

Tuning Into the Tide: A Seashell Meditation for Camp Staff

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SUMMARY: In this session we will use seashells and meditation techniques as tools for deepening our own self-awareness and strengthening our ability to support others at camp.

GOALS:

- **Cultivate a Deeper Sense of Presence** – Participants will develop an awareness of what it means to be fully present by engaging their senses in a guided meditation with seashells. They will reflect on how presence influences their ability to observe and support others in a camp setting.
- **Strengthen Observational Skills for Working with Campers** – Through sensory exploration and reflection, participants will enhance their ability to observe and respond to the unique needs of each camper. They will learn how presence and intentional observation are essential tools for cultivating a supportive and inclusive environment.
- **Create a Personal Symbol of Presence** – Participants will design a seashell necklace or bracelet that serves as a tangible reminder of their commitment to being present. This craft will help them internalize key takeaways from the session and provide a meaningful, personal tool to support mindfulness and presence throughout the summer.

AUDIENCE: Teens, 20-25 participants

TIMING: 60 Minutes

MATERIALS:

- Seashells
- Beads
- String
- Tea lights
- Scissors

SET-UP: Ensure that you have a quiet, dark space to complete the activity.

SESSION TIMELINE

- 00:00-00:05 – *Welcome & Grounding*
- 00:05-00:20 – *Meditation: Engaging the Senses with Shells*
- 00:20-00:30 – *Meditation Reflection*
- 00:30-00:45 – *Creation of Shell Necklace/Bracelet*
- 00:45-1:00 – *Sharing & Closing Reflection*

SESSION OUTLINE

00:00-00:05 – Welcome & Grounding

- **Settle In:** Facilitator invites each participant to find a comfortable seat.
- **Introduction:** Facilitator invites each participant to showcase a symbol with their hands that represents an aspect of who they are (which serves as a way for them to introduce themselves.)
- **Cultivating presence:** Facilitator frames – In just a moment, I'll invite you to close your eyes. Take a deep breath in... and now a deep breath out. Let's take one more breath together, allowing ourselves to fully arrive in this space.
- Background:
 - **Music:** Calming music, resembling [beach waves] playing in the background
 - **Candles:** set-up to set the mood.

00:05-00:20 – Meditation: Engaging the Senses with Shells

Full Script for Meditation:

I invite you to find a comfortable seat. Allow your body to settle. Let's take two deep, collective breaths together. Inhale deeply... and exhale slowly. Again, inhale... and exhale.

You are at camp.
It's been a long day.

You've been holding a lot: mediating arguments between campers, repeating instructions that go unheard, feeling pulled in all directions. You're physically tired. Emotionally spent. You have found yourself growing extremely impatient, and you know it's time; you need a break.

It's late afternoon, and you finally have an hour off. You head to the one place that always brings you a sense of calm: the beach.

As you walk, the usual camp sounds begin to fade. Laughter, shouting, footsteps—they grow quieter with each step. The noise falls away, and in its place: stillness. The gentle lapping of the lake. A light breeze rustling through the trees.

You find your spot. You lay down a towel and sit, gazing out over the water.
For the first time all day, you feel like you can breathe.
You feel like you can just be.

This is your moment. To pause. To reflect. To be present.

What does the word “presence” mean to you?

What does it look like to be truly present for your own needs?

You take another deep breath, grounded by the scene in front of you. And then, in the distance, you notice someone walking toward you. Slowly. Calmly. You squint, unsure who it is... until you recognize them.

It’s your camp director.

They walk up beside you and say gently,

"I want to show you something spectacular... but first, close your eyes."

It feels a little strange, but you trust them. You close your eyes.

Then they say, “Now, hold out your hand.”

You do, and something small and familiar is placed in your palm: a seashell.

Look – With your eyes still closed, picture it.

What does it look like in your imagination?

Feel – Let your fingers explore its surface.

Is it smooth? Rough? Ridged? Cool to the touch?

Smell – Bring it closer to your nose.

Does it have a scent? If so, what does it remind you of?

Hear – Bring it up to your ear.

What do you hear? The distant ocean? The echo of something familiar? Or something entirely new?

Your director places a second shell in your hand.

Once again:

Look – Imagine what it might look like. Is it different from the first?

Feel – Notice its texture. Is there contrast?

Smell – Is the scent the same? Or does this one evoke something different?

Hear – What do you hear this time?

Now, I invite you to slowly open your eyes.

Next to you is a small flashlight. Pick it up.

Shine it on the shell in your hand.

What do you notice?

How is it different from what you imagined? What surprises you about seeing it clearly now?

Here’s the invitation:

What if you approached being a counselor the same way you approached that seashell?

With curiosity.
With patience.
With openness to surprise.
With all your senses.

If you can meet each camper, each moment, and even yourself with that kind of presence...
You will have unlocked something truly spectacular.

- **Framing: Facilitator shares,** I invite you to reflect on the word presence. What does it mean to you? How does presence show up in your life?
- **Guided Exploration:**
 - With your eyes closed, I invite you to put out your hand and to receive a seashell. Please keep it resting in your hand until I share additional instructions.
 - **Guide participants through the following prompts:**
 - **I invite you to imagine – what does the seashell look like?**
 - **Touch:** What do you notice about the texture of the seashell? Is it smooth, rough, ridged?
 - **Smell:** Bring it close, does it have a scent? What does the scent remind you of?
 - **Sound:** Hold it up to your ear, what type of sound do you hear? Is this sound familiar or new?
- **Repeat this exercise by handing each participant a second seashell.**
 - How do the two seashells compare to one another?
 - Do you notice differences in texture, smell, or sound?
- **Introducing sense of sight:**
 - Now, slowly open your eyes. Use the flashlight next to you and shine it directly on the shell. What do you notice now that you couldn't before?
 - How does this compare to what you imagined?

00:20-00:30 – Meditation Reflection

- **Guiding Questions:**
 - What was it like to slow down and engage with an object in this way?
 - How did it feel to rely on senses other than sight?
 - What did this experience ask of you?
 - How does this connect to working with campers?
- **Key Takeaways:**
 - Our job as staff members is to be observers. We can't make assumptions about how our campers will show up each day, we must find intentional ways to observe their needs in the present.
 - Observation is a core part of our role as staff. We can't assume how someone is experiencing a moment. We must intentionally observe and respond to their needs.
 - Hineni is the practice of being fully present and helps us show up for each camper with awareness and care and respond to the needs of each individual person.
 - Seashells - each one is different and completely unique, with different textures, sights, sounds, smells. This serves as a metaphor for meeting the unique needs of each of our campers.
 - Requires us to show up and be fully present.

- **Self-Reflection Prompt:**
 - Invite participants to take a moment of self-reflection to think about the following prompt:
 - What do you personally need in order to be more present for yourself and others?

00:30-00:45 –Shell Crafts

Framing Shell Art Activity:

- We've spent time engaging with the seashells through touch, smell, sound, and sight. Now, I want to invite you to transition from observing to creating.
- Using the materials provided, I invite you to create a seashell necklace/bracelet, water bottle key chain, or jibblet for your crocs, that serves as a personal reminder to be more present, in order to support yourselves and your campers throughout the summer.
- Some prompts to consider as you plan out what you would like to create:

Symbolism:

- What does 'presence' mean to you, and how can you express that in your creation?
- Does the way you arrange the shells in a pattern, a single focal shell, or a certain color choice reflect how you think about being present?
- Are you drawn to a particular number of shells? Could that number represent something meaningful about presence in your life?

Metaphor:

- Is there a natural element that reminds you to stay present? A wave that moves but always returns? A spiral that keeps drawing inward? A knot that holds everything together?
- How can your creation reflect that symbol? Does the way the shells are strung together tell a story about presence for you?

Personal Connection:

- Think of a time when you felt truly present or fully engaged in the moment. What did that feel like?
- How can your necklace or bracelet remind you to return to that feeling? Maybe one particular shell holds a special meaning, or the act of wearing it becomes a personal ritual.

Practical Use:

- How do you want to interact with this piece once it's finished? Will wearing it serve as a physical reminder to slow down and be mindful?
- How might this piece help you embody presence in your role at camp? Could it be a tool to remind you to check in with yourself before supporting others?

00:45-1:00 – Sharing & Closing Reflection

- **Sharing (Optional):** Invite participants to share their creations and reflections:
 - What did you create, and why?
 - What intentional choices did you make in your design?
 - How does this piece represent presence for you?
 - Where might you keep this to remind yourself of this experience?
- **Final Reflection Questions:**
 - What is one key idea you're taking away?
 - What is something from this session you want to experiment with at camp?
 - How might you bring this experience to campers this summer?
- **Closing Words:**
 - Presence is a practice. As you leave this space, I encourage you to carry this sense of awareness into your work with campers, into your relationships, and into the moments that matter most.”

BRINGING IT TO YOUR CAMP

If you don't have seashells available for you, I would suggest doing this activity with other natural elements (rocks, leaves, etc.) Additionally, if you don't have seashells with holes for jewelry, I would suggest creating a seashell picture!