

# Podcast Walk



1 – 2 Hours



Mental Health

## OVERVIEW

Walking in nature has been shown to have numerous benefits, including improved concentration, reduced stress and anxiety, and better physical health. In this lesson, students go for a nature walk while listening to a podcast. They use this experience to connect with nature and reflect on the themes presented in the podcast.

## USEFUL FOR

- Connecting with nature
- Boosting physical and mental health
- Deepening students' understanding of the course content
- Strengthening bonds between students

## MATERIALS

- Smartphone and headphones (one per student)
- Podcast episode on any topic relevant to the course
- Set of 6 – 8 quotations from the podcast episode (one set per group of 4 students)
- Appropriate footwear and clothing for walking outdoors
- Colouring pages and pencil crayons (one set per for every student in your class who has mobility restrictions that may prevent them from going on a nature walk)

## PREPARATION

1. **Select a podcast episode and create a hand-out with 6 – 8 quotations from the episode.** Students will discuss these quotations before listening to the podcast.
2. **Map out a walk that lasts as long as the podcast episode you selected.** Try to find a forest trail or, if this is not possible, a route that will take students through parks and along leafy streets.

3. **One week in advance, announce that the class will be going outside and listening to a podcast.** Tell students they will need a smartphone and headphones. Also tell them they will be spending 15 – 60 minutes walking outside (depending on the length of the podcast episode), so they should dress for the weather.
4. **Ensure students can download the podcast episode you selected.** Some students will already have a podcast app on their phones; they should be able to download the episode through their app. Other students may not have a podcast app on their phones. These students would benefit from having access to a downloadable audio file (emailed to them or posted to the course LMS). That way, they won't have to use their phone data to stream the podcast episode while walking out of wi-fi range.

## PROCEDURE

1. **Engage students by having them explore quotations from the podcast episode they will listen to.** Give each group of 4 students a set of 6 – 8 quotations from the podcast episode. Ask each student to pick one quotation that resonates with them and tell their group members why they picked their quotation. After students have had a few minutes to discuss in small groups, bring the class together. Read one of the quotations that resonated with you, and explain why. Then, invite 2 – 3 students to share the quotations they picked with the class. The goal of this activity is to have students begin making connections to the course material. This step is especially important if the podcast explores abstract concepts and/or ideas that will be new to many students.
2. **Share the purpose of the podcast walk and explain the walking portion of the activity.**
  - Make sure students understand the route they will be taking and discuss any safety guidelines they should follow (e.g. walk with a buddy, stay on the path). Encourage students to walk at their own pace and take time to appreciate their surroundings.
  - Provide instructions and materials (e.g. colouring pages and pencil crayons) for students with mobility restrictions.
  - Be sure to specify a meeting time and place where students should gather after listening to the podcast. This announcement is especially important for any students with mobility restrictions who will not be going on the walk.
3. **Lead students on a walk.** As students begin walking, they should start playing the podcast on their audio devices.
4. **Debrief the activity.** After the walk, facilitate a sharing circle, where each student has the opportunity to share their reactions to the podcast. Weather permitting, teachers are encouraged to hold the sharing circle outside. A large part of students' education takes place indoors, which means students and teachers have limited opportunities to directly experience the natural world. This is especially true as we are increasingly interacting with others through virtual communities. The less time we spend in nature, the harder it is to form close relationships with other species and the ecosystems that support us.

## EVALUATION

In the last few minutes of class, create space for students to consolidate what they learned.

- **Knowledge and understanding option** – Teachers can create questions testing students’ understanding of key concepts or themes from the podcast.
- **Reflection option** – Invite students to take 10 minutes to write (or record) a response that includes:
  - **A text-to-text connection:** How do the ideas in this podcast remind you of another text (book, article, lecture slides, movie, song, etc.)?
  - **A text-to-self connection:** How do the ideas in this podcast relate to your own life, ideas, and experiences?
  - **A text-to-world connection:** How do the ideas in this podcast relate to the larger world – past, present, or future?

## EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING

- The podcast walk is a great opportunity to centre and listen to BIPOC ideas and intellectual contributions. There are many excellent podcasts by BIPOC creators; consider asking your librarian for help finding an appropriate podcast episode for your course.
- The shared experience of spending time outdoors can help build community among students. Going on a nature walk, students will face various challenges – mosquitoes, a boot full of snow, physical exertion, figuring out how to relate to their peers when not seated at a desk, etc. Experiencing these challenges as a group helps students form a communal bond.
- To make this activity accessible to all students, make sure you have options available for students who don’t own a smartphone or headphones. You might be able to borrow equipment from your institution’s IT office.
- Prepare an alternative version of the activity for students with limited mobility. For example, you suggest they find a quiet spot on campus and colour while listening to the podcast. Like walking in nature, colouring can help create inner calmness.
- Students may not be dressed for the weather. Depending on the weather, teachers might consider bringing sunscreen, extra mittens, or other items that will help students be more comfortable during the walk.

## ADAPTATIONS AND EXAMPLES

- If you want to give students more control over their learning, you can post a selection of four or five different podcast episodes and invite students to select the one that most interests them.

## USEFUL RESOURCES

- [What should you do if you meet a black bear?](#) by the National Capital Commission

- [Set of quotations](#) selected to help students explore *Enormous Fires Everywhere*, a Canadaland episode exploring how wildfires are impacting First Nations communities and what Indigenous people are doing to protect their communities from wildfires.
- [Black Lives Matter Canada Podcasts](#) by Columbia College
- [Indigenous Podcasts](#) by the University of British Columbia
- [Don't Call Me Resilient](#) a podcast about race and racism by Vinita Srivastava