

Wheel of Wellbeing

Place: *Mindful Listening*



Overview of the activity

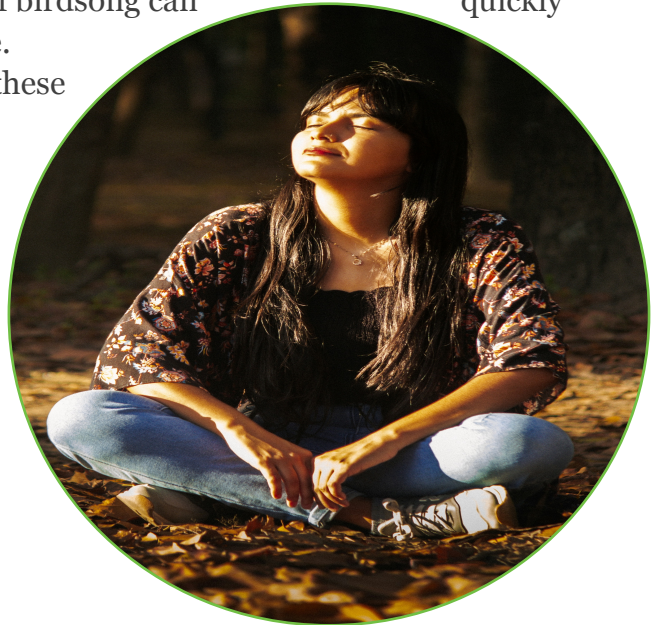
Mindful listening to nature involves intentionally settling in a natural space, closing or softening the eyes, and focusing entirely on environmental sounds without judgment. By breathing deeply and shifting focus between close and distant sounds—like rustling leaves or bird calls—you cultivate presence, calm, and connection with the environment.

Why do this?

Nature sounds have power to relax the body and ease stress. The gentle flow of water, the rustle of wind through trees, and the melody of birdsong can quickly transport us into a calmer, more peaceful state.

Research consistently shows that exposure to these natural sounds reduces stress, lowers anxiety, and supports overall mental wellbeing.

Listening to nature sounds has been linked to lower cortisol levels, the hormone associated with stress. As the body responds, heart rate slows, blood pressure drops, and muscle tension begins to fade, allowing us to truly unwind. At the same time, the brain releases endorphins—natural mood boosters—further enhancing feelings of calm and contentment.



Instructions

- 1. Prepare Your Space:** Find a comfortable spot outdoors (park, garden, forest) or indoors by an open window.
- 2. Settle the Body:** Sit or stand in a relaxed, upright position. Let your shoulders drop and feel the ground beneath you.
- 3. Begin with Breath:** Take three deep, slow breaths. Notice the inhale and exhale, allowing your attention to settle into the present moment.



Wheel of Well-being is owned by South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) and is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Share-Alike 4.0 International License. Information on this license is available at www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0. Adaptations need to follow brand guidelines available at www.wheelofwellbeing.org/brand and be signed off by SLaM. For permissions beyond the scope of this license contact hello@wheelofwellbeing.org.

Wheel of Wellbeing

Place: *Mindful Listening*



4. **Shift to Sound:** Gently close your eyes or soften your gaze. Shift your attention away from internal thoughts and outward to the sounds around you.
5. **Listen Without Judgment:** Rather than identifying or naming sounds (e.g., "that is a bird"), simply experience them as pure sound—pitch, volume, and rhythm.
6. **Expand Your Awareness:**
 - **Near Sounds:** Listen to sounds close to you, such as your own breathing or leaves rustling immediately nearby.
 - **Distant Sounds:** Shift to far-off sounds, such as wind in the trees or distant traffic.
 - **Mixed Sounds:** Allow all sounds to exist together without prioritising anyone.
7. **Reconnect and Close:** When you feel ready, gently return your attention to your physical body, notice the temperature of the air, and slowly open your eyes.

