

## Guided Visualization

### *A Walk in the Woods*



Start by finding a comfortable position for your body. You can close your eyes or shift your gaze downward to reduce visual distractions. Notice where your thoughts go as you bring your attention inward. Notice any feelings you have. There is no need to judge them or try to change them. Just acknowledge they are there as you shift your attention to your breath. Take a relaxing breath in through your nose, and out through your mouth. Pay attention to the breath going in and see if you can draw your breath a little deeper in your body and hold for a brief moment before gently releasing it. And again. On this next breath, shift your attention to where your breath settles as it leaves your body and hold for a short moment before your next relaxing breath. Try and have this breath settle a little deeper than the last.

As you breathe, feel your body and your mind start to relax. It is natural to have your mind wander; just gently notice it and bring your attention back to your breath.

Imagine you have arrived at a wooded area for your walk in the woods. The sun is just starting to break over the horizon. The dew covering the ground melts with each footstep as you move through the grass to reach the trail ahead. You momentarily stop, pull your chin up towards the sky, and feel the cool, crisp air tickle your cheeks and cling inside your nostrils. You can smell the freshness of the woods as you begin your quiet trek through the rustling leaves and over the fallen branches. It is only you and nature. Nothing else matters but this moment as you breathe it in.

As you get deeper into the woods, your senses are picking up on the sights and sounds around you. The birds are chirping, the squirrels are chasing each other, and the tree limbs are creaking as the leaves crinkle under the pressure of the gentle wind. You hear a faint crunch off to the right and you pause your steps and your breath holds for a moment as your attention shifts to find whatever made the sound. Your eyes are scanning the area and then you see it. A young deer slowly walking in the other direction. He hasn't caught your scent as he continues to graze and wanders farther into the woods and you stand in awe of his beauty.

You continue to breathe and walk with quiet intention as you take in the sights around you. There is no pressure to go anywhere on this part of your journey through the woods. It's all about clearing your mind and being present in the moment. You notice a bench up ahead and to the right of your path and curiosity has you shift your direction as you wander towards it. You sit and scan the magnificent view that overlooks a babbling brook and an open pasture nestled in the opening of the trees. As you listen to the water burbling over the stones and rock like a soft steady rainfall, you take a moment of appreciation as you think about three things that you are grateful for.

Your eyes track movement and your attention shifts and focuses on the horses that are grazing in the pasture. You notice and smile as the small colt is bucking his legs as he runs and plays knowing he is safe under the watchful eye of his mom. You take a calming breath and you give thanks for the chance encounter of these majestic creatures and the perfect day that eliminated the stress of the week.

Hold on to this feeling of contentment and relaxation as you return your awareness to the present. Take a breath as you feel your feet or body connecting to the surface you are touching. Feel yourself reconnecting with the sights and sounds around you as you take one more breath before moving on with your day.