



Emotional Wellbeing & Nature Connection Activities

This list has been adapted by Communitopia and originally developed by Andra Yeghoian, since 2010, with influence from colleagues at multiple institutions (i.e. Presidio Graduate School, Bishop O'Dowd High School, the Environmental Leadership Program (ELP), the San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE), the California Environmental Literacy Initiative (CAELI), and the Institute for Human Education

Overview: The following are examples of supplemental emotional wellbeing practices you could do with students to help foster a connection with nature, and to support students to process emotions during an emotionally triggering lesson about the environment or social justice issues. To learn more about an overview to this topic, visit: [Climate Change Literacy & Emotional Well Being](#).

Title	Description	Materials
Nature Symbols	Find a piece of nature that you think represents your relationship with nature. Journal about your relationship to nature and why this piece of nature is a good symbol of that. Bring the object to class (if virtual hold up on screen) and share with classmates. → <i>This activity is a good starting point and paves the way for other nature activities below.</i>	Piece of Nature
Solo Sit-Spot in Nature	Find a solo sit spot outdoors*. Spend time journaling about your own relationship and impact on nature, and the feelings you have about seeing so many of our living systems in decline. → <i>A solo sit spot is generally a great activity to make into a regular routine, and the prompt does not always have to be about nature.</i>	Journal
Practicing Gratitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-Reflection Questions: Do you have a regular practice for gratitude? Why/Why not? If you do, does it include connection to nature?• Video: Watch Louie Schwartzberg's TED Talk "Nature. Beauty. Gratitude" (also on youtube).• Post-Reflection: What thoughts and emotions surfaced for you during this video? How might you establish a more regular practice of gratitude that involves nature and love for humanity? → Practicing gratitude on a regular basis, in particular gratitude for things such as nature is a good routine for students.	Video
Local Environment Observations	A) GO OUTSIDE* FOR 5-10 Minutes and Make Observations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the weather like?• What do you notice with your senses?• What is the balance visually of natural to built landscape?• What is the balance of nature noises to human noises? B) Extended Reflection Questions:	Outdoors



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To What Extent is it Easy/Difficult for You to Immerse Yourself in Nature Where You Live? • How can you build in a routine that allows you to connect more regularly with nature to recenter your senses? 	
Nature Meditation	<p>Choose a Nature Meditation Video and complete the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Reflection: To what extent do you bring meditation into your life? • Post-Reflection Questions: How did you feel during the guided nature meditation? What did you like the most? What did you dislike the most? To what extent does meditation in general help you to relax and feel grounded? <p>→ <i>It is recommended that nature meditation become a regular practice for students. There are many other videos that could be used for this.</i></p>	<p>Video 1: General (12:30)</p> <p>Video 2: Beach (9:15)</p> <p>Video 3: Forest (18:00)</p> <p>Video 4: Waterfall (3:21)</p>
Nature Walk (or walk in the outdoors)	<p>Find a local walk you could take that is outdoors (preferably with more natural landscape than built landscape, but with at least some natural landscape). On the walk do any or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you observe with your senses? What colors draw your attention? How is the temperature? Is the air more damp or dry? What natural sounds do you hear? • What types of animals and plants do you see on the walk? • What do you notice your attention being drawn to on your walk? • How does your body and mind feel after the walk? <p>→ Making a walk in nature/outdoors a regular daily or weekly routine</p> <p>→ Ideas for how to turn a daily nature walk into a lesson with children</p>	10-30 minute route for walking
Plant Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations: Sit or stand near an indoor or outdoor plant for 5 minutes and make observations (try and use all your senses). • Perspective Writing: Do a five minute writing from the perspective of this plant about how it might view the world (day-to-day and/or larger trends). • Sharing: Share your nature connection writing with 1-2 other classmates. Reflect on the experience of doing the task and listening to others. 	Indoor or Outdoor Plant
Focusing on Trees	<p>Read the poem, "The Shapes of Leaves" by Arthur Sze. Then find a tree in your area that "speaks" to you. Describe, in writing, the details of that tree and why you feel a connection with it. Pay particular attention to the tree's leaves, and draw a picture of a leaf you particularly like.</p> <p>→ It is recommended that students come back to visit this tree throughout the year weekly or monthly. Possible routine prompts could be: make</p>	<p>"The Shapes of Leaves" by Arthur Sze</p> <p>And a Tree</p>



	observations of changes over time, engage in a pretend dialogue with the tree - consider how the dialogue shifts and changes over time.	
Sounds of the Forest	<p>Timber Festival has put together a first-ever open-source forest soundmap of the world, "Sounds of the Forest," where students can enjoy a library of sounds and rhythms of the great outdoors. Possible activities to do with this resource are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compose music using the sounds from a particular forest - see example lesson plan here for music composition • Compare the sounds of different forests and connect different emotions you feel while listening to the different forests • Draw a picture of the animals that you hear in a forest • Write a letter to the local government that manages the forest and express why it is important to protect that forest 	
Up Close	Find a small piece of nature (i.e. leaf, blade of grass, twig, etc.) and observe it close-up using a magnifying glass. Sketch the item in large scale on a piece of paper. Include as many details as possible (consider shape, texture details, color, etc.). On your piece of paper, add the following types of statements: "I Wonder," "I Notice", etc.	Piece of nature, magnifying glass, paper/pencil
Animal Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Reflection: How Connected Do You Feel to Other Animals? • What are some of your favorite animals? • Video: Watch the Biodiversity Loss Video (11:40 - 14:10) • Perspective Writing: Choose an animal that you saw in the video, and take 10 minutes to complete a perspective writing from their perspective that addresses the challenges associated with human impact and extinction. • Sharing: Share your perspective writing with your peers. Reflect on what it felt like to write from that animal's perspective, and to hear other people's writings. 	Video and Writing Materials
Day Sky (Sky Checks)	<p>Make observations about the sky (try for every day or one day each week). Consider the following prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you notice about the color today? • Where is the sun and the moon? • Is there any precipitation (rain, fog, mist, etc.)? • How about clouds? If so, what shape? • What other objects do you notice? • What is the weather like today? 	Observation chart
Night Sky	<p>General Night Sky Reflections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How connected are you with the night sky? • What is your favorite memory of stars and night sky? 	<p>Night sky images</p> <p>Binoculars</p>



	<p>Make observations about the night sky (try for every day or one day each week). Consider the following prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you notice about the color tonight?• Where is the moon?• Is there any precipitation (rain, fog, mist, etc.) or clouds?• What do you notice about the stars?• Can you see any planets?	<p>or telescope</p> <p>Observation chart</p>
Earth Love	<p>Write a love note to the earth that you can share with others :)</p>	<p>Writing Materials</p>
Overview Effect	<p>Watch the short video, Overview (19:11), and respond to the following reflection prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How did seeing the earth from space impact the astronauts?• What do you think is the most beautiful aspect of earth?• Pretend you are an astronaut who is traveling back to earth and write a letter to your fellow humans that encourages them that <i>taking care of the earth is one of the most important fundamental responsibilities of humans.</i>	<p>Device for access to video</p>

**If going outdoors is not a possibility for a student they can do a similar activity looking out a window where they can see a tree or the sky.*