

# Wheel of Wellbeing

## Place: *Slow Looking*



### Overview of the activity

Slow looking is simple - at its core it means taking the time to truly see beyond what's immediately obvious. Rather than glancing quickly and moving on, slow looking invites careful, focused, and sustained observation. It is a mindful practice often used with art and nature, but its value extends far beyond them.

### Why do this?

Slow looking offers an important counterbalance to our natural tendency toward *fast looking*. Most of the time, we move through our visual environments rapidly—scanning, skimming, and absorbing only surface information before shifting our attention elsewhere. We form quick first impressions, and once formed, they tend to stick. In this fast mode, we often engage in “fill-in-the-blank” looking, relying on assumptions rather than true observation. Fast looking usually serves us well. Intuitive, rapid visual sense-making helps us navigate the world efficiently. However, some things cannot be fully understood at a glance. A quick look at a tree may tell you it has a trunk, branches, and leaves. But slowing down reveals far more: the mottled patterns of lichen on its bark, the asymmetry of its canopy, and the many creatures that depend on it as part of a living ecosystem. The benefits of slow looking include:



- **Combats Distraction:** In a world of constant input, slow looking retrains the brain to focus, shifting from scanning and scrolling to deep engagement.
- **Develops Habits of Mind:** It cultivates curiosity, sustained attention, patience, and a non-judgmental stance.
- **Fosters Self-Discovery:** Through careful observation and reflection—often supported by journaling—individuals begin to notice changes in their thinking, habits, and relationships.
- **Improved Well-Being:** Builds inner strength, resilience, and compassion while reducing stress.



# Wheel of Wellbeing

## Place: *Slow Looking*



### Instructions

### Preparation

- **Choose Your Subject:** Pick one object or artwork that interests you, or even a simple everyday item.
- **Set a Timer:** Start with 3-5 minutes or try a "10-Minute Challenge".
- **Get Comfortable:** Find a good spot to view your subject without distractions.

### During the Observation

- **Let Your Eyes Wander:** Look at the whole thing, then zoom in on small parts.
- **Engage Your Senses:** Notice colours, textures, lines, shapes, and materials.
- **Ask Questions:** What do you see? What do you wonder? What surprises you? What does it make you feel?
- **Observe from Different Angles:** Move around or change your perspective.
- **Be Patient:** Your mind will wander; gently bring your focus back.

### Deepening Your Practice

- **Take Notes:** Jot down observations, questions, or sketches in a notebook.
- **Talk About It:** Share your experience with a friend or group to build on each other's ideas.
- **Revisit:** Return to the same object to find new details.

### Slow Looking How to Guides:

- [Art](#)
- [Museums](#)



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](http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0). Adaptations need to follow brand guidelines available at [www.wheelofwellbeing.org/brand](http://www.wheelofwellbeing.org/brand) and be signed off by SLaM. For permissions beyond the scope of this license contact [hello@wheelofwellbeing.org](mailto:hello@wheelofwellbeing.org).