instrument but want to sing, rap or hum. You might bring materials to paint, dance, write or perform theatre with yourself, draw, knit, mould clay. Bring any art form you like.

Now, spend as much time as you would like in the natural setting to be relaxed and allow yourself to worry about nothing but creating your art. If you begin feeling stressed or thinking about things you need to do, let those pass. It will help if you schedule undisturbed time to do this activity and set an alarm for time so you don't need to worry about anything else while you're spending creative time.

Feel free to show others what you make!

## 7.7 Earth-Connecting: Stone Stacking and Rock Balancing

**Purpose:** *Stack and balance stones, pebbles and rocks for a calming meditative practice.*

### **Introduction:**

Rock and stones have long been used traditionally by many different cultures for various purposes such as, navigation, meditation, art, ritual and ceremony. Today, people practice “rock stacking” -- stacking rocks on top of one another in a way gravity and the rocks allow, in any arrangement of balance -- for its [meditative and calming qualities](#) (Grab, 2011). Rock balancing is a great way to spend relaxing time in nature. When we balance rocks, stones and pebbles, it requires us to focus our awareness on the present moment as we feel the gravity and positioning of the rocks to make them stay in position. This is where our brains get to cool off from all that busy thinking we do in our lives.

We also must become intimately aware of the rocks we work with, their shapes, grooves, colours. We can consider how they came to be in their current form, why they might be surrounded by the other natural beings or features that exist around them. We can consider the age of the rock and how much of the evolution of its surrounding beings it has seen, where it has existed in some geological form for thousands of years. We become intimately connected through our senses to the natural objects we use and the natural space we are visiting. If we return often to that space, we might see it change through seasons: the ebb and flow of the river across seasons, the growing, colour changing and falling of leaves in the trees, etc.. Noticing seasonal differences gives us an even deeper connection to that natural space and the rhythms of nature. All by stacking rocks and reaping benefits for our body and mind!

Lastly, we can connect and participate in essential elements of life through stacking rocks. We combine natural objects, rocks, to create something new and beautiful that exists only by the relationships of the rocks to each other, to gravity, to the local environment around you. We are reminded that all of life is impermanent, meaning it does not last forever; what is created will eventually crumble but we get to enjoy it in the present moment. You might experience this as your stacks fall halfway through, or you might even intentionally destroy the structure when you are done. At first, you may become disappointed if your rock structure failed after putting so much time into it. But this experience can help you learn to accept that you do not always control the outcome of things in your life, that parts of your life will crumble when you don't want them to and that the point is to enjoy the process. Understanding that in nature, things fall apart, you can become more calm and resilient to negative life events.

*“I quickly noticed the therapeutic/transformative effects that balancing and working with nature had on myself and others; in an artistic sense, but also nurturing something uniquely human, inspiring a sense of magic and peace, luring awareness out of the mind and into the moment – ultimately cultivating a meditative presence.” (Michael Grab, [Gravity Glue](#)) (Check out his [amazing videos](#))*

**Instructions:**

Find a natural space where you can move rocks, stones or pebbles to create a gravity stack. Please keep in mind that moving things in a natural environment may disturb it and the beings who depend on it, so be compassionately aware of the ecosystem you are in. Some places may be fine to leave a stack standing, others may require you to put the rocks back. If you build a stack in a river, consider how the water flow may change or if you may obstruct the path of fish. If there is a risk, simply destroy it when you are done, or find another spot. Also consider if you are stepping in a sensitive ecosystem that will leave it trampled. Find another spot if necessary.

If you cannot visit a natural space, you may want to find a set of rocks or stones you can stack in your yard or home. Finding these rocks is a special process in itself.

While you stack rocks, all you need to do is breathe and enjoy your time. Visit [Gravity Glue](#) for tips on how to stack rocks. If you feel mentally distracted, try to let your thoughts pass without them holding your attention. If you are by water, such as a running river, you might also ask the river to carry away those thoughts and to offer you a freshness and clarity of mind. Rocks also act as a great store of energy and may store your heavy negative feelings as you touch and move them. Intentionally asking them (with gratitude) to ground that negative energy and emotion for you can help.

Stack for as long as you like. Feel free to take pictures to show others. Considering doing this activity with friends, family or loved ones.

Check out [Gravity Meditation](#) for a look at different types of amazing rock balancing structures.

## References:

Michael Grab, Gravity Glue, Web. Retrieved from  
<https://www.gravityglue.com/about/> Oct 2, 2020

Gravity Meditation, Web. Retrieved from  
[http://gravitymeditation.com/rock\\_balancing.html](http://gravitymeditation.com/rock_balancing.html) Oct 2, 2020

Grab, Michael (2011) The Meditation Power of Balancing Rocks, Matador Network, web. Retrieved from  
<https://matadornetwork.com/bnt/the-meditative-power-of-balancing-rock-s-pics/> Nov 18, 2020