

CULTIVATING CURIOSITY

Cultivating Curiosity, A Mindful Exercise

Adapted from Mark Coleman's book *Awake in the Wild*

"One could spend a lifetime learning a small range of mountains, and once upon a time, people did." It takes time and intimacy to know the secrets of a particular place. In this case, you'll be exploring a small piece of ground. Find a piece of earth, a small tide pool, a flower bed, a patch of meadow grass or a patch of forest floor and focus on an area about a square foot large- a size you could hold in your arms. Take about 30 minutes to do this exercise fully. Allow yourself to become curious about this microcosm of the world. Engage all of your senses in this exploration. Seeing, listening, touching, tasting, smelling. Find out what creatures and insects forage here, what passes through, what makes its home here. Observe the color, texture, and fragrance of the flora, noticing all the different varieties that may grow in this small area. Let this habitat come alive through your senses. Imagine if this were your whole world. What would it be like to live here as ant, beetle or spider? Imagine if you were a blade of grass here. Maybe you would feel a grasshopper walking up your spine, or be pushed aside by an alligator lizard. How deep and intertwined are your roots? As in any meditation practice, when you notice you have become lost in your thinking, bring your attention back to the present, to your little plot of land. Look deeper and resume your exploration like an archeologist uncovering a sacred fossil. See if you can find beauty, interest, fun in what you are doing.

Once you are done and back in your "regular" life, try to bring that curiosity with you. Similar abundance lies everywhere, in your yard, your street neighborhood. People around you are whole ecosystems in themselves! Endeavor to bring this spirit of exploration and curiosity to all aspects of your life!

