

## Transcript: Savoring Exercise

Health Care Provider:

This is an exercise to enhance your experience of a natural environment. As humans, our minds are very good at spotting and trying to solve problems. However, they can become so problem-focused that sometimes all we see are challenges, difficulties, setbacks, and barriers to happiness. While these things certainly exist, it may help to take the opportunity to focus your attention to parts of your experience that are positive, enjoyable, or fun, not to ignore the challenges you face, but to open yourself up to all aspects of living.

Begin by taking a few deep breaths, breathing down into your belly. If you are sitting still, this may be easier than if you're being active; but either way, bring your attention to your breathing, and just notice what it feels like to breathe. See if you can be here in the present moment, noticing your breath. With each in breath, notice your belly expanding and then with each out breath, notice your belly contracting.

Your eyes may already be open, but see if you can really open your eyes, and notice the environment. What do you notice around you? What can you see? Shapes... color... motion? Try being somewhat like a little child, who, with curiosity, is seeing this environment for the first time. As you look around, is there anything that you find particularly interesting, beautiful, mesmerizing, or relaxing? Make note of it.

Now how about smells? Can you take in some deep breaths through your nose to try and sense what smells are in the area? Can you pick up anything that you hadn't previously noted? Any smells from the earth, plants, water, or other parts of the natural environment? Is there anything you especially like? If so, again, make a note of it.

And now we move to the sensation of touch. Are there any sensations on your skin or your face? You may notice a cool breeze, a light mist, the warmth of the sun. You may feel the earth under your feet – firm rock or dirt, soft sand, or vegetation. Your hands may be in contact with some part of the natural environment. Are there any of these sensations that you find pleasing or relaxing? Make a mental note of those.

Moving on to sounds. What can you hear? When we pause and bring our attention to the sounds around us, we may notice sounds of which we weren't previously aware. Are there any nearby sounds? Sounds that are far? Or sounds that are very distant? Are there constant sounds, and are there fluctuating sounds? If you're walking, can you hear your feet making contact with the ground with each step? Are there sounds that you find interesting or enjoyable? Make a note of them.

For the next few minutes, see if you can revisit those aspects of the environment that are most enjoyable or interesting to you. Are there sights you could spend a few moments studying in more depth? Are there smells you'd like to linger on? Any sensations of touch that feel good that you can welcome? And sounds that are worth more of your attention? Allow yourself to

experience these sensations fully. If that means changing your position, moving to get a better smell or look, please do so. When your mind wanders to other things, gently bring it back to these positive experiences. Spend the next few minutes really enjoying the different aspects of this environment.

Like many individuals, you may find yourself avoiding the process of savoring the present moment and avoiding the good feelings associated with savoring. While there are many reasons you might keep yourself from fully enjoying the moment, see if you can allow your resistance to these positive emotions to relax. Even for just a minute, put your guard down and open up to the positive aspects and feelings related to your experience. Our minds wander many times to other events, which is normal, but just for these few minutes, intentionally bring your attention back to the positive parts of the environment you have chosen to reflect on. You can even tell your mind, “We will almost certainly have time to reflect on the other parts of this experience later, but for right now, I’d like to experience the most enjoyable parts. The sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touch-related sensations that bring positive emotions.”

You cannot force a positive experience, just like you cannot force a seed to sprout. But, just as you can create a garden that welcomes and supports the growth of a sprout, you can create an internal environment that welcomes positive experience. With that in mind, while engaging in this savoring exercise, be intentional about noticing what is happening right here, right now, rather than what you expect to happen in the coming seconds, minutes, or hours. Your mind may wander to events from your past or in the future, but while engaging in this type of savoring, see if you can gently, and with kindness, bring your attention back to the sights, smells, sounds, tastes, and sensations of your current nature setting.

As you notice the different aspects of the environment, is there something for which you can express gratitude? It may feel odd, but you can say, “I’m feeling grateful for \_\_\_\_”? Or “I appreciate \_\_\_\_”. And it can include the warmth of the sun, the sky, the wind on your face, or the ground supporting you. See if you can allow this appreciation to grow. In fact, it may expand to more than one aspect of the environment.

If you’re with others in this experience, see if you can at some point let them know that you value being with them and are happy that you can share this experience together. If you’re alone, express appreciation for the opportunity to take care of yourself and promote your personal development through this positive exercise.

As you continue with this nature experience, see if you can continue to explore aspects of the environment that are especially appealing to you. Be curious about it. Enjoy it and allow yourself to experience it fully. Though the formal exercise will end now, you can continue to take opportunities to notice and enhance the positive aspects of this nature experience.