Explore Your Senses Field Walk

Objectives:

1. Participants will collect observations on unique phenomena throughout the program.
2. Participants will be more aware of the sights, sounds, and smells of their local natural areas.

Theme: Our senses have the incredible ability to connect us to the outdoors!

Time: ~30 minutes

Materials (all are optional):

- Paper for sketching
- Magnifying glass
- Pencils
- Crayons

Introduction:

Throughout our days, we may believe we are fairly familiar with the area we are in. We know some native birds and trees and can point out some neat things, but what does that mean for us personally? Our senses have the incredible ability to connect us to the outdoors! Thousands of years ago, humans evolved outside in the natural world. They evolved in clean air, natural light, and quiet areas that influenced human behavior for years to come. The introduction of technology coupled with the booming growth in population has greatly affected the way in which we interact with the outdoors. Humans spend a significant amount of time indoors, which is affecting our senses and how we behave.

Through our 5 senses, we can explore all that our own backyards have to offer while getting to know the area that we live in. The natural world can significantly influence our creativity, mood, and overall outlook on life. Using the human senses as inspiration, this activity
will be an introduction to incorporating unique natural sounds, smells, and sights into creative expression and memory. The goal is to foster environmental connection and curiosity through unconventional methods.

Lesson:

#1: Sound

Subtheme: Our sense of hearing is a powerful tool to detect things around us.

- First, we are going to explore our sense of sound!
- As the seasons are changing, wildlife and plant life is changing as well, and can go unnoticed if we don’t pay close attention.
- We are going to take a moment to use our deer ears.
  - Deer and other animals have adapted their senses to suit their survival needs.
  - Cup your hands around your ears to listen to what’s in front of you, or cup them backward to hear what’s behind you better, imitating the way deer shift their ears to hear.
  - Visualize sound
    - Sonograms can be a great way to record sound visually.
- Take a few moments to close your eyes and listen to the sounds around us
  - Listen closely and try to pick out one single sound
    - Can be natural or man-made
  - You may know what the sound is, or you may have no idea
  - Think about the qualities of that sound
    - How loud?
    - Tone?
# Repetitive? Etc

- Have them share their sounds and the qualities
  - Help each other identify if needed
  - Why did you choose that sound?
  - Did everyone choose the same sound?
  - Why are you hearing it now?

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**#2: Smell**

**Subtheme:** Our sense of smell connects us to memories and places.

- It can be hard to think of what something smells like, however, smell has the strong ability to remind us of specific events in our lives.
  - Have you ever smelled something and you may not be able to place it but you are immediately reminded of something from years ago?
    - Smell can have this effect on us in the natural world as well. Through exploration of natural smells, we can connect ourselves to the seasons and our location.

- Find something nearby and take a moment to observe it closely.

- Animals like dogs have an incredible sense of smell.
  - Dogs and other animals have wet noses to help them smell better.
    - Scent particles stick better to a wet surface, which intensifies the scent.
  - Optional: Wet the kids nose with some water to imitate a dogs nose to “help them smell better”. It may not actually help but it is fun!
○ What does it smell like?
○ Does it remind you of something?
○ Is it earthy? Sweet?

Further Thinking: Think about what today smells like. What does today smell like to you?

#3: Sight

Subtheme: Our eyes allow us to observe magnificent natural events.

● I believe that the sense we take for granted the most is our sense of sight.
  ○ The world is full of color and beauty, everything unique in its own way.
● Everything has its own beauty in some way if you look closely (or from far away).
● Use your “owl eyes” forming binoculars with your hands to imitate owls’ fixed, forward-facing eyes, and turning all around.
● Find something that interests you and take a few moments to really observe it
  ○ Sketch it!
  ○ Sketching can be a great way to commit important things and events to memory
● After sketching and observing, think about where you might find your object in the future.
● Taking pictures of things can be helpful if you’re in a hurry, but your mind will commit things to memory better if you spend time observing something in the moment.

#4: Touch
Subtheme: Textures make a big difference in how plants and animals live.

- Find a leaf, piece of bark, or other object
  - Take some time to analyze the object closely and think about how it feels
  - Why is bark hard and leaves are not?
- You don't have to use your hands to explore your sense of touch!
  - Feel of the sun and wind on your skin
  - Use your feet to tell whether the grass is wet, dry, soft or hard. etc
- Compare textures of different plants and animals
  - Bird feather vs mammal fur
- Optional: Use a crayon and piece of paper to do a rub of the object
  - Place piece of paper over the object and rub a crayon over top to visualize the texture
  - Complete with different objects to compare textures

#5: Taste

- Taste is a unique sense that allows us to enjoy different foods and beverages.
- You can explore taste in the kitchen
  - Try new foods or unexpected combinations!
  - The movie “Ratatouille” shows how unexpected combinations can be great!
    - Strawberries and cheese!

● Or explore outside
  ○ Using your “snake tongue,” try tasting the air, seeing which way the wind is blowing, and sensing the temperature

● Do not try tasting plants without proper identification.

**Conclusion:**

Today we had the opportunity to connect our bodies to what is happening outside around us. We don’t need technology and modern comforts as much as we think we do and sometimes it is nice to remember how magnificently capable our senses truly are. We are currently experiencing “a state of mismatch” between the ways our senses evolved and our current surroundings. Visual acuity has displayed overall downward trends due to increased time spent in dark rooms in front of screens. People who live in polluted areas are proven to have a diminished sense of smell. Our bodies are reacting to our lifestyles and are rapidly changing to account for diminishing natural qualities. Our senses have the incredible ability to connect us to the outdoors through simple endeavors. By spending more time outside and utilizing our senses, we can exercise our bodies to be in tune with the natural world and protect them from degrading. I hope that this encourages future exploration of your senses and that you are a little more grateful for the senses you have!