**Mindfulness Exercise No. 1: Nature Walk / Day at the Beach**

**Introduction:** Facilitators, pack a picnic lunch and head to the park or – if you’re near one – the beach. Invite participants to move slowly, taking in the sights, sounds and smells with the activity outlined below. If you’re in a park or botanical garden, you could take a group tour. If on the beach, collect a few shells and try building a sand castle.

**To Begin:** There are two exercises below, with specific dialog for each. Remember that these are only guidelines. Because you will be moving for both exercises, you will need to paraphrase. Speak slowly and pause often.

For the beach walk, the sound of the surf will make it difficult to be heard. The text is a sample of instructions that can be used before undertaking the activity.

**On a Nature Walk:**

**Line 1:** For the purpose of this exercise, I am going to request that everyone refrain from conversation for the next 15 minutes, so that we can practice being mindful for the entire activity.

The first thing I’d like everyone to do is find a spot where you can stand comfortably for about a minute…In a moment, I’m going to ask you to close your eyes. This could affect your balance, so if you are concerned about falling, you’ll want to pick a spot where you can rest your hand on a tree or bench for support…Good.

Now, close your eyes. Out in nature, there are amazing fragrances. We’re going to pause here, with our eyes closed, and take in a few of the smells…I can tell you that at this moment, I can smell the fresh-cut grass…I can smell the “woodsiness” from the trees…I smell scents from the flowers…What do you smell? Take note of these scents…Enjoy them…If you’re not sure what they are, let it go. You don’t have to identify anything with a name to experience them…

**Line 2:** Now, open your eyes. For the next minute, look around you and take in the sights. Memorize each color and detail as if you were going to go home and paint a picture of this scene from memory. Enjoy the beauty of your surroundings.

**Line 3:** As we begin our walk, move slowly, feeling the earth beneath your feet as you methodically place one foot in front of the other…Feel free to stop on occasion to touch the bark on a tree or run your fingers over one of the leaves. The only caution here is to avoid touching any unfamiliar vine. Allow yourself to be completely aware of your surroundings.

**Continue your walk for about five to ten minutes.**

**Line 4:** Let’s pause here for a moment. Take a deep breath of fresh air. We’re going to keep moving in a moment. You’ve probably already begun to notice the sounds of nature, the wind blowing through the trees, bird chirping...See if you can keep your attention on what you see, what you smell and – now – what you hear, all while consciously feeling the ground beneath your feet as you walk.

**When you reach your designated picnic area, the activity has reached its conclusion. While everyone is eating, encourage dialog about what people experienced. If it’s an area in which they are familiar, did they notice anything that they’ve never noticed before? Did any feelings arise (such as feelings of peacefulness or clarity)?**

**At the Beach:**

**Dialog:** For the purpose of this exercise, I am going to request that everyone refrain from conversation for the next 10 minutes so that we can practice being mindful for the entire activity.

The first thing I’d like everyone to do is find a spot where you can stand or sit comfortably for a minute or two. For those comfortable doing so, feel free to pop your shoes off so that you can feel the sand beneath your toes.

Because you will not be able to hear me over the sound of the ocean waves, I’m going to give you brief instructions ahead of time.

We are going to take a short walk from here down to the water. As we do so, try to keep your attention only on what you notice around you and not let your mind wander. Be aware of the smell of the salty sea air. Hear the sounds of the waves crashing against the surf and seagulls calling overhead. Observe everything you see around you as if you were trying to memorize each detail. Feel the sand beneath your feet, and be mindful of your steps – particularly when we reach the water. When you get to the water, you can choose to dip your toes in for a minute or two before walking back. When everyone is back here – in about 10 to 15 minutes – we’ll have our picnic lunch.

**When everyone has returned, facilitators will have set up a picnic area either on a beach blanket or at a few picnic tables (if available). As an addition to this exercise, facilitators may choose to pass around a few shells for people to observe how they look and feel in their hands.**