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THE *Tiredgirl*



Outdoor Energy

START A "SIT SPOT" PRACTICE THAT CAN LEAD
TO A HEALTHIER AND HAPPIER YOU



HERE'S THE CONCEPT...

FIND A QUIET PLACE IN NATURE, SIT DOWN,
RELAX AND JUST OBSERVE.

This ancient practice of simply finding a quiet and intimate connection with nature – a place where you learn to sit still – alone, often and quietly has immense benefits to our healing and wellbeing.

WORDS BY SUSAN JOACHIM



WHERE SHOULD MY SIT SPOT BE LOCATED?

Close by! When you are just starting with the Sit Spot practice, find a spot that is close to you: not more than a few minutes from your door. Your own balcony or garden is perfect! Community parks and gardens are pleasing, especially if there's a lake or creek.

However, research has also shown that patients with an unobstructed bedroom view to natural surroundings appear to have better supported improvement in self-reported physical and mental health during a residential rehabilitation programme.

A beautiful nature connection practice can also blossom in the confines of your home while convalescing. Plants are immensely beneficial to our health, so you can indeed have your sit spot right at home.

A Sit Spot can become like an anchor in your life -- a place to settle down, feel well, cultivate present-moment awareness and a quieter mind. Whichever place you chose to have your sit spot, here are some ways to make the best of it.

GO ALONE

Find time when your chores are done and you can slip away alone. Then quietly approach your sit spot and you'll notice more. Having established a sit spot routine, you will soon find incredible things happening around you and with you.

SIT FOR AT LEAST 20 MINUTES QUIETLY

It's a practice of being completely present, opening all the senses to become aware of all that is going on in the environment. The other part to this routine is about sitting, about stillness. Focus on improving your sit spot and your observation skills. By being a quiet, unobtrusive guest you will learn to make yourself welcome, as an accepted member of the natural community.

BE COMFORTABLE AND LEARN TO BE STILL

Be comfortable and learn to be still. Sit quietly and comfortably as this is the best way to allow the natural world to get to know you as well. After a while, birds may eye you with curiosity. Allow yourself a few minutes to start noticing. Once you sit quietly long enough, the birds accept the fact that you are there and there for good. As they return to their daily tasks, a previously hidden dimension of your landscape opens up. Simply try listening to different bird songs until you can distinguish between them.



OPEN ALL YOUR SENSES

Use all your senses: your vision, hearing, touch, taste and smell. If you are intuitive, you can use that too.

- Start with one sense at a time. I usually practice mindful breathing, closing my eyes and just noticing the textures of the air, inviting the pleasure of calmness.
- Draw your attention to the closest sounds and then expand your hearing to the sounds furthest away. I love the sound of rain as it falls on my raincoat. There's a rhythm in nature that is different throughout the seasons.
- Move your eyes to notice the smallest details – from the little daisy next to you, to the bird settling on the tree – to the full expanse of the sky and the clouds above you.
- Touch the bark of trees and the leaves with your fingers. Feel the air on your skin. Pick up a handful of sand and feel the texture as it falls through your fingers. If safe to do so, take off your shoes and walk through the grass. Earthing is known to be beneficial.
- Smell the air around you, notice the smell of fresh grass, or eucalyptus after rain. Put your nose against the bark of a tree, pick up the vanilla scent of wattle tree flowers and notice the different textures of these aromas.
- With practice, you will be able to notice how the different senses are interwoven, heightened in different seasons and encourage deeper connection to nature.

Go to your sit spot at different times

To fully benefit from your sit spot, go there at different times of day. Depending on the time of day you will notice the different birds, flowers and animals through the seasons. Dress warmly and be comfortable. If you have a sit spot outdoors, take note of the weather forecast and be prepared. Big umbrellas are good for rainy but also very sunny days!

DON'T BE CONCERNED THAT YOU CANNOT GO TO YOUR SIT SPOT AS MUCH AS YOU'D LIKE TO. GO FOR AS LONG AS YOU CAN, OR FOR A SHORT TIME IF THAT'S ALL YOU CAN. HAVING A SIT SPOT CLOSE BY HELPS A LOT.

Keep a journal, meditate or draw

Occasionally, I take my journal to my sit spot to sketch or write what I observe. Yesterday I observed what is best described as a 'territorial war' between birds at the pond. Let nature guide you to enjoy your sit spot in mindful ways.

Enjoy your sit spot in a way that brings you joy, healing, happiness and connection.

Let it remind you of your place in the great circle of life and how your unique spirit is and always will be connected to all the splendor that surrounds you.

Have fun with it. I'm going out to my Sit Spot soon.

You should sit in nature for 20 minutes a day... Unless you're busy, then you should sit for an hour.

~Old Zen Meditation.

Susan Joachim is the President of the International Nature and Forest Therapy Alliance (INFTA) and also Director of In My Nature, the only accredited institute in Australia to offer Forest Therapy Guide training following the International Core Curriculum of Forest Therapy (ICCFT). Though having worked in the hustle and bustle of the business world as Chartered Secretary, Susan is an ardent nature lover, avid hiker and very happy to have found her very own relaxing and peaceful sit spots.



In My Nature

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