A photograph of a forest with tall trees and sunlight filtering through the canopy. The trees are mostly evergreens, and the ground is covered in low-lying vegetation and fallen branches. The lighting is warm and golden, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

Fiona Doubleday

*A mindful  
walk*

## A Mindful walk

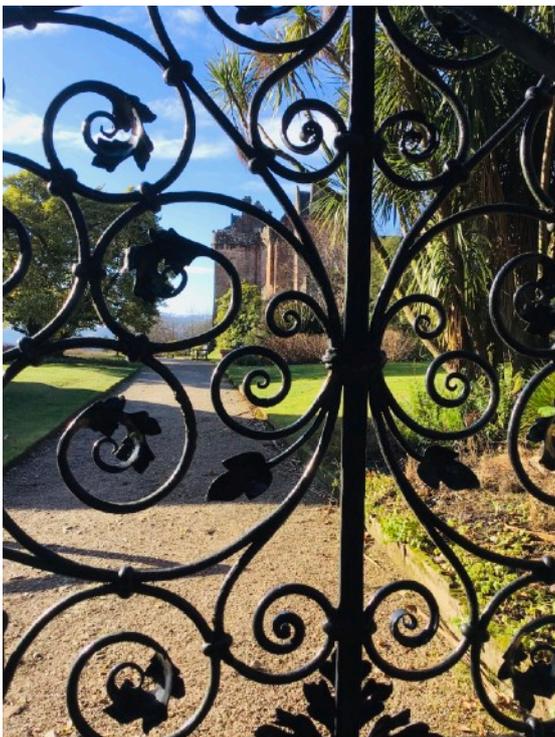
Let us use our minds to take us on a journey. Let us prepare.....

It is a good idea to sit near an open window on a sunny day to do this exercise -

Find a place to sit comfortably. Focus on your breath. Take a deep breath in through your nose for a quiet count of 4 and then release that breath slowly through your mouth for a count of 5. Repeat 4 times and on each exhale let a little more tension go. Focus entirely on your breath and, if you feel comfortable, close your eyes. Sit quietly for a few moments.



Gently open your eyes so that you can read through your journey. Pause regularly before moving forward. Use your mind's eye as your guide.



You are standing at the gates to a park in the middle of a busy town. You can hear the traffic noise but if you listen very carefully you can also hear birdsong. Let the traffic noise disappear and focus on the birdsong.

In front of you there is an open iron gate, as black as a dark night. But the gate opens and you take your first steps into the park. Using your mind's eye imagine closing that gate and shutting out the noise, sights and smells of the town.

Take in your view. The park is large with many mature trees. The weeping willows in the distance with a bench under them

immediately catch your eye. You will head for there. Paths lead off in different directions. Choose which path to take. As you start to walk along your chosen path, what do you see? What can you hear? What can you smell?

Your path starts to wind towards some water. You can hear the fountain and as you turn a corner there is a beautiful pool with a fountain in the middle. Study the fountain - what do you see?

Sit gently on the edge of the pool so you might listen to the sound of the water. Sit quietly and listen.....

The clouds above part and the sun comes out. Sit by your pool, close your eyes and listen.....

Open your eyes and re-focus on your route. Begin walking again as people gather at the pool. Leave the people behind you and walk forwards.....

You are overwhelmed with the sound of birdsong and you see a bird feeding station ahead of you. Walk near to it but not too near to disturb the birds. A couple of birds are in the water station having a noisy bath. What can you see? How does it make you feel?

Leaving the bird feeding station behind you you weave your way through the crowds of people gathering to watch the birds. Your path starts to head down into a quiet glade of trees. Trees either side of the pathway are creating



shadows as the clouds move across the sky. Watch the shadows. Look for your own shadow.....can you find it? You see it and it confirms that you are present.

Walk through the quiet glade listening to very faint rustling of the trees. Trees communicate with each other below ground. What do you imagine they are saying?

Your path is leading you closer and closer to the weeping willows and that bench. You have brought your stitching with you in your bag and you hope nobody sits down on 'your' bench.

A sudden movement catches your eye and you see a squirrel leaping between the branches, You look around. No-one else has noticed the squirrel. You keep walking.....

A final gentle bend and the weeping willow trees are directly in front of you and you are quite alone. In a few steps you claim the bench and just sit for a few moments watching all the people walking, gazing, smiling and chatting.

You reach for your sewing bag and pull out the piece you are working on and prepare to stitch. What are you working on at the moment? Gently and quietly you start to stitch. Piece by piece the world

around you starts to dim very slightly as you focus on your work, one stitch at a time.



Allow your breath to soften as each stitch moves across the fabric. Feel the weight of the fabric and see your work continuing to grow. This is your project and this is your time. Stitching helps to quieten and calm your mind as you focus on the rhythm of the needle moving through the fabric. Shapes are forming and progress is being made. Your stitching is always your happy place.

You need more thread and are rummaging in your bag when a lady sits down at the other end of the bench. You smile weakly slightly disappointed that you are no longer alone....no matter - your needle is re-threaded and you begin to stitch again. Once more the world around you starts to dim just very slightly. This is broken by some words spoken into the air between you and the lady at the other end of the bench.....

*'That is beautiful stitching. I wish I could stitch...'*

*You look up from your work and smile and her eyes are smiling back.*

*'It is easy' you utter.....let me teach you.....*



*Fiona Doubleday x*