

Observing, Exploring, and Appreciating Nature with Children



“There must be provision for the child to have contact with Nature, to understand and appreciate the order, the harmony and the beauty in nature...so that the child may better understand and participate in the marvelous things which civilization creates.” Maria Montessori, The Secret of Childhood

Earth my Body

Water my Blood

Air my Breath

And

Fire my spirit

NATURE HELPS CHILDREN LIVE AND LEARN BETTER



NATURE
LET'S GO
EXPLORE **ROCKS**
By The Nature Conservancy

NATURE NURTURES THE MIND

Spending time in nature can improve self-confidence and enhance problem-solving skills.

NATURE HELPS YOU CONCENTRATE

Just a 20-minute walk outside can improve concentration and creative reasoning in children.

NATURE BOOSTS CREATIVITY

Backpackers scored 50 percent better on a creativity test after four days in nature.



WWW.NATUREROCKS.ORG

NATURE MAKES YOU HAPPY

In one study, 65% of kids age 13-17 described themselves as feeling "calm" and "happy" when out in nature.



NATURE REDUCES STRESS

Exposure to nature has been shown to reduce stress levels in children by as much as 28%.

Benefits Beyond Nature

- Greater ability to concentration
- Greater self-discipline
- Advanced motor fitness coordination, balance and agility
- Reduced levels of sickness
- Fosters language and collaborative skills
- Improved cognitive development
- Greater ability to deal with stress and adversity
- Reduces or eliminates bullying
- Instills a sense of peace
- Fosters more positive feelings about themselves and others
- Stimulates social interaction
- Greater development of independence and autonomy

NATURE PLAY

— TEACHES KIDS TO —

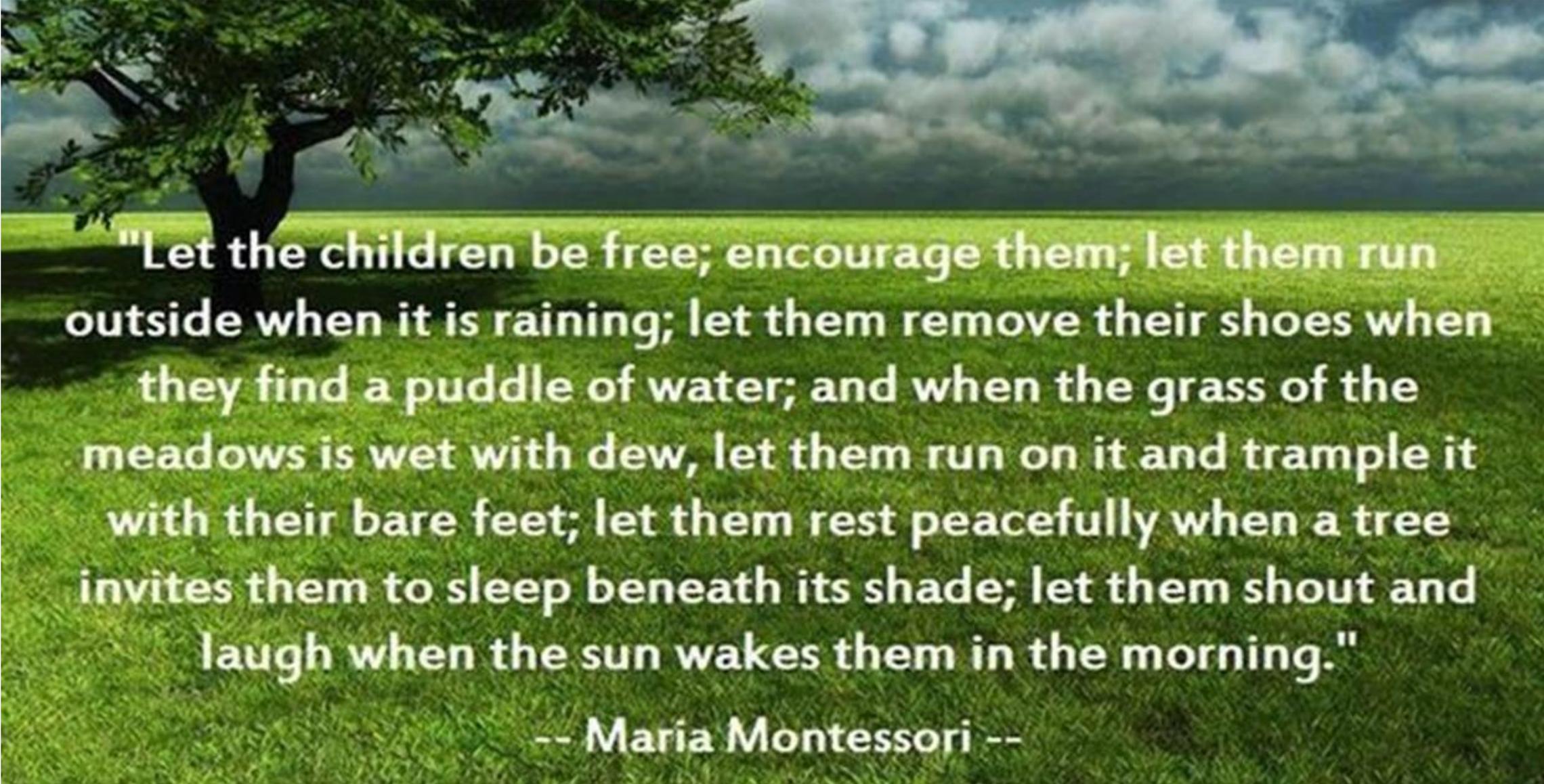
CLIMB HIGHER — THINK CREATIVELY
FIND THEIR OWN RHYTHM — EXPLORE
IMAGINE — RELY ON THEIR SENSES
ASSESS RISK — TEST THEIR BOUNDARIES
USE THEIR OUTSIDE VOICE — OBSERVE
NURTURE LIFE — RESOLVE CONFLICT
CULTIVATE A SENSE OF PLACE & SELF
IMPROVISE SOLUTIONS — FEEL FREE
RECOGNIZE BEAUTY — COLLABORATE
BE RESILIENT — REGULATE STRESS
LEARN THROUGH PLAY — WONDER WHY
GET MESSY — DEVELOP THEIR STRENGTH
BUILD IMMUNITY — GAIN PERSPECTIVE
FEEL CONNECTED TO THE WILD

Nature Connection Pyramid



Together we can bring childhood back outside, one day at a time.



A large, leafy tree stands on the left side of a vast, green field. The sky is filled with heavy, grey clouds, suggesting an overcast or stormy day. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

"Let the children be free; encourage them; let them run outside when it is raining; let them remove their shoes when they find a puddle of water; and when the grass of the meadows is wet with dew, let them run on it and trample it with their bare feet; let them rest peacefully when a tree invites them to sleep beneath its shade; let them shout and laugh when the sun wakes them in the morning."

-- Maria Montessori --



MEET a TREE

Concepts, Attitudes, Qualities: To build empathy, olfactory and tactile awareness; trust; using senses

Mood of Activity: Calm/Reflective

When and where for Experience: Day/Forest or Woodland

Number of Players Needed: 2 or more (in pairs)

Materials Needed: a Partner and a Blindfold

Activity:

Pair off. Blindfold your partner and lead her through the forest to any tree that attracts you. (How far will depend on your partner's age and ability to orientate herself. For all but very young children, a distance of 20-30 yards usually isn't too far.)

Help the "blind" friend to explore her tree and to feel its uniqueness. Specific suggestions are best. For example, if you tell children to "feel the tree," they won't respond with as much interest as if you say "Ruby your cheek on the bark." Instead of "explore your tree," be specific: "Is this tree still alive?...Can you put your arms around it?.....Is the tree older than you are?.....Can you find plants growing on it?.....Animal signs?....At what height on your body do the branches begin growing?..."

When your partner is finished exploring, lead her back to where you began, but take an indirect route. (This part of the game has its fun side, with the guides leading their partners over imaginary logs and through thickets that might easily have been avoided.) Now, remove the blindfold and let the friend try to find their tree with eyes open.

BLIND TRAIL

Concepts, Attitudes, Qualities: Sensory awareness; trust

Mood of Activity: Calm/Reflective

When and where for Experience: Day/Forest or anywhere

Number of Players Needed: 1 or more (the more the merrier!)

Materials Needed: Roped Trail, blindfolds

Notes: This is a rope-guided caravan whose travelers roam through lands full of strange sounds, mysterious smells, and interesting textures. Most travelers can hardly wait to retrace their steps through this enchanted land with eyes open. To make your blind trail exciting, find an area that offers a variety of experiences. An example of a good Blind Trail might be: Follow a shady forest path; climb over a moss-covered log; emerge into a sunlit clearing humming with summer bees; dive again into a forest and feel/hear the smooth, dry needles crackle under your hands and knees. A really good Blind Trail takes a fair amount of time to set up; but even a quickly-improvised one can be worthwhile. The important elements to keep in mind include variety and mystery.

*Before laying out the trail, decide which side of the rope the children will walk on. (Be sure to tell them to stay on that side.) Keep safety in mind and make sure there aren't any poisonous plants or animals in the area. Give them some idea of how to explore the trail, so they won't just run through it. Encourage them to be silent as they explore.

Create an Animal and the Habitat

Partner up or even in small groups. You are all zoologists who have just discovered a new animal species. As all good scientists do