



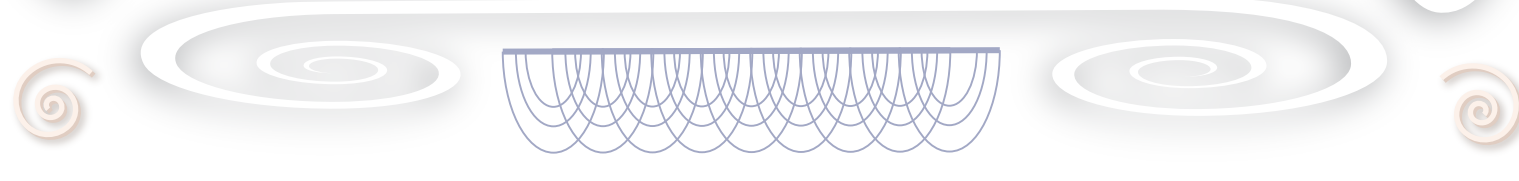
Makeovers Meditation Exercises. Observation: Plants and Animals.

This exercise will bring about a shift in your ability to notice the details of your immediate surroundings. ***Awareness builds appreciation for the details in life.***

The beauty of nature and the miracle of how animals interact with their environment are often things that we overlook in our busy lives. Observing how an animal eats, nurtures its young, or flies in a flock is truly the ***miracle of life in action.***

Nature performs magic everyday for us—if only we pay attention and give it its due regard. Take the time to view nature as important and as awe inspiring as it truly is. Building the ability to see how many different plants and animals there are in just a walk around your neighborhood will pull you out of your busy inner dialogue and divert your attention long enough to give your thoughts a little mini-vacation from worries.

As you practice this observation exercise on plants and animals, let your mind play and imagine. Here are some thoughts and an example to get you started:

- Observing an animal for a brief time gives you a chance to really feel what it's like to be that animal. Let your imagination take on the thought of *being* that animal: Its body, its purpose for living, eating, sleeping, protecting itself from danger, caring for its young, etc.
 - *"This tree has probably been here 100 years. It has such stamina against the elements! If a life force could choose to be whatever it wanted, this one chose to be a tree. Strong and steadfast, changing with each season, it has beautiful lush green leaves in the spring and jewel toned colors in the fall. Some trees bear delicious sweet fruits like cherries or apples. Others bear fragrant flowers like lilacs. How amazing!"*
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Exercise:

1. Go for a walk.
2. Clear your mind of all thoughts.
3. Let your attention wander to various plants and animals. Place your attention on one plant or animal at a time.
4. Label the plant or animal in your inner dialogue. Say to yourself, "*plant,*" or "*animal.*" If you know the common term for it, use it: Dandelion, pansy, elm, oak, squirrel, dog, cat, etc.
5. Quiet all inner dialogue and any judgment past the common label.
6. Now begin the observation process:
 - *It is moving fast/slow.*
 - *It is eating.*
 - *It is taking care of its babies.*
 - *It has fur.*
 - *It is searching for food.*
 - *It has many colors.*
 - *It is watchful.*
 - *It is big/little.*
 - *It bends with the wind.*
 - *It has pointy ears.*
 - *Its bark has a rough texture.*
 - *Its branches are thick/ long.*
7. Try to notice every detail about the plant or animal.
8. Gently let go of any thoughts that come up that do not pertain to the plant or animal that you are observing.
9. Stay with this exercise as long as you wish. When you are done, say to yourself, "I am done now. Peace."

