

AN INVITATION TO  
PERSONAL REFLECTION  
& WELL-BEING



 Comox Valley  
Hospice Society


## Introduction

This guide is part of the **Comox Valley Hospice Society Nature Walks Program** (CVHS). It is a self-care program designed to connect people who are journeying through loss, illness, or caregiver fatigue, with the healing powers and beauty of nature. Using the guidebook provided, you can take part in a self-led nature walk at your own pace, using the themed questions provided for personal reflection, and allow nature to be a therapeutic environment in which wellness can occur. By focusing on the present moment and experiencing the sights and sounds of nature, many find that a sense of wellbeing and calm reduces feelings of sadness, hopelessness, fear, anxiety and loneliness.

### How to Use This Guide:

Using the questions in the provided reflection points, you'll be exploring the theme of **Cycles of Life**. We suggest choosing a walking location you're already familiar with, but this guide can be applied in any location where you feel comfortable. As you walk, the guide will refer to **five stops** you'll be asked to make. These stops can be any places on your route that invite you to slow down, to linger, or rest. The guide will refer to these places as "reflection stops".

 = rest/reflection stops

 = topic for reflection, journaling, taking a picture with your cell phone, doing some drawing or some other form of creative expression

### Welcome

Please dress appropriately for the terrain and the weather. Bring along a journal, a pen, some water, and a cell phone (if you have one). As this is a reflective walk and you'll be focused inwardly as well as outwardly, we recommend muting your phone and leaving pets at home. Please review the alerts on pages 13-14.



### Before You Begin:

You will be choosing your route, as well as where you will pause for reflection. As you walk, be prepared to stop along the way. As your walk is not intended to be focused solely on physical exercise, it's okay to be flexible, to be open to a change in destination, or for your route to take a little longer than it normally would.

Take a moment to check in with yourself. What is your mood like? How are you feeling? What bodily sensations are you noticing? What thoughts are running through your mind?

## ***My Reflections***

*"Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty." - Albert Einstein*



## ***A Focus on Cycles of Life***

What do you think about when you hear the word "cycles"? Does it bring up images of nature? There are many different cycles in nature: day and night, monthly lunar cycles, and seasons. Do you think about generations? Or perhaps your mind goes to situations or habits in your relationships that have recurring themes. Maybe these thoughts bring comfort as you think about the natural order of things, or perhaps the word cycles makes you think "here we go again."

Before you begin your walk, take a few moments to think about the context of cycles that most resonates in your life today and in which area(s) you are wanting to experience healing.

**Now take a deep breath and look around at your surroundings, and begin your walk using all of your senses.**



### #1 Reflection Stop

Describe the place where you have decided to stop. In what ways does this place remind you of cycles?

### \*Reflective Points

- As you look around at your surroundings, what things do you see that are unique for this particular time of year?
- What things can you see that will be experiencing change as the season progresses?

## **My Reflections**

*"Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you."  
- Frank Lloyd Wright*



### #2 Reflection Stop

Take a few moments to think about why you have chosen this reflection stop. What examples of cycles are you noticing?

#### \*Reflective Points

- Do you notice anything in your surroundings that has been shaped by the cycles in its environment? (A rotting log, a bending tree, or perhaps the smoothness of the stones.)
- In what ways have you been shaped by your life experiences?
- How are current or recent experiences changing you?

### *My Reflections*



### #3 Reflection Stop

Describe this reflection stop and how it relates to your responses to cycles.

#### \*Reflective Points

- Take in your natural surroundings. Notice what is living and what is dying.
- How does viewing the changes in nature bring to mind your own mortality?
- Can you think of how experiencing grief has changed you?

### *My Reflections*



#### #4 Reflection Stop

Are your choices of reflection stops similar or different each time? What criteria do they seem to have in common? In what ways have your stops been unique?

#### \*Reflective Points

- In what ways does the natural world respond to cycles of change?
- Can you identify anything in your surroundings that does not experience change?

## **My Reflections**

"Nature repairs everything."  
- Baron de Montesquieu



### #5 Reflection Stop

Is it becoming easier or more difficult to recognize the cycles around you? Describe the way this final stop relates to natural cycles.

#### \*Reflective Points

- How does the wind feel on your skin? Is it coming from a new direction? How has the light changed since you began your walk?
- Have you gained any insights today? What cycles do you recognize in your own life?

### *My Reflections*

## *A Few Final Thoughts*

- Become aware of your thoughts, feelings, moods, and bodily sensations. What are you experiencing now?
- What is different from when you started your nature walk?

As you conclude the reflective part of your walk, take a deep breath and let it out. Offer thanks to yourself for taking this time to be present, mindful and caring for your whole being. Over the next few days, some of your reflections may come to mind again. Be open to the insights nature has offered you as you contemplate the natural rhythms of cycles.



*"When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world." - Don Muir*

## ***Be Alert to...***

### **Stormy Weather and High Wind Events**

Be cautious when walking on forested trails when the weather turns stormy and wet. Trails can be slippery and winds can dislodge branches, or cause unstable trees to fall, during, or shortly after a storm. Let others know where you are going and when you expect to be back.

### **Fluctuating River Heights**

Seasonal rains and spring runoff can cause flooding in some low-lying areas around local rivers. Please maintain a safe distance when waterways are flowing high and fast; and only go as close as you feel safe to do so. Some areas may sound a siren to indicate when the water level is about to change rapidly.

### **Dogs off Leash or Wildlife Encounters**

You may come across other walkers in the area who have dogs off leash. Most dog owners are courteous and willing to call their dogs to re-leash them but if the owner is not in sight, and you feel anxious, try to take a few deep breaths to remain calm. For more information about wildlife encounters, see page 14.

## **An Encounter with Wildlife is Always Possible**

As the park is used by the public on a regular basis, and may produce garbage that attracts wildlife, it's recommended that you don't carry food and please dispose of any waste in the receptacles provided. Be mindful of dogs that may be loose. We have also included some tips from the provincial wildlife conservation website, to help minimize risk should you happen to encounter a black bear, cougar, or deer in nature.

If you see a black bear:

- Remain calm and use a quiet monotone voice
- Try to distance yourself from the bear by slowly backing away
- Keep your eye on the bear without making direct eye contact
- Ensure the bear is able to avoid you with a clear escape route
- Do not feed them or try to approach them
- Do not run, kneel, or try to climb a tree
- Continue only after the bear has left the area and you feel it is safe to do so.
- Ensure you are not carrying anything that would attract them

If you see a cougar:

- Keep the cougar in front of you at all times
- Do what you can to make yourself appear as large as possible
- Never run or turn your back as this may provoke an attack
- If it shows interest in you, respond aggressively by maintaining eye contact, show your teeth and make loud noises
- Arm yourself with rocks or sticks to fight back if necessary focusing on its face and eyes
- Leave the area when it is safe to do so

If you see a deer:

- Keep your distance and do not approach it
- Allow the deer to have an escape route

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CVHS respectfully acknowledges that these nature walks take place on the unceded traditional territory of the K'òmoks First Nation.

We gratefully acknowledge the following organizations whose walking wellness programs were the inspiration for CVHS Nature Walks Program:

- Bloedel Reserve's "Stroll from Home Program"
- Missouri Botanical Garden's "Journey for Wellness"
- Morikami Museum and Japanese Garden's "Stroll for Well-Being"
- Niagara Hospice's "Mindful Hiking Group"

We also recognize and appreciate the dedication and hard work of the CVHS Nature Walks Development Team.

CVHS Nature Walks Program includes:

- Air Park Amble (under development)
- Puntledge River Transition Walk
- Puntledge River Sensory Walk
- Strolls for Wellness Journey Walk
- Strolls for Wellness Aliveness Walk
- Cycles of Life
- Trust

While we offer the Nature Walks Program without charge, please consider making a donation to fund CVHS programs, and/or offer a testimonial of your experience that we can share with others.

Visit our website [www.comoxhospice.com](http://www.comoxhospice.com) or call 250-339-5533.

## IN APPRECIATION FOR FUNDING



Sovereign Order of St. John