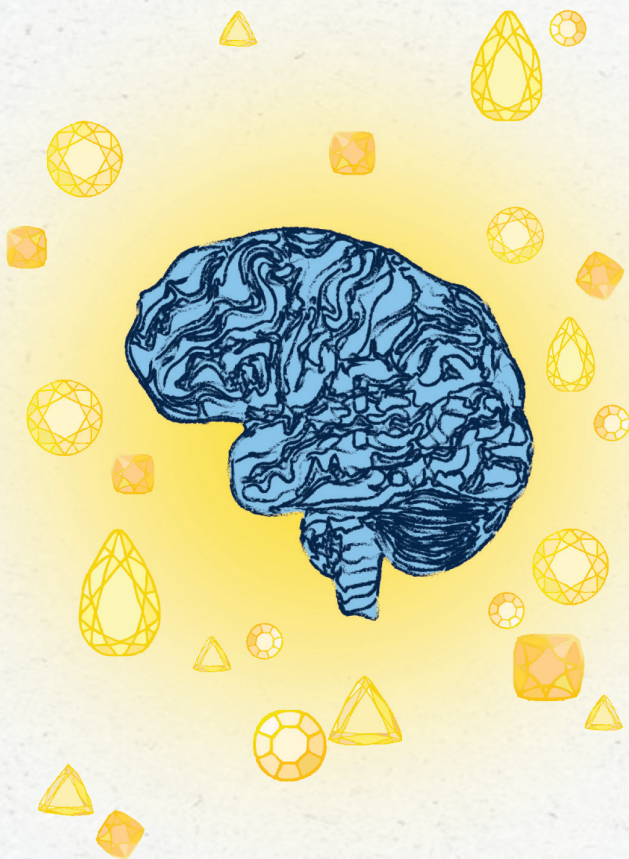


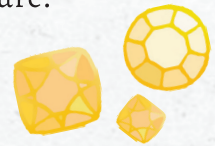
CULTIVATING STILLNESS



Psychogeography

Psychogeography (psycho + geography) is a playful exploration of our environment. As we walk, we let go of our walking habits and notice the effect the changing locations have on our emotions and behaviour. The philosopher Guy Debord originally termed psychogeography in 1955. He talked about this process as going on a *dérive* - or 'drift'.

As we drift, we loosen up our habits, get in touch with how these places make us feel and tap into our intuition to discover new territories. The roots of psychogeography are based in the art movements of Dadaism and Surrealism. One aspect of these movements was to see and show the world in a different light. Originally designed as a form of urban wandering, psychogeography can be applied to any environment. Used this way, we can choose to go on a sensory walk in nature.



Walking to learn and create

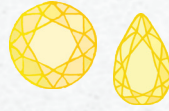
Walking and learning about the world and oneself was considered in Ancient Greece to be strongly interconnected. Students of the Peripatos school walked through the Athenian Lyceum as a key method for integrating the teaching of Aristotle. This has since been explored by many more generations of seekers.

We know that thinkers, poets and creatives have a strong relationship with walking. They navigate “between worlds, between aspects of self, and between cultural identities”. As such, *dérives* are invitations to connect to the world, our emotions, and sense of aliveness, they are metaphors of our well-being. By putting on a ‘fresh pair of eyes’ and

1 Poole S., Scott C., Marichalar-Freixa E. (2020) *Psychogeography and Well-Being*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95681-7_58

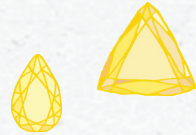
looking at our surroundings under this new lens, our habits dissolve, we open up and absorb information effortlessly. We interact in new ways with our environment and let our intuition and creativity flow.

Walking to become present



Walking in the bush can form one of these ‘between worlds’ experiences in which we (our thoughts and body) merge with the natural world. This metaphysical encounter leads to the quieting of our mind and brings about clarity. As such, walking can be an aesthetic and spiritual experience. We respond to the world and the world responds to us. When practiced in silence, walking gives rise to introspection, inviting us to explore the outside world as much as being present with our inner-self. Such contemplation leads to an important sense of well-being which you will gain a better understanding of when you experience it in the chapter activity.

Mapping our emotions



A *dérive* will naturally bring us in touch with our emotions, and of course, some locations can trigger powerful ones. When this happens, mapping our emotions can help alleviate trauma. When capturing on paper any turmoil we experience, we can recognise and accept the business of our mind, and process our emotions. We can also distance ourselves from this unrest and take the opportunity to look at it without engaging our thoughts. This is another important aspect of the healing process: to notice and accept when the inner voice rises and let go of it without dwelling on it or judging it.

Using the place where we live, indoor or outdoor, as a psychogeographical playground can bring creativity and fun to our family and Community. If the following activities speak to you, remember to share them with your loved ones!

Walking + Drawing

Materials needed:
Notebook and pen
Voice recorder, camera

The following activities can be adapted to any environment: a classroom, the bush, an office, a hospital room, the town you live in. Before your journey, if you intend to travel outdoors, pack a snack and some water. Let someone know the area where you are venturing.

Remember to carry a notebook and pen to record your adventure through doodles, sketches and notes. Collect found bits and pieces, maps and diagrams. Capture sound with a voice recorder and visual with a camera.

Dérive at home

The proposed destinations form a method of unknowing what we are so accustomed to. They are invitations to willing voyagers to take a break, and discover their familiar setting under an engaging bright new light. They will ignite the adventurous spark that sleeps within each one of us. Once lit up, this helps cultivate stillness within.

Take a gentle walk with the aim to discover something new. This journey is composed of four destinations that can be done in the proposed order or following your own. Some activity suggestions are added, so you can redo these destinations and each time, discover something new.

Destination 1

Walk in the room where you are for 20 seconds (use your stopwatch).

Stop. Look in front of you and find a pattern even if there is not any. Record it in your journal. In writing, associate to your doodle (or sketch) an emotion or point of tension. If you feel the need, write, draw, colour, dance, sing, take photos about it.

Variation: adapt by changing the walk duration, the room or space you are in, by looking right/left, adding extra steps (turn right/left, go down/up).



Destination 2

Listen to a song that has no lyrics (classic or meditation musics are great for this) while walking aimlessly at home, in the indoor space you are in.

Let the sound guide your steps, feel the vibrations within, pay attention to how it makes you feel.

At the end of the song, look out for “new” words in newspapers, posters, book covers, logos, packaging, signs... that match your sense of aliveness. If necessary, create your own word by using found letters only. Record it in your journal.

Variation: look for colours, texture, light quality instead of words.



Destination 3

For 1 minute, walk, jump, run, turn, balance on one foot, climb stairs, and swing.

In your journal, keep the point of your pen down and draw without looking in a continuous line to create a map of your journey. The movement/vibrations will lead the pencil across the page rather than you, directing it.

Add a colour next to your map that matches your experience.

Variation: walk faster, slow down, alternate between each action, move at a varying pace (fast/stop/fast/slow; fast/slow/fast/slow etc.)



Destination 4

Find an object you feel immediately drawn to in the room next to the one you are in.

Think of the memories and emotions they bring up. How do they connect you to the world with others? Draw the shapes that come up within you, the shapes or patterns between the object, yourself and your connections with others.

This can show how stillness within also takes place in finding connection into a realm that is expansive and full of possibility.

Variation: rather than an object, find a texture, a scent, a sound, a light quality.



Journaling

In your journal, looking through your notes on this psychogeography experience, mark down any positive outcome. This could form a composition on which you add, each time you 'travel'. The aim is to build a visual sanctuary which you visit when in need of peace, to cheer up or to draw inspiration from.

Think about inventing outdoor psychogeographic adventures to further your sense of discovery and to become present with your surrounding. Next time you step outside:

- Use the alphabet to record your journey (what do you see that starts with the letter A? the letter B? etc.)
- Do the same thing using colours (can you see any blue objects? flowers?), numbers, and geometrical shapes (do you notice a circular pattern?).
- Using your common sense and keeping safe, invent impossible rules that will lead you off your usual track (walk for 2 minutes, then turn 90 degrees left/right and take note of what is there. Resume walking for a minute, gently jog for 2 minutes and walk backwards, stop and look up, record the clouds, the tree's branches, etc...).

Invite your friends or Community to go on a walk together. At the end of the walk, share your discoveries. How different was each person's experience? Have others recorded their journey in ways you had not imagined before that could be useful for future adventures? What did not go according to plan? Did you learn anything from it?

Use your journal to write down this collective adventure. You can revisit it later and reflect further more.

Activity for Children

Materials needed:
Wind, quiet and space to move (barefoot if safe).
This is an outdoor physical expression activity.

Activity

We too often walk in our neighbourhood on auto-pilot, and forget to see, sense, be curious and present. As we rush to our destination, we miss on all the beauties the world has to offer! Learning to look with 'fresh eyes' simultaneously makes us discover our surroundings under a new light and expands our awareness. As such, this creative walking activity draws on our sense of observation and perception.

Step 1 - A Week Before

Unfold a map of the neighbourhood, ask a volunteer among the children to place a glass anywhere on the map. Draw around its edge. Before the expedition day, check that the area is safe for children to walk as close as possible along that curve.

Step 2 - Preparation

On the day of the expedition, write on pieces of paper the following roles (which can be adapted to the age group): The Calligrapher, The Illustrator, The Leaf Viewer, The Poet or The Word Recorder, The Colour Noticer, The Shape Documentarian, The Smell Witness, The Bird Watcher, The Storyteller, The Tempo Observer or Sound Archivist, The Feather Reporter, The Path Scribe, The Texture Sampler... ask each child to pick a role from the hat.

Step 3 - Expedition

Each child records the field experience through drawings (without looking at the piece of paper!), charcoal rubbing, colour swatches, words, scribbles, poetry, etc, using the tools and media they are naturally drawn to. For young children, choose a theme (colours for example) and as you walk, ask them to say outloud what they see that is pink, green, blue. For children learning the alphabet, ask them to look for objects starting with the letter A, B, C, etc.

Step 4 - Display

Once back from the expedition, organise a display of the artworks, poems and other creations. Share each other's discoveries and experience of the space covered, how they followed the map. Also discuss how exploring their local area impacted on their inner world, creativity and senses.

