Take a **Meditative Spring Hike**

Hiking in nature and taking time to notice and reflect upon the surroundings such as trees, plants, animals, and wildflowers has many therapeutic benefits. As the weather warms, take a walk outside and focus on the changes you see as nature transitions from winter to spring. Observe how nature survives. What do you see coming to life again?

**A Sensory Walk**

Become more aware of nature by engaging your senses: look more closely, breathe in new scents, listen to each sound, feel the changes in the air. Here is an outdoor list for the senses to get you started. What else can you discover?

- The damp, earthy smell after a spring rain
- The sweet fragrance of a flowering tree
- The rush of running water from a nearby stream
- The crunch of melting snow underfoot
- The sound of animals scurrying about, unaware of your presence.
- The sight of the first green leaves coming out of the ground
- The color of an early flower’s bloom
- The sight of birds back from their winter homes
- The cool touch of spring wind on your cheeks
- The warmth of sunlight on your face

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**A Meditative Walk**

Walking meditation transforms something we do every day into something deeply nourishing, healing, and enjoyable. This meditation is best done outdoors, where you can be energized by the trees and sky.

1. **Begin by standing** with your spine upright and your shoulders relaxed, letting your arms hang gently by your sides. Take a couple of long, slow, deep breaths. As you exhale, let go of any unnecessary tension and let your attention flow deep into your belly, hips, legs, and feet. Feel your connection to the earth.

2. **Next, begin to coordinate** your breathing with small steps. As you inhale, step forward with your left foot. As you exhale, step forward with your right foot. Continue your steps while focusing on the ground in front of you. You can also experiment with taking several steps during the inhale, and several steps with the exhale. Keep the pace slow and relaxed.

3. **As you become comfortable coordinating** your breathing with walking, try adding this beautiful visualization: Each time you place one of your feet down, imagine you are kissing the earth through the sole of your foot. Each time you pick up one of your feet, imagine that a beautiful wildflower is now blossoming in the place that your foot just was. Our walking now becomes a way of expressing our love for the earth, and of creating beauty with each step. **Walk this way for 10 minutes or longer. Notice how you feel.**

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**We must not forget to be grateful.**
**We walk for ourselves, and we walk for those who cannot walk.**
**We walk for all living beings past, present and future.**

—Thich Nhat Hanh