



Mindful Mountain Hiking - Movement and Meditation Programs

Intended Audience

For all members including people living with cancer, family members and significant caregivers.

Program Description

Wellspring Calgary's Mindful Mountain Hiking program provides a series of day hikes to beautiful locations in various mountain parks throughout Alberta and British Columbia. There is a mindfulness component to the hikes wherein members walk for periods in silence and then talk about their experiences. Inspiring readings and the sharing of stories add to the support and enlightenment of the day.

Benefits and Impact

There are many benefits, both tangible and intangible, to being immersed in nature and engaging in a physical activity with others who share similar goals of health and wellness. In addition to numerous measurable impacts, participants can expect to:

- connect with self in an outdoor setting
- connect with the natural world
- gain confidence and fitness in a range of physical activities
- increase movement which can enhance mood, appetite and rest
- feel a sense of support from others who have experienced cancer

What to Expect at a Session

Members convene at Wellspring Calgary or an alternative location to check in with the facilitator and sign waivers. The group then proceeds to the trailhead and is prepped with a discussion of safety and a profile of the day ahead. Hikes are enjoyed at an easy pace, sometimes in mindful silence, sometimes with thought provoking conversation. Sharing of stories and readings is encouraged as members find common ground and explore new perspectives in the peaceful refuge of nature. For some, reaching the destination is a confidence-building conquest. For others, forward momentum with a steady focus on healthy steps is reward enough.

Participant Comments

"The courage of the participants is awe-inspiring. Many are testing themselves in ways they never thought possible and are getting to see places they never thought they would see again. They trust the skill and care of the facilitators, knowing their physical and psychological safety is held paramount." – Peter Tucker (Facilitator: Wellspring Calgary Mindful Mountain Hiking program)

"Enjoyed the journey, not just the destination."

"From start to finish each day is packed with benefits and beauty."

"Loved the camaraderie and team interaction."

What the Research Says:

In a 2011 study, scientists studied the effect of a hiking program on the anti-oxidative capacity (AOC) in 18 cancer patients. AOC refers to a cell's ability to absorb reactive oxygen species (ROS). High levels of ROS are found in nearly all cancers and are believed to be involved in tumor growth and development. Low AOC correlates to higher levels of ROS. Female participants hiked for 7 weeks over a total of 680 km and male participants hiked for 5 weeks over a total of 387 km (both programs correspond to a moderate-high level endurance training program). After the hiking program, participants' had an increased blood level of AOC. (Knop K., Schwan R., Bongartz M., Bloch M., Brixius K., Baumann F. 2011. Sport and Oxidative Stress in Oncological Patients. International Journal of Sports Medicine. 32(12): 960-964.) (Liou GY., Storz P. 2010. Reactive Oxygen Species in Cancer. Free Radical Research. 44(5))

Program Frequency:

3 - 5 hikes per season
Spring/summer, fall

Optimum Class Size: 11

Related Programs:

Bird Strolls
Cross-Country Skiing / Snowshoeing
Photo Walks
Urban Nature Walks