

Understanding the cultural specifics of participants can offer valuable starting points in both planning and implementation. Attitudes toward nature, the forest, or silence can vary greatly depending on participants' backgrounds or age groups. What may be a calming experience for one group could provoke anxiety in another.

If the group's cultural trait is the overuse of digital devices, being present in nature requires a conscious shift of attention. In such cases, the facilitator's role is to support participants—non-judgmentally and safely—in letting go of digital stimuli and rediscovering sensory and emotional

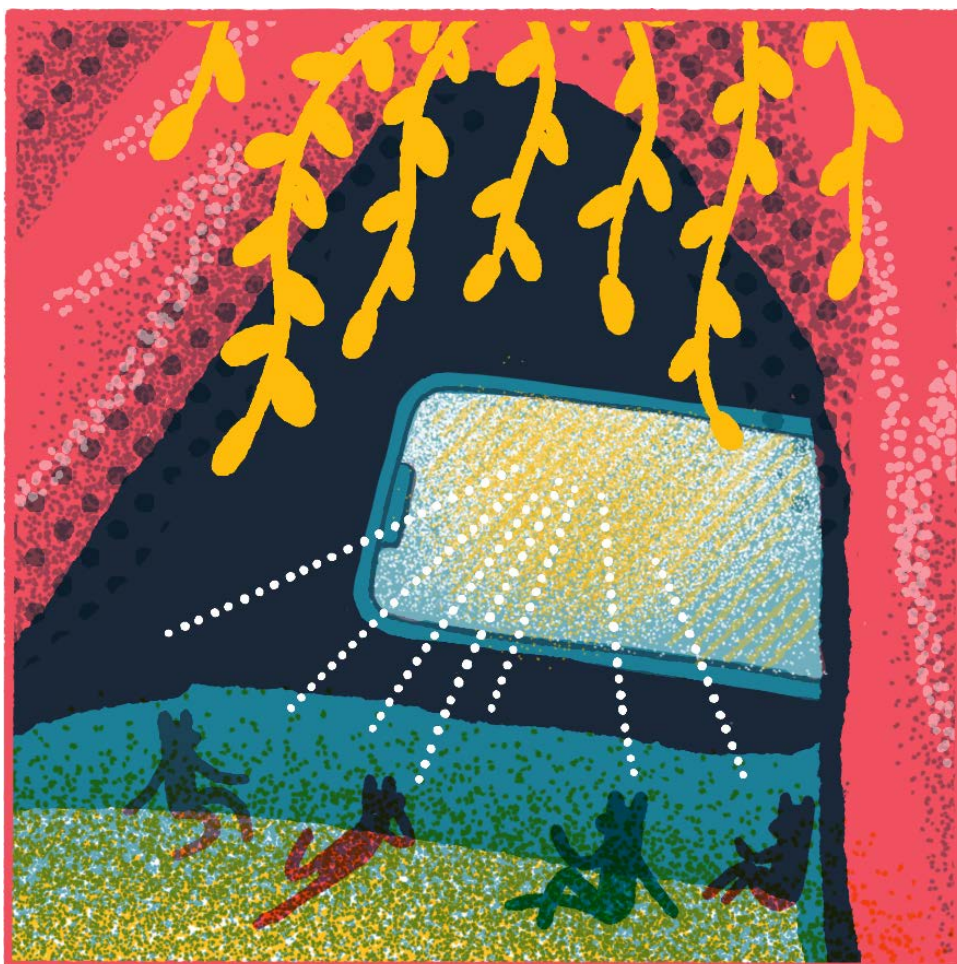
EXPERIENCE:

Leave Your Phone Behind! – How to Support Participants in Preparing for the Walk Without Their Digital Devices

This can be supported by activities that foster slowing down, shifting focus, and experiencing the joy of being offline. This supplementary guide can help you and your participants prepare for and complete the walk without using phones. Leaving phones behind helps everyone immerse in the moment, stay present in the “here and now,” and fully experience the sensory richness of the forest. For many, however, spending several hours without their phones may seem difficult. You'll find practical tips in Annex 1.

CLOSING REFLECTION QUESTIONS ON THE METHODOLOGY:

- How did the absence of digital devices influence the participants' presence, engagement, and connection to nature and each other?
- What strategies proved most effective in creating a safe and supportive atmosphere for letting go of phones, and where did resistance or discomfort still arise?
- How did your own relationship with digital presence shape the way you facilitated this activity, and what adjustments you might consider in future sessions?



ANNEX: LEAVE YOUR PHONE BEHIND – HOW TO SUPPORT PARTICIPANTS IN PREPARING FOR AND ATTENDING THE WALK WITHOUT DIGITAL DEVICES

Information

It's helpful if participants know in advance what to expect, why they are asked to leave their devices behind, and where they can safely do so. It's also reassuring if they know exactly where the walk will take place (so they're not afraid of getting lost) and how long the program will last. It's recommended to send them an email beforehand that outlines the basic information, rules, and suggestions.

Agreement

At the beginning of the walk, make a verbal agreement or consensus with the group that feels okay for everyone. Explain why walking without a phone is important and ask for their agreement. You can also discuss in what cases phone use might be acceptable (emergencies? taking photos? — it's up to you what you agree on and how). If someone needs to take an important call, ask them to step aside and not disturb the group, respecting the jointly created silence.

Safety

If someone needs to be reachable during the walk, you can provide an escort's phone number who agrees to be on standby for the participants.

If your number is given, don't take out your phone unless it's for an emergency. Wear a watch to keep track of time. If you want to take photos, notify the group in advance, and ideally use a separate camera. It's important that you model the behavior you expect from the group.

Silencing devices

If someone doesn't want to leave their phone in the car or at the meeting point, they can mute it (without vibration), switch it off, or put it in airplane mode.

Understanding

It can help to understand why someone finds it hard to put down their phone. A short conversation at the beginning of the walk can make it easier to support participants in making a shift. Some helpful questions:

What does having your phone close mean to you?

How do you think it helps or hinders you when it's with you?

What would be better or harder without it?

What would you use it for here, in the forest?

What would help you feel comfortable leaving it behind?

Fidgeting

During the walk, it may help participants to use their hands or fingers to manipulate something other than their usual device. Carrying a pinecone, stick, or piece of bark — to fiddle with or hold — can provide calming tactile stimulation. You can even integrate this into the program as an exercise, perhaps by exploring what can help with everyday relaxation instead of using a phone.

Reflection

Reflection and reinforcement are important. Invite participants to share:

- How did you feel during the walk?
- What was it like to be without your phone?
- How did it affect you?
- Did you miss it?
- If you brought it, how did it influence your experience?

