



Mindful moments



Instead of just spending time outside, actually connecting with nature has been shown to be good for our health and wellbeing.

There are five pathways to help you connect with nature:

1. Sensory **contact** with the natural world.
2. Finding an **emotional** bond with, and love for, nature.
3. Taking time to appreciate the **beauty** of nature.
4. Thinking about the **meaning** and signs of nature.
5. Showing **compassion** and care for nature.

These activities are designed for 11 years + but can be adapted for any age.

Explore with your senses

Take time to really notice nature by going on a sensory journey where there are trees. Before you begin, consider for a moment how you feel and how you have generally been feeling lately. Then set off and start to concentrate on one sense at a time.



You will need:

- Paper/copies of worksheets
- Pencil
- Camera

If it is a sunny day, focus on light and shade and how it changes beneath different trees.



1. Contact

Look

As you go, carefully look at the shapes of the leaves around you. Compare the shapes on different trees.

- Are the leaves curvy, straight or wavy?
- If there is a breeze, how does each leaf move?



Listen

Find a quiet spot where you can close your eyes and listen to the sounds around you.

Create a sound map on a piece of paper: Draw yourself in the middle. Every time you hear a sound, mark a symbol on the map to show the direction and distance of that sound from where you are sitting.

Touch

As you carry on, take time to stop and carefully feel textures. For example, bark on trees and moss growing on stones.

- Search for leaves with different textures.
- Consider why they have different textures - why are some waxy and shiny and others hairy and soft?
- At home, research and find out if you were correct.



Smell



As you continue, breathe in deeply through your nose.

- What can you smell?
- What do the trees smell like?
- Do the smells remind you of anything?
- Do all areas smell the same?

Taste

Trees provide food and shelter for many different animals.

- What can you see that is a food source for animals and therefore a vital part of the forest environment?





2. Emotion

Feel like a part of the forest

Find a cosy spot

It could be sat under a tree you particularly like. Get comfortable and then close your eyes and take a moment to notice your breath.

Start to count

This will slow your breathing down. Breathe in through your nose for a count of three and gently breathe out through your mouth for a count of four.

When you feel calm

Imagine that as you breathe in you are smelling the scent of fresh new leaves in spring, then as you breathe out imagine you are gently blowing the leaves and watching them sway.

Repeat this for as long as you are comfortable, then gently open your eyes.

- **How do you feel now?**
- **Are you more relaxed?**
- **Do you notice anything around you?**

3. Beauty

Notice the beauty

Take some time to explore an area and look for interesting shapes, colours, views or patterns.

- **Choose your favourite and take a photo, draw or write a description about it.**
- **What is it that made you take notice?**





4. Meaning

A place in our lives



There is a lot that trees do for us, for example creating beautiful scenery to walk in, producing oxygen, and providing wood – a sustainable resource.

We spend a lot of our lives looking down, so for a change spend some time in the forest looking up and do some canopy gazing.

Choose a tree to lie under and be silent and still.

- **Watch the canopy and the movement of the leaves. Look at all the different colours and shapes you can see.**
- **Take time to reflect on how important trees are to you - think about what they provide you with every day.**

5. Compassion

Caring for trees



You have spent some time considering what trees do for us and how important they are in our lives.

Now, can you think of anything you can do to help care for trees and forests?

- **Think about how your actions and choices can impact on the forest environment – what positive changes can you make?**
- **Perhaps you could do some conservation volunteering or a litter pick?**



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Earn your stamp

To earn your stamp, fill in the worksheet, write a poem or create a photo collage to show your connection to trees. Email a copy of your work, along with your name, age and the place you visited, to us at learning.english@forestryengland.uk.



Worksheet

Explore with your senses

Sound map

Draw yourself in the middle. Then every time you hear a sound, mark a symbol on the map to show where the sound came from and what it was like.



How did you feel before your nature exploration?

Did you feel differently afterwards?



Worksheet

Notice the beauty

What was your favourite shape, colour, view or pattern? Draw or write a description about it. What is it that made you take notice?

Caring for trees

What will you pledge to do to help protect and care for the forest environment?

