

springing INTO NATURE

ACTIVITIES TO AWAKEN YOUR SENSES



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Find a sit spot

A sit spot is simply a favourite place in nature (or by a window with a view of nature) that is visited regularly to cultivate awareness, expand the senses, and study patterns of local plants, birds, trees, and animals. The practice supports mindfulness, builds routine, and increases focus.

Our connection to nature throughout the seasons delivers numerous benefits for our bodies, minds, and hearts. In spring we witness new beginnings—a whole new year ahead. Research shows that people who spend at least 2 hours per week in nature report significantly better health and wellbeing,¹ and when it comes to the mental health benefits, science suggests that the most efficient drop in cortisol happens between the 20–30-minute mark.²

Making nature time an essential part of your family lifestyle is one of the best things you can do for both your and your children's health. Increasing your green time can have a wide range of positive effects, from a healthier heart and immune system and reduced stress in adults, to better eyesight and brain power in kids.

Time with nature encourages children toward teamwork and kindness. Kids who play in recently greened school grounds play more cooperatively, communicate better, and behave less aggressively. Taking group walks in parks and in the countryside improves kids' self-esteem; each extra day a child spends in a park per week steadily increases their resilience against stress.

It's clear: Grab your boots and warm layers, and go on an adventure!

Get Outside!

Refresh your mind and outlook with a few of these activities, perfect for your next outdoor trek:

LISTEN What do you hear? Can you identify the sounds? How many do you hear?

SCAN for movement. What do you see? Can you see tiny bugs, or birds, or squirrels?

LOOK What is your view? Is there anything new you can see from your sit spot today, like a fallen leaf or a bird feather?

SMELL Give your nose, palate, and gut a break from artificial additives that stress our body systems and soak in the aromatherapy of nature.

REFLECT in a nature journal. Write about what you experience in your sit spot today. Include details like the weather, the colours you see, any other observations, and what you are thinking about today. What do you see outside that you wonder about? With each sense we awaken, we connect more deeply to nature, strengthening the bond that restores us.

TUNE IN We can overcome a state of overwhelming thoughts and emotions and be present in the moment by practicing the 54321 grounding exercise. Try it: What 5 things do you see? What 4 things do you hear? What 3 things do you touch? What 2 things do you smell? What 1 thing do you taste?

WRAP UP this moment with your senses by sharing your wonder at the diversity of sensations that you have noticed with your children. Happy trails! •

For further reading visit ecoparent.ca/EXTRAS/SPR22

The Exploration Club for Families... NatureKids BC helps children get outdoors to play, imagine and explore in nearby nature. Join a family nature club near you or become a free-range member. Find out more at www.naturekidsbc.ca. If you are already a member you can use this activity as part of your Action Awards Quest!

