



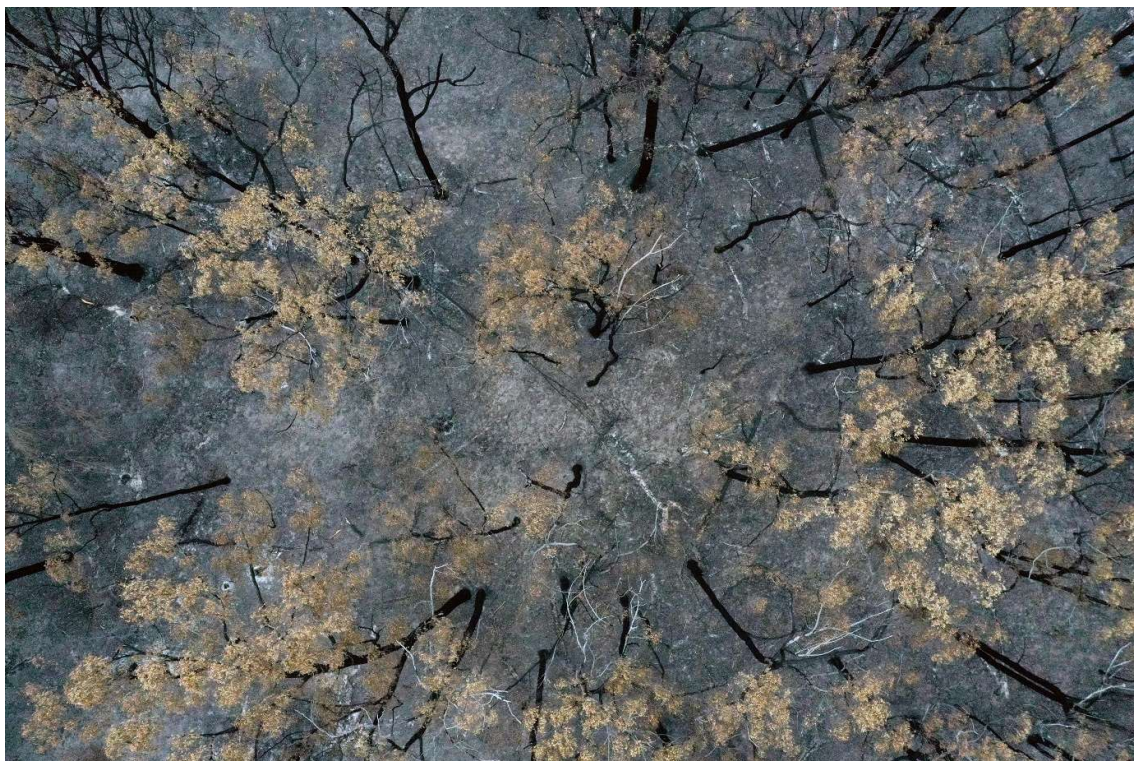
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Non-formal learning club "WE"



Breath of Nature – encounter with the forest and yourself



WORKSHOP PROGRAM

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Introduction to Workshop: “Breath of Nature – encounter with the forest and yourself”

Conduct the workshop according to our guidelines and share your reflections.

Invite adults, including seniors, and you surely know people from vulnerable groups – encourage them in particular to attend meetings held in contact with nature, e.g., in a forest, park, or community garden.

Duration: you need 4 hours (with a tea break) – you can adjust the time to suit the needs of the participants.

Participants: Adults, including seniors and people from vulnerable groups (max. 15 people)

Workshop objectives:

- Strengthening a sense of calm, mindfulness and balance.
- Reducing social isolation through shared experiences in nature.
- Coping with loneliness through shared experiences of nature
- Reducing emotional stress and tension
- Supporting participants in coping with the experience of illness and the emotions associated with it.
- Deepening the connection with nature as a source of strength and hope.

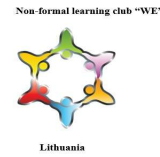
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1. Welcome and introduction (30 min)

- Greeting the group, brief introduction of the facilitator and participants (name, what I like about nature).
- Discussion of safety and comfort rules (everyone works at their own pace, you can be silent, rest, sit down).
- Introduction to the idea of “forest bathing” (shinrin-yoku) and therapy through contact with nature.
- Short mindfulness exercise: focusing on breathing and the sounds of the forest.



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2. Mindfulness walk and exercises

- Quietly walking through a section of the forest/park at a slow pace, without talking.
- Stops at several points:
 - to listen to the sounds of nature,
 - to touch the bark of trees or leaves,
 - to observe light and colours.
- Exercise: 'Senses of nature' - participants choose one sense (sight, hearing, touch, smell) and focus only on it for 5 minutes.
- Brief sharing of impressions in pairs or in a circle.

3. Break for tea and conversation (20 min)

- Warm herbal tea or infusion of lime, mint, lemon balm.
- Informal chat, sitting together on blankets or benches.
- For those wishing to do so: writing one word on a piece of paper to describe how you feel.

4. Creative encounter with nature (60 min)

- Mandala from nature" exercise: Participants create their own composition out of natural elements (leaves, pebbles, twigs), symbolising peace, strength or hope.
- Alternatively (for people with reduced mobility): drawing or painting inspired by the landscape.
- Brief discussion: What would I like to take away from this painting into my life?

5. Gratitude meditation and conclusion (40 min)

- Short relaxation guided by the facilitator's voice (e.g. 'Roots of the tree' - visualisation of stability and peace).
- Gratitude exercise: everyone can say what they thank nature or themselves for today.
- End in a circle - symbolic farewell, take a photo together or write your thoughts in the "Forest Diary".



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🔗 It is useful to:

- Ensure a calm atmosphere and a slow pace during the sessions.
- Encourage, but do not force, conversation – some participants may need silence.
- Provide a rest area for people with reduced mobility.
- In the event of bad weather, some activities (such as mandala drawing and relaxation) can be carried out under cover.

🔗 Materials needed:

- Mats, blankets or small cushions to sit on
- Cards, crayons or markers
- Cups, thermos of tea, water
- Wipes, disinfectant, first aid kit
- (Optional) bins for collected natural materials

Notes for the facilitator:

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BEFORE YOU START – A FEW TIPS FOR YOU

➤ **The workshop is based on a non-formal and experiential learning approach.**

Its purpose is not to provide therapy or solve participants' personal problems, but to create a safe and supportive environment for connecting with nature, slowing down, reducing everyday tension, building relationships and discovering personal resources. The facilitator's role is primarily to **accompany the group, invite participants to experience and carefully observe their needs**, rather than impose a fixed pace or expected way of responding.

- ⇒ **Maintain a calm and unhurried pace.** Do not try to fill every moment with an activity or conversation. Silence, pausing and simply observing the surroundings are an important part of the experience. If the group needs more time for one activity, the next one can be shortened.
- ⇒ **Invite rather than instruct.** Use phrases such as: "If you feel comfortable...", "You may want to try...", or "Choose what feels right for you." Every participant should be able to opt out of an activity without having to explain their decision.
- ⇒ **Do not require participants to share personal experiences.** During reflection rounds, participants may speak, but they may also choose to remain silent. Some people need more time to feel comfortable in a group. This may be particularly important for people experiencing loneliness, illness, loss, migration or other difficult life circumstances.
- ⇒ **Do not interpret participants' emotions.** If sadness, emotion or tension appears during an activity, there is no need to immediately ask about its cause or try to "fix" the situation. Give the person time and, if needed, offer a place to rest or the possibility of stepping aside for a while.
- ⇒ **Create a sense of safety from the beginning.** Briefly explain the workshop structure, the location, approximate duration of activities, breaks and basic rules for moving around the area. Knowing what to expect can be especially helpful for participants who feel uncertain in a new environment.
- ⇒ **Adapt the activity to the participant, rather than the participant to the activity.** A person who cannot walk for long can observe nature from a seated position. Instead of bending down to collect natural materials, participants can



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- use items placed on a table or bench. Provide an accessible resting place and allow participants to shorten or leave a walking activity if necessary.
- ⇒ **Encourage relationships without forcing interaction.** Simple activities in pairs, creating a nature mandala together, a quiet walk or sharing tea can naturally encourage conversation. However, not every activity needs to end with a group discussion. Simply being together can itself be a valuable experience.
 - ⇒ **Use simple and accessible language.** Instructions should be short and given step by step. In linguistically diverse groups, demonstration, gestures, pictures and practical examples can be more helpful than lengthy verbal explanations.
 - ⇒ **When working with refugees and people with experience of forced migration, avoid questions that require them to talk about their past.** Do not publicly ask about reasons for leaving their country, war, loss of home or family. If a participant chooses to talk about these experiences, listen without putting pressure on them to continue. The workshop should focus primarily on the experience of the **here and now**.
 - ⇒ **Remember that nature may not have positive associations for everyone.** Forests, silence, particular sounds or smells, or being alone outdoors may cause anxiety for some people. This may be particularly relevant for participants who have experienced war, displacement or other threatening situations. Allow them to remain close to the group, modify the activity or choose not to participate.
 - ⇒ **Do not assume that everyone feels comfortable with physical contact.** Activities involving touch should always be optional. The same applies to holding hands, closing the eyes or working in very close physical proximity to another person.
 - ⇒ **Treat the diversity of the group as a resource.** Participants can be invited to choose a plant, scent, landscape or element of nature that reminds them of something positive or meaningful. They should not, however, be expected to explain the personal meaning of their choice.
 - ⇒ **Observe the group throughout the workshop.** Pay attention to signs of tiredness, withdrawal, discomfort or overload. When working with older adults and people from vulnerable groups, participants' safety and comfort are more important than completing every planned activity.



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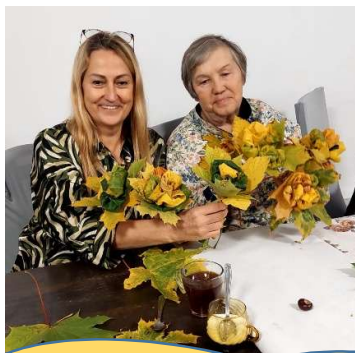
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- ⇒ **Treat the four-hour workshop plan flexibly.** Keep its overall learning flow: **entering the place and creating a sense of safety → a calm experience of nature → activity → rest and connection with others → reflection → gentle closure.** Individual parts may be shortened, extended or simplified depending on the needs of the group.
- ⇒ **Treat the tea break as part of the process, not only as an organisational break.** It can create a safe and informal space for spontaneous conversation, rest and relationship-building, which is particularly important when one of the workshop aims is to reduce social isolation.
- ⇒ **Prepare an alternative in case of bad weather.** Activities such as creating a nature mandala, sensory exercises, quiet reflection or relaxation can be moved to a sheltered area. Do not try to follow the programme at all costs if the weather, temperature or terrain causes discomfort or creates a safety risk.



*"Every leaf reminds us:
we are never alone;
nature always holds our hand"*

The most important principle for the facilitator: do not judge the quality of a participant's experience. Not everyone has to feel calmer, open up to the group or say that contact with nature has helped them.

Each participant has the right to experience the workshop in their own way. The educator's role is to create a safe space, offer opportunities for experience and preserve participants' freedom of choice.