

Nature 4 Wellbeing Project

Letchworth Garden City



Sensory Walk

Written Guidelines

Before your walk:

This sensory walk is a gift to you to resource you and uplift you. It may be that you are having a difficult day or week, or it may be that you want to exercise and simply get outdoors more. Whatever has led you to be curious as to this invitation for a sensory walk, welcome the opportunity and gift yourself this time for you and your wellbeing.

Some people find that a sensory walk is a great way to re-set themselves and feel better in themselves when they are overwhelmed, upset, lonely or finding work or life challenging. See how you find the experience and if you are happy to encourage others or want to share how the walk affected you, please do get in contact info@createseven.org or on social media with the #wellnaturedherts.

It doesn't matter where you decide to go for your walk, it can be on the streets around your home, on the pavements near your office or workplace, in a town park, on holiday footpaths, or any route that provides you with safe space to walk away from traffic. If it is a new route to you, you may want to ensure you have a navigation app or map with you, so you know you can find your way back to where you are now with ease.

Before you step outdoors, take some time to prepare so you can experience the walk comfortably and safely. At this time, we need to be aware of our own health to protect others health. If you have any symptoms of covid-19, a temperature, cough or loss of smell or taste then please get tested and wait until you are well before engaging in outdoor activities.

The guide for your walk lasts approximately fifteen minutes. You can pause using the guide at any time and stay longer with any of your senses to have a longer experience if you choose to do so. Equally if you have less time available you could do part of the walk. If you are feeling unsteady on your feet then how about bringing along a friend, carer or neighbour and doing the walk together? Take notice of the weather and the forecast, and ensure you are dressed appropriately. Are you wearing comfortable and appropriate footwear for your environment? Although not a long walk, if hot you may want to bring along water with you. Notice the time of day, will it be getting dark when you step out? If so, consider your route and lighting ensuring you are safe at all times.

Some people like to bring a notebook and pen so that they can pause at the end of the walk and collect some reflective thoughts or notes on paper to fully capture the experience. It may be that you will take this walk many times or in different places so note taking can be a great way to notice how the environment or the time has influenced your experience.

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Like many things in life, taking time to prepare is important and provides an opportunity also for us to practice self-care and kindness. As we prepare we can start to begin to let go of the busy thoughts and worries we have. Before you step out from your home, car or wherever you are, I invite you to close your eyes and take a deep breath.

The walk:

Firstly, thank yourself for giving yourself this gift of a walk outdoors today for your wellbeing. This is space for you and a time you can leave your worries and difficult thoughts behind, we don't need to ignore these, we all have difficult thoughts and worries in our lives, but we can put them aside for this space and time. Perhaps imagine that you are packaging them all up in a suitcase, placing them in their gently, zipping up the case and then placing the case away in storage for you to come back to them when you are ready after the walk. Ok, now we are ready... let's step out into our senses and walk...

As you take your first steps outdoors, notice the change as you go from indoors to outdoors, perhaps noticing the temperature change, the sensation of the air or weather on you, the change in smell and sounds, generally noticing the shift in your experience. Just start walking at your own natural pace and without thinking about how you are walking simply noticing here you are walking and are now outdoors.

As you settle into your rhythm and pace you can begin to notice that as you walk breath is coming in and out of the body, you don't need to change this in any way but see if you can just notice this, breath coming in and out, perhaps noticing where you notice the breath coming in, maybe on your nostrils or in your belly, and notice the movement in your body and the sensations of the outbreath too. Carry on walking whilst noticing breath in the body.

As you walk, and breath notice how your body knows how to do this, there is nothing to fix or solve in walking, you can notice your experience of the walk without having to work hard at doing anything. This walk is all about BEING in the experience of the walk, not DOING walking. You can start if you wish to notice the feet coming into connection with the ground. Perhaps getting curious about the point where one foot leaves the ground and the other connects with the ground. See if you can sense into each foot as it connects with the ground, lifts from the ground and moves forwards to connect again. There is no right or wrong with any of this, just noticing the experience is enough. Spend a few minutes noticing this connection of feet and ground.

You can now start to take your attention to notice the legs in movement, what does it feel like in your legs to be walking, can you notice any sensations in any parts of your legs as you walk. Can you feel the different joints doing what they do best allowing the legs to move and walk? Spend a few minutes aware of the legs whilst walking.

How about the top half of the body and the arms, what do you notice when you take your attention here whilst you walk. If you wanted to you could experiment with different arm movements, perhaps more of a swing or less, how does this alter your walking experience? As you continue to walk notice the head too here, balanced on the shoulders and neck, is it

moving, how does it feel balanced here on the body whilst in motion? Now notice the whole body here in motion as you walk.

As you continue to walk, aware of the body here in motion, you are welcome to play with your experience by walking at different paces. You may want to see what it's like when you slow right down, really noticing each step and the connection, then speeding up to a fast walk. See if without any expectation of different paces, you can notice how each feels and your experience in each moment of the walk. Perhaps like a toddler would learning to walk for the first time..

So now as you continue with the walk at a pace that is your natural rhythm, you may want to start to take your attention out to sounds that are around you right now. Wherever you are you can be interested in sounds of any nature. What sounds can you hear far away?

What sounds can you hear that are close by, or even from the movement in your body of walking?

Are there any loud sounds?

What is the quietest sound you can hear right now?

Notice how the sounds shift and change and the body is in motion.

If you want to you could take your attention to a sound that draws your attention. As you walk explore that sound in further details, maybe noticing any silence in the sound, or a rhythm in the sound, what captures you? Perhaps noticing any imagery forming in your mind as you listen to the sound, where does it take you in your mind? Then come back to hearing the sound as a sound. Aware of the vibrations of sound coming into your senses enabling you to hear the sound as a sound.

As you continue your walk you can now turn your attention to your sense of sight and start to notice nature and life around you moment by moment. What takes your attention right now as you start to look out for signs of nature and life. It could be the green of grass or leaves, a bird in a tree or overhead, it could be a dog on the walk, or simply the sky overhead. Allow yourself to be drawn in by different aspects of life or nature that you see as you continue walking. It maybe that you have many opportunities where you are right now to see nature if so take your time, let your senses take you to be interested in what you can see right now...

In the next part of your walk, when you find a part of nature or a view of the sky or nature that really attracts your interest, take a moment to pause to explore it further if you feel comfortable to do so, if you prefer you can just continue, with interest in what nature and life you can see as you walk. If you have taken a pause to explore further then see how close you can get to the nature, if it's safe to do so have a touch of the nature, what does it feel like, perhaps notice any colours that you can see, any shade or shadow, light and dark. Perhaps notice the edges and any other nature or life it connects with. Is there a pattern there to see at all? Is there a texture that's of interest? You may even notice any images in

your own mind, or stories that appear that connect the nature to you and what you are experiencing as you give it attention in this way. When you are ready, let go of the nature, place it back if it's been in your hands, and begin to resume your natural walk again..

As you continue walking become aware of any smells you can be interested in. Does the air have a quality you can notice, without judging wherever you are, see if you can just notice the sensations of the air on the skin or nose and any smells that are present at different moments as you continue walking. Have you ever noticed for example the smell after the rain or the smell of wet leaves or dry leaves? If it's of interest you may want to get closer to some of the nature, perhaps grass or mud or stones or trees and have a smell to see if you notice any sense of smell you hadn't noticed before. If there is no smell you can notice, just notice this, there is no need to create anything, in this sensory walk we are simply interested in fully noticing our experience moment by moment.

As we move to the final part of the walk, have a play with the various senses, you can revisit senses explored earlier if you wish, perhaps coming back to noticing the body in motion, or sounds that are now in your environment, or you may simply want to enjoy the walk for the pure enjoyment of walking with no need to be doing anything other than simply walking.

Take a few minutes as this guidance comes to a close to practice gratitude, you can thank yourself for taking this time to give yourself this experience that has boosted your wellbeing. You may want to thank others who are with you on the walk or who have made it possible for you to come outdoors. You may want to thank the space you are in and the nature you have noticed that has given you this boost. You may want to thank your body for taking you on the walk enabling you to move through this experience outdoors. Whatever you feel is relevant for you allow a moment to in your own mind and words, be thankful.

After your walk:

Great, you have now completed the sensory walk. Of course, you may wish to continue your walk. Remember you can always do this walk again, the more you step outdoors and reconnect with yourself and nature in this way, the greater the benefit. So, keep safe and well and remember the wonderful resources that are free, that you can access to give you a boost whenever you need them. Please do share with others too. Enjoy your walks and thank you.