
Lesson 5: Let's Go Outside

Target audience: K- 6th-grade youth

Time needed for station: 20 minutes

Volunteers needed to support station: one to two

Objectives

Youth will be able to:

- Describe the health benefits of being outdoors
- Connect with nature using guided imagery
- Complete the Family Nature Pledge Card and Nature Scavenger Hunt with their families

Materials

PROVIDED:

- Family Nature Pledge card (p. 23)
- Guided Imagery activity (p. 25)
- Nature Scavenger Hunt (p. 26)

NOT PROVIDED:

- Nature Connection Pyramid Poster <https://naturekidsinstitute.com/optin18529868>
- Benefits of Connecting with Nature <https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/FNR/FNR-539-W.pdf>
- Crayons
- Clipboards

Background Info

General description of how this activity connects families with nature and health:

Participants will learn together about the benefits of doing family activities in nature.

- Participants will connect health benefits with nature while participating in a guided imagery activity.
- Participants will take home a Family Nature Pledge Card to complete with their families. The pledge is to spend quality time with family members in nature through writing a SMART goal.
- Participants will take home a Nature Scavenger Hunt to complete with their families.

Nature is good for our families. When youth spend more time outside they are more physically active, have healthier weights, are less likely to develop myopia, and have improved motor skills. The American Academy of Pediatrics

WIN! Tip

Nature connectedness plays an important role in human well-being.

(Children & Nature Network, 2016; Ferreira, J.G., Venter, E., 2016)

recommends that 60 minutes of unstructured free play for youth is essential to physical health.

Studies show that different environments can increase or decrease stress. Therefore, what a person sees, hears, smells, etc., changes not only their mood but also their blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and immune system functioning.

Nature can heal

Natural settings, whether in real life or pictures, have been shown to reduce anger, fear, and stress, as well as increase pleasant feelings. A reduction in blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and stress hormones are all reactions of the body to experiencing a natural environment.

Nature can relieve and refresh

Nature also helps people cope with pain. Trees, plants, water, and other elements of the natural environment are captivating and interesting to humans, so being in the presence of natural elements distracts people from pain. For this same reason, nature increases our ability to focus and be attentive. Natural environments serve as a break for people's minds, refreshing them to continue tasks again later. This is particularly helpful for youth with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Nature can connect

Time spent in nature connects people to one another and society. Research has shown that when people view nature scenes, the parts of the brain associated with empathy and love activate, but when they view urban scenes, the parts of the brain associated with fear and anxiety activate. Therefore, it could be argued that nature rouses feelings of connectedness with each other and the world around them.

Procedures

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP

Read the Benefits of Connecting with Nature publication as background information on the health benefits of nature (<https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/FNR/FNR-539-W.pdf>). Make a copy of the Guided Imagery Worksheet for each participant (p. 25). On card stock, print the Family Nature Pledge cards (p. 23), the Nature Scavenger Hunt, (p. 26), and the Nature Connection Pyramid Poster (<https://naturekidsinstitute.com/optin18529868>). Print one copy per participant.

1. Explain to participants that they will be learning about the health benefits of nature, will participate in a guided imagery and drawing activity, and will sign a pledge to go outside more.
2. Guide participants through Activity 1: Guided Imagery. Take participants outside for this if possible.

3. Share the WIN! Tip and some additional benefits of nature provided in the Background Info.
4. Guide participants through Activity 2: Family Nature Pledge Card.

ACTIVITY 1: GUIDED IMAGERY ACTIVITY (15 minutes)

Participants will take part in a guided imagery activity (a technique that helps people use their imagination to direct their thoughts toward a relaxing or peaceful scene). The images can be recalled from a person's memory, created from fantasy, or a combination of both. Typically, another individual or a recording verbally instructs or "guides" the participant to imagine a specific scene or series of scenes to create a connection between the participant's mind and body for a purpose (i.e., to help them relax or relieve stress).

How to do the Guided Imagery activity (10 minutes)

Pass out the Guided Imagery worksheet and coloring supplies to each participant. In this exercise, you will help participants visualize a nature scene where they remember feeling calm, confident, content or hopeful. Read the passage below to lead youth through the guided imagery exercise. Read the passage slowly and clearly with a smooth, relaxed tone of voice. Give time for your youth to fully visualize the environment you are describing by pausing for 5-10 seconds after reading each sentence.

"I want you to close your eyes and breathe deeply. Imagine that you are outside in a space that makes you feel happy. You may be standing in a forest, surrounded by tall trees full of deep green leaves. Or maybe there is a bubbling creek nearby, and there is a gently blowing breeze. Perhaps you are on a sandy white beach. As you see yourself in this spot in nature, what do you hear? What do you see? Can you smell the fresh air and feel the breeze on your skin? Take another deep breath, count to three, and slowly open your eyes."

Say to participants: "Now I would like for you to use your crayons to draw the picture you were seeing in your mind."

Debrief (5 minutes)

Ask a couple of participants to share their thoughts and feelings about the picture they drew.

ACTIVITY 2: FAMILY NATURE PLEDGE CARD (5 minutes)

Give each participant one each of the Family Nature Pledge cards, Nature Scavenger Hunt, and Nature Connection Pyramid Poster. Next, share these thoughts with the participants:

- Thank you for taking the time to be here and participate in our program. Nature is good for you and your family. So, we want to encourage you to Get Outdoors! We know that if families pledge together to do something it is more likely to happen.
- Think about how your family can set a goal to spend more time unplugged and in nature. Maybe your family can spend more time outdoors each day by taking

family walks. Or maybe doing something each week is better for your family schedule. Try nature walks together, collect rocks or leaves, bird watch, try gardening. Or maybe each month plan a trip to a local park. Or vacation to the great outdoors this summer! See the Nature Connection Pyramid Poster for examples of ways to connect with nature.

To help get you started on your outdoor adventures, consider a Nature Scavenger Hunt (reference the Nature Scavenger Hunt sheets). Then take some time to complete your Family Nature Pledge card with your family when you get home.