



CORNERSTONE 2025 RESOURCE

Hineini Nature Observation Maps

AUTHOR(S): AKIKO YONEKAWA

SUMMARY: Locate yourself by tuning into the sights and sounds of the natural world. We will orient ourselves in the soundscape of the woods by slowing down, noticing the world around us, and recording what we observe.

GOALS:

- Experience a mindfulness practice
- Explore how identifying yourself in the midst of a natural setting feels and affects your mood, concentration, or demeanor
- Identify how observing yourself as a part of a natural setting helps you understand the meaning of hineini

AUDIENCE: Anyone!

TIMING: 60 minutes

MATERIALS:

- Pens or pencils
- Paper, sketchbooks, or notepads
- Clipboards (optional)

SET-UP: For this program, we will meet at a designated location and then walk to a place where we are relatively isolated from the main part of camp. This activity is well-suited for a hike or a time when you can get into the woods or the hills or a field that has more natural sounds than non-natural sounds (like traffic or the dining hall's hvac)



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SESSION TIMELINE

- 00:00-00:10 – Intro and Framing
- 00:10-00:15 – Walk to isolated area
- 00:15-00:25 – Dropping in
- 00:25-00:30 – Instructions for Mapping
- 00:30-00:45 – Solo time with Mapping
- 00:45-00:55 – Reflection
- 00:55-00:60 – Wrap up/walk back

SESSION OUTLINE

00:00-00:10 – Intro and Framing

Session Leader (SL) will welcome folks to the group and ask them to share why they chose this session. SL will then give a little framing for what to expect: we will walk to a nearby natural setting where people will have some time to be on their own (though close enough to be seen) and do some nature observation.

00:10-00:15 – Walk to isolated area

SL will lead the group away from the main part of camp to a spot that is big enough for everyone to spread out and still be at a safe distance from SL.

00:15-00:25 – Dropping in

SL will gather the group in a circle and ask what the theme of Cornerstone is. Hineini! Hineini can mean a lot of things. SL will ask for examples. Today, we are going to engage in a practice that asks us to find ourselves by paying attention to the world around us and observing ourselves in space. But first we have to signal to our bodies and minds that we are in observation mode. SL will facilitate the noticing activity:

- Find a partner
- Stand 2-3 feet away from your partner, facing each other
- When SL says to start, one person will have 10-15 seconds to tell the other partner what they notice. “Noticing” something means that you perceive it through your senses and pay attention to it. You can tell your partner what you notice by naming it: “chirp” “cold” “windy” “standing”. Your partner doesn’t have to know what you are noticing. They are just there to witness.
- When the SL says it is time to switch, the second partner will do the same

00:25-00:30 – Instructions for Mapping

Now that we have dropped in to our noticing selves, we are going to have a chance to do some noticing on our own. Each person will get a clipboard with a piece of paper. You will then have a chance to walk around this area and find a spot to sit in where you will be comfortable for around 10-15 minutes.

SL will hand out papers and clipboards and instruct participants to write “Hineini” in Hebrew or English in the middle of the paper and draw a circle around it.



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When you get to your spot, have a seat and take a deep breath and get situated. Look around, get the lay of the land. When you are ready, begin observing some of the things around you. Maybe close your eyes and listen to the sounds you hear. Open your eyes and notice what you see around you. For each thing that you notice, make a mark on your paper. Place each of the noticings in relative proximity to yourself in the middle of the paper. If you hear a bird far away, put it far from the center of your paper. You decide how you want to observe. You can write words, draw little pictures, maybe a combination of both. You can also note the temperature, weather, sunlight, time. Try to capture the world around you.

00:30-00:45 – Solo time with Mapping

00:45-00:55 – Reflection

SL will gather the group back together and ask them to take a look at their maps and witness them. What do they see? How does it make them feel? How does it help them to understand what Hineini might mean?

00:55-00:60 Wrap up/walk back

BRINGING IT TO YOUR CAMP

This could be a great activity for a hike or an overnight. It might also be a great thing to do more than once. You could use it as a daily practice in the same spot or maybe once a week. It is best done in a place where you can hear a lot of birds. Birds really give this activity a boost.