

Spring into STEM: Getting Back to Nature

Intended Audience:

Any age
Individuals or groups

Learning Standards:

Ohio Standards

H.K.2, K.LS.2:

N.G.S.S.

1-ESS1-1.

Lesson Objectives:

Participants will:

- Learn about nature experiences from others
- Have a chance to get outdoors and explore nature in their backyard or neighborhood

Time:

varies depending on activity

Equipment and Supplies:

varies based on activity

Do Ahead:

- Review lesson
- Gather supplies



BACKGROUND

Richard Louv introduced the phrase nature deficit disorder in 2005. He explains that the term was a way to describe the “human cost of alienation from nature” (Louv, 2019). Louv says, “research suggests that nature-deficit disorder contributes to a diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, conditions of obesity, and higher rates of emotional and physical illnesses.” Since that time research has shown that spending time in nature is important for children’s positive development. Today youth are often more connected to electronic devices like phones, video games and television and less connected to nature. Being in nature is a good way to de-stress and just play.

WHAT TO DO

Have the learner interview an adult: a parent, grandparent, teacher, neighbor. Interview questions might include:

- Did you spend more time playing indoors or outdoors when you were a kid?
- What did you like to do outdoors when you were growing up?
- Are there any special memories you have of an activity you did in an outdoor setting?
- What benefits do you think you got from playing outside?

Choose an idea from the interview or from the list below to get back to nature:

Plan a Picnic: Go to your favorite park or just your backyard with a picnic meal or snack. On your picnic, enjoy a hike or a game of frisbee.

Birdwatching: Take the time to listen to and identify birds. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources provides an online Field Guides to help you identify birds and many other types of wildlife. You can find these on their website—www.ohiodnr.gov under discover and learn.

The Audubon Society has a bird guide app you can download. Find it at www.audubon.org on the birds and guides page. You could add a birdfeeder to your backyard. Try different bird feed in each feeder and see which attracts the most birds.

Outdoor Scavenger Hunt: Plan an outdoor scavenger hunt or hike. Find things in nature that start with each letter of the alphabet or with certain colors. You can find many printable nature scavenger hunts or hikes online.

Do a Sport Together: Get outside and play baseball, basketball, or croquet. Ride a bike in the summer or go sledding in the winter.



References:

- <https://childmind.org/article/why-kids-need-to-spend-time-in-nature/>
- Gregg, J. (n.d.). Back to Nature: Activities to Teach Your Kids to LOVE the Outdoors. Retrieved from momtastic.com: <https://www.momtastic.com/parenting/757115-activities-to-teach-your-kids-to-love-the-outdoors/>
- Louv, R. (2019, October 15). What is Nature-Deficit Disorder? Retrieved from richardlouv.com: <http://richardlouv.com/blog/what-is-nature-deficit-disorder/>
- Suttie, J. (2016, September 15). How to Protect Kids from Nature -Deficit Disorder. Retrieved from Greater Good Magazine: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_protect_kids_from_nature_deficit_disorder
- Image from pixabay.com

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Plan a Backyard Obstacle Course: Television shows like American Ninja Warrior have made obstacle courses popular. Use hula hoops, cones, pool noodles, jump ropes or whatever you have around to create a backyard obstacle course.

Bug Hunt: Magnifying glasses are fun to use and bugs can be fascinating to observe. Go on a bug hunt and watch how insects live and work. Let children identify colors and talk about which insects sting.

Do a Nature Craft: Nature is full of materials that are perfect for making crafts. A simple online search will help you find lots of ideas. You could paint rocks. You can make a pressed flower bookmark, a wreath, a flower bracelet, or a nature sculpture.

Stargaze: View an annual meteor shower or just enjoy the stars. Local astronomy group or parks hold stargazes or there are apps you can use to identify constellations.

Explore a Stream

Fly a Kite

Take a Walk/Hike or Ride Your Bike on a Bike Trail

Catch (and Release) Lightning Bugs

Make a Sidewalk Chalk Masterpiece

Go Fishing

Go Canoeing

Plant a Garden or Flower Bed.

TALK IT OVER

Reflect:

- What did you observe during your outdoor activity?
- How do you think being outdoors was a benefit to you?
- Did this activity make you feel less stressed or happier?
- What other outdoor activities might you like to try?

Apply:

Continue to find ways to get back to nature. Make connecting with nature part of your weekly routine even if it is only in your backyard.

EARTH TAKE ACTION TIP

Get politically active, vote, contact your representative about environmental issues that concern you and urge local and state government to take bold, ambitious action now!

CITIZEN SCIENCE CHALLENGE

Become a citizen-scientist by surveying this diversity of insects and plants in your own backyard, schoolyard or neighborhood. <https://bugsinourbackyard.org>.