

Encounters beyond the view

For families and small groups

This how-to sheet is to help you receive something extra from an outing in nature. Primarily intended for use in the great outdoors, it can also be adapted to use in parks and even gardens.

It will require someone to act as a leader for each of the sections to help people engage with a task that hopefully opens us up to receiving whatever it is nature has in store for us today.

Remember that children can make good leaders too!

**Awe
and
wonder**

Start well

1. Start your outing by inviting each other to expect to receive something special during your time in nature

- Stand quietly for as long as you can manage: Breathe in the space, see it, smell it, hear it, feel it – long enough to help you notice that you have stepped out of the synthetic and the busy and into nature.

- You could even try saying:

For what we are about to receive, may we be truly thankful

2. Keep your eyes open for things that inspire awe and wonder.

Broadly speaking, awe and wonder arise where we encounter the unexpected, for example a big view, vertical rock faces, powerful natural things like waterfalls, the wind or waves. On a smaller scale it can be encountered when closely watching animals or noticing details and variety and design in flowers and leaves.

Take time on your walk to look out for such things and share them with one another, notice how it makes you feel.

4. Around 10-15 minutes from the end of your time in nature, invite your group to reflect on their experience. This seems to help keep hold of what we've received during our time out in order to take it back into the rest of life.

Sometimes questions help get people started. Try these or similar:

- What particularly caught your attention today?
- What did you notice about nature and/or other people?
- What did you notice about yourself? (thoughts and feelings)
- When did you notice something deeper, from beyond the view? (e.g. experiences of hope, love, life, peace)
- In one sentence, how would you describe, to someone who wasn't here, what you received from nature during your outing today?

3. Time in nature provides space for good conversations and also for no conversations (silence). This can mean that we talk about more deep and meaningful things. Try and create a culture for this on your outing by being a good role model – allow silence, but also share some of your deeper thoughts with those you are with.

This can be a real challenge for many children and adults. In order to help them you could choose a short length of time to set aside for deeper conversation. Perhaps set people off with a 'wondering' question to help them dig deeper into their imagination, thoughts and feelings.

For example: I wonder how this tree feels about losing its leaves in the autumn, I wonder how the lake feels about people leaving rubbish on its beaches, I wonder what the artist who 'painted' this view was thinking or feeling, etc. Ask people to walk quietly for 3 minutes and then have another 7 minutes for people to share with one another.

**Take
it
away**

Talk deeply