

**Tool 2.4**

Giving nature time

CLARITY Competence Area:

Nurturing connection to oneself, others and nature

GreenComp Competence Area:

Embracing Complexity in Sustainability

Why use this tool?

The "Give Nature Time" tool is designed to encourage individuals and groups to deepen their connection with the natural world through immersive and mindful experiences. This tool is an invitation to slow down, reconnect, and appreciate the profound impact that nature can have on our lives. By integrating activities like "Nature Adventures," participants engage in unstructured outdoor play, reflection, and exploration, allowing them to experience the myriad benefits of nature firsthand.

Activity 2.4.1

Slow walk in nature

Overview

This activity invites learners to walk slowly and mindfully through a natural space, focusing on their breath and sensory awareness. By moving at a gentle pace and tuning into their surroundings, participants can cultivate presence and self-awareness while deepening their connection to nature. The simplicity of the exercise makes it adaptable to a variety of settings and group sizes, offering a grounding experience that supports emotional wellbeing and complements practices aimed at building inner resilience.

Curriculum linkage

Physical Education & Health.

When taking breaks between classes or activities.

Competences built

Self-reflection, presence, self-awareness.

Prep Work

Practice mindful walking, including following the guidance given in activity 1.3.3.

Steps in the activity

1. Experience
2. Reflect

Step 1: Experience

1. Bring the group to a quiet place in nature, where there is a path, or a clearing where it is possible to walk.



BASIC INFO

Age range:

6+

Duration:

5-20 minutes

Group size:

Flexible

Level of difficulty:

Basic

Materials/space required:

None

Location:

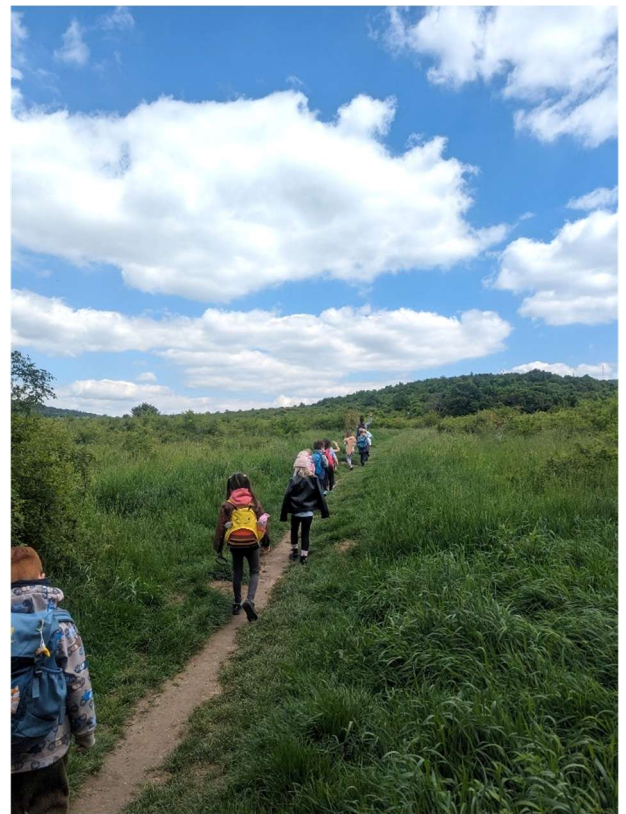
Outdoors

Engagement of external stakeholders:

None



2. Invite the learners to take a few deep breaths together, and encourage them to keep breathing deeply through the exercise.
3. Invite the learners to walk as slowly as possible in nature while continuing to take deep breaths. Allow them to find the rhythm between breathing and walking that works best for them while modelling a very slow walk.
4. Invite the learners to go in the direction or on the path that they feel called to take. The focus should be on the walk and the breathing, while leaving learners sufficient time to explore the natural location in which they are. Depending on the ages of your learners, you may want to suggest that the learners should remain in areas where they can see and be seen by the teacher.



While exploring the Jane Goodall Trail in Budapest, we conducted the "Slow Walk in nature" activity.

Photo by Carmelo Zamora, REAL School Budapest.

Step 2: Reflect

1. At the end of the exercise, invite the learners who are open to it to share how it was to do this exercise in nature. You can invite the learners to share whether they noticed any noise, smell, color or texture in nature around them. You can invite them to reflect on elements that they had not become aware of before.
2. Invite the learners to practice the slow walk in nature regularly as a way to enhance their connection to themselves and nature.



Dos and don'ts

Do:

- Encourage learners to walk very slowly
- Model slow walking as the learners are engaging in the activity

Don't:

Don't expect the activity to be carried out perfectly from the start. Allow learners time to engage with the activity regularly.



Adaptations:

If learners cannot walk, they should be encouraged to breathe deeply in nature.

This activity can be carried out regularly to help foster wellbeing in children and youth, and can complement all activities undertaken under competence area 1: Taking care of climate emotions and trauma.

We invite you to adapt this activity to the specific needs of your learners, including by taking into account their neurodiversity. When adapting tools and activities for neurodivergent learners, please note it is not about treating others how you want to be treated, but how they want to be treated. Ask, listen, and stay open to different ways of learning and engaging.

References

Inspired by Thich Nhat Hanh's mindful walking practice:

- ICPPD. (2014, May 29). 5 Thich Nhat Hanh - Simple Mindfulness - Mindful walking [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSOKte6TeMI>
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- Lion's Roar. (2024, October 9). Thich Nhat Hanh's walking meditation. <https://www.lionsroar.com/walking-meditation-thich-nhat-hanh/>

Louv, R. (2008). *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. <https://richardlouv.com/books/last-child/> (Highlights the benefits of unstructured play in nature for cognitive and emotional development)

Kuo, M., Barnes, M., & Jordan, C. (2019). Do experiences with nature promote learning? converging evidence of a Cause-and-Effect relationship. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00305> (Shows that time in nature improves attention, learning, and creativity)



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