

# Mindfulness Trail

Mindfulness is the practice of being fully present in the moment, and observing the things around you without judgement. In a society where we are told every minute of our time must be productive, it is important to take time to slow down and observe the things around us. Nature is a great way to do this as it is full of wonders. It is often easiest to start practicing mindfulness with an activity or object to focus on.

As you walk around Bovingdon Brickworks, take time to engage your five senses. We have suggested some ways you can do this, as well as some of the best places to do them. Bring along a snack or a picnic (to engage your taste sense!) and take an hour to yourself.

Don't worry if you don't feel very mindful and your thoughts keep wandering. Just acknowledge that your thoughts are wandering (say it out loud if that helps) and bring your focus back to the moment.

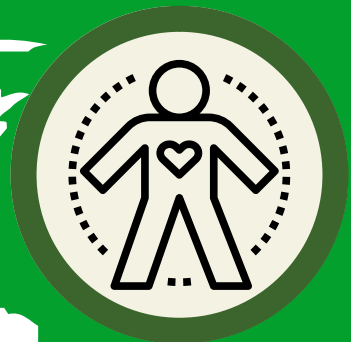


## Bovingdon Brickworks

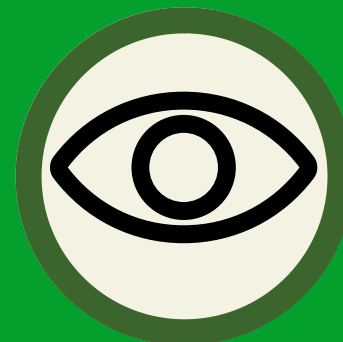
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We describe a lot of emotions in relation to our bodies, so it's no wonder that emotions are felt across your whole body. Start your walk with a bodyscan and bring awareness to every part of your body. Close your eyes and hold your body in a relaxed position. Take a deep breath in through the nose for 5 seconds, then out through the mouth for 7 seconds. Continue this breathing pattern and, starting at the forehead, gently scan down through the body, noticing any sensations and where they are. You're not trying to change anything, just bring attention to every part of your body, from the tips of your fingers to the soles of your feet.



Pick a tree and stand far enough away that you can see the whole tree. Take five minutes and observe the tree – it may not be moving but a lot can be happening. Birds might be visiting it, or insects flitting about the leaves. The leaves or branches may sway in the wind. Try to observe all that is happening – the tree remains where it is, no matter what happens around it. Some of them are over a hundred years old – a lot of things have happened around them, but they have stood strong and adapted where needed.



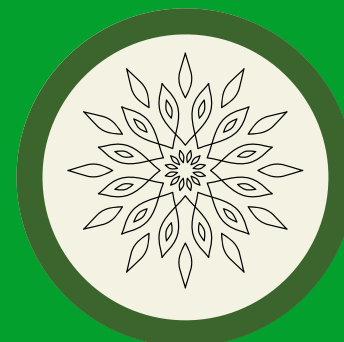
There are lots of different plants that all have different textures around you. Willow leaves are soft and furry, while the leaves of holly can be prickly, but smooth to the touch. Oak trees have rough bark, while Bird's Foot Trefoil has a soft, spongy texture beneath your feet. Try feeling different textures – can you find something soft, rough, furry, bumpy, prickly and smooth? Notice how they feel on your fingertips – what about other parts of your body like your cheek or arm?



Find a nice spot to rest and eat your lunch or snack. Before you start eating, look at your food. What colours can you see? Are they dull colours or shiny? Next, try smelling your food. Take a deep breath in. What does it smell like? Sweet? Savoury? Does it bring back any warm memories? Take your first bite and notice the sensations within your mouth. Does it taste how you expected it to from the sight and smell? Is it warm or cold? Take each mouthful slowly, considering these things as you eat.



Our sense of smell can prompt some emotional memories – a perfume that a loved one wears, food that a family member always cooks. At different times of the year, certain smells linger in the air. In late Spring, hawthorn blossom dominates, while in early summer, Elderflower takes over. What can you smell around you? Smell the flowers in bloom, crush some plants between your fingers and see if they release an aroma – you will find garlic mustard around the woodland edges here, which smells strongly of garlic.



Nature often has elements of beauty in it – a gnarled tree can look like a beautiful sculpture, a meadow can reflect a sunset. Collect a handful of things that catch your attention – the petals from a yellow flower, a bright green leaf, some lichen curled at the bottom of a tree. Find some bare soil and make a picture with your treasures – if you're stuck for ideas, start with a mandala. Put some petals in the middle, then circle it with another item (pebbles, bark), and another until you have a beautiful, natural mural.