

Tuning In

Location of activity provided by staff



Summary

Intro: 2-4 mins

Explain activities: 2-4 mins

Do activities: 15-20 mins

Grades: (suggested) 4-8

Subject: Multisensory Desert Exploration

Activity Objective:

To present a variety of activities which encourage students to tune into their natural surroundings by sharpening their senses of sight, sound, and touch and to practice being a quiet observer.



Materials & Preparation:

PROVIDED:

- Blindfolds (if you plan to do the sensory walk)

NOT PROVIDED:

- Pencils and paper
- Index cards

PREP: Read materials, if leader knows of other “tuning in to nature” activities those may be added or substituted.

Key Vocabulary Terms: Observation, examination, natural surroundings

Intro Discussion: (2 mins)

Ask the kids, **have they spent any time in the natural world just observing what's around them?** (*Take responses*) Explain that today they will be doing a few activities that encourage them to tune into their natural surroundings.

Activities: (15-20 mins)

You may use AS MANY OR AS FEW of these activities as you wish (time on the activity can change)

Focusing In (about 5 minutes):

Object: Students study one small area.

Directions: Find something you want to examine closely and for a long time. Examples are:
...animal burrow, animal tracks ...tree branch, cactus, a tiny plant ...an insect

Take five minutes to really look at it. Tune out everything else. Just think about the area you are examining

Rules: Students must sit, kneel or lie on the ground and only look at the object being observed for this activity.

Peripheral Vision (about 5 minutes):

Object: Develops peripheral vision so we notice things even though we are not looking directly at them. Animals do this well.

Directions: Stare at a spot on the horizon, but be aware of any movement you see to the sides. Momentarily look at what caught your attention (branch moving, bird or insect flying, etc.) then focus back on the horizon.

Using Peripheral Vision While Walking (about 15 minutes):

Object: Too often we stare at our feet while walking the trail, therefore missing other sights around us.

Directions: Walk down a trail, but do not look at your feet. Look ahead or to the side, not at your feet or the trail. But, using peripheral vision, be aware of what is on the trail

just beyond you...a rock, a bend in the trail, an overhanging branch, etc.

Hearing with Coyote Ears (a few minutes):

Object: To magnify and focus sounds to the ears.

Directions: Ask students if they have ever watched their dog or perhaps a wild animal such as a deer, coyote, or rabbit as they listen for sounds. The outer ears are large and they rotate towards the direction of sound.

Ask students to practice listening as if they are a wild animal with hands cupped behind the ears and notice the magnification of sound. If it is unusually quiet at this time the leader may quietly scratch a foot in the soil and ask students to listen with and without cupped ears.

Listen to the Music (about 5 minutes):

Object: To carefully listen to the sounds around us.

Materials: Each person gets a pencil and index card.

Directions: Find a spot away from everyone else. Sit on the ground and listen to the sounds around you. Make marks on the card that illustrate the sounds you hear...whatever you think would be the best representation for the sound.

At the end of the listening time, students return to the leader and share their sounds by showing their markings on the cards. They will remember the sounds from these marks. Ask them to put their names on the cards and collect them. Give these to the teacher so the students can look at these back in the classroom and recall the desert sounds.

I Am a Camera (5 minutes):

Object: To look at our surroundings in different ways.

Explain: Some cameras have different lenses for different kinds of views depending on how the photographer wants to compose a scene. This may be a wide view showing the entire vast scene, or maybe a closer view of only a few objects, or maybe a very close look at a tiny part of the scene that we wouldn't ordinarily notice. That's what we are going to do as we pretend to be cameras.

Directions: Sit in a circle, facing outward so everyone has a good view of a tree.

Wide-angle lens - look straight ahead, holding arms to sides at eye level. Slowly bring the arms forward and stop when you see both thumbs. That's your widest-angle lens. Using this "lens" let your eyes take in the scene, constantly moving only your eyes. Do not focus on any one thing, just get a general impression of the scene.

Telephoto lens - make a telephoto lens by making a 'tube' with both hands (demonstrate) and bringing them to your eye. Find a small fragment of the scene before you and concentrate on that. What do you see now?

Macro lens - hold up one hand, fingers curved into a "tube". Walk up to a plant and look at a small object up close.

Students may wish to share.

Touching Nature (about 10 minutes):

Object: To touch the plants, rocks, and soil around us and discover different textures.

Directions: Now we are going to discover more about our surroundings through the sense of touch. You may use fingers, but use other parts too, such as the back of your hand, cheek, nose, etc. Find contrasting touches such as:
rough - smooth cool - warm slimy
- dry spongy - solid prickly - fuzzy
soft - hard

Walking Like a Bobcat (about 5 minutes):

Object: Animals walk quietly. It is one way to avoid predators, or to be a predator—hunting prey without the prey hearing.
Humans are usually not quiet walkers—we clomp along making noise, raising dust, and moving branches.

Directions: Let's practice walking as an animal would walk if it does not want to be noticed. That means very, very slowly and very, very quietly. Rather than using your whole foot, walk only on your toes, and walk very slowly so there is no sound. Give students a number of minutes to try walking quietly without making a sound with their feet or moving branches, etc.

Sensory Walk:

There may not be time for the following activity now, but this may be done later during the day or back at school.

Object: To concentrate on the senses of touch, sound, and smell while blindfolded.

Directions: We rely on our sense of sight so much that we often do not think about the importance of our other senses.

Ask the children to find a partner. Hand out one blindfold to each set of partners. One person will be blindfolded while the other leads him/her to an object to be **safely** touched. The leader is careful not to cause injury to his/her partner. There should be NO talking, just guiding, perhaps picking up an object from the ground to hand to the person.

Blindfolded students are asked to think about how the object feels, can they detect any smells, can they tell which direction they are facing by the feel of the sun. Were they led over level or hilly land? Can they guess what they are touching and relate any other information they have detected through the senses?

After a few minutes, switch places so everyone has a chance to be leader and be blindfolded. Allow a few minutes after this session to talk about discoveries.

Clean Up:

Upon completion of all center rotations, take activity center kit to “Biznaga” building and place it on the table. If you did the "Listen to the Music" activity, give the cards to the teacher.

