

## TEEN WELLNESS KITS

### MEDITATION GARDEN

These Teen Wellness Kits have creative and wellness activities for teens. Create a peaceful retreat by building your own miniature version of a Japanese rock garden.

Traditional Japanese gardens usually include a small Zen garden, made of carefully placed gravel, rocks, bushes, and water features. These calming spots are meant to represent nature. The gravel or sand represents the ocean, rocks act as islands or mountains, and bushes stand in for forests. Patterns raked into the gravel symbolize waves, motion, or journeys.

Tabletop gardens are a representation of traditional Japanese rock gardens. They encourage self-reflection, meditation, contemplation, and mindfulness. Mindfulness is about being fully present in the moment. Your tiny tabletop version can act as a focus for meditation or just a calming scene.

#### MATERIALS TO FIND AT HOME:

- a small dish
- sand (silica-free and non-allergenic)
- sand rake (bamboo fork)
- assorted items to add to the garden
- pinecones, driftwood, dried leaves, grass, or twigs
- a second colour of sand sprinkled into a pattern or shape
- different tools to make patterns (try a toothpick, comb, stamp, or textured rock)
- other materials or figurines that you find soothing

#### ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Fill your container with sand and even it out. Leave a little space between the sand and the top of the container so it doesn't spill.
2. Arrange stones, moss, and other trinkets on top of the sand, and feel free to add your own. As you add items to your garden, reflect on the significance of what you are adding. Does it have a

- deeper meaning for you and if so, what does it represent? Does it represent an element you feel a connection to? Or an important memory? Do you just like the colour / shape / texture?
3. Create a pattern in the sand using your mini rake. Did you choose straight or wavy lines? Try making circles or spirals. Are you satisfied with the design? Do not change it right away. Let it sit for a bit and contemplate why you like or dislike it.
  4. Change the placement of your items periodically. While changing the placement, meditate on the reason for the change. Is it in response to a change in your life? Is it an ending or a beginning?
  5. When you first complete your meditation garden, take a photo. Through photos, keep track of the changes you make. What parts of your garden have changed the most? The least?

#### ZEN GARDEN SYMBOLISM:

*From [loveZenlife.com/meditation/mini-Zen-garden](http://loveZenlife.com/meditation/mini-Zen-garden):*

Gravel and sand represent water, which is a symbol of purity, emptiness, and distance. The act of raking the gravel into a pattern represents waves or rippling water. Raking is meant to promote concentration. Perfect lines are not easy to achieve, so it's a great way to meditate. Developing variations in the pattern is an inspiring and creative challenge.

Stone arrangements usually represent mountains, islands, rivers, and waterfalls. One stone could represent a boat or a living creature like a turtle. A group of stones could symbolize a crane in flight. The stones can have whatever meaning you give to them.

#### LEARN AND DO MORE:

- Visit [calgarylibrary.ca/mindfulness](http://calgarylibrary.ca/mindfulness) or [calgarylibrary.ca/nature](http://calgarylibrary.ca/nature) for staff-recommended titles about mindfulness for teens or plant care.
- Check out ProFlowers DIY Mini Zen Gardens at [calgarylibrary.ca/zen-garden](http://calgarylibrary.ca/zen-garden) for ideas.
- If you're up for a day trip, the Nikka Yuko Japanese Gardens in Lethbridge, Alberta have the closest example of a life-size Zen garden. Check their website at [nikkayuko.com](http://nikkayuko.com) for opening times in the spring, summer, and fall before you go.