

Children's Mental Health Week



Nurturing Healthy Minds: Connection to the Land and Environment

Did you know?

Our connection to the land is a source of life, nourishment, and wellbeing for everyone. Nature is a place of belonging. Spending time in nature we usually feel comfortable, safe, and able to be ourselves. Where do you feel a sense of belonging?

Our environment is so important to our well-being. Nature has been shown to bring happiness,¹ positive social interactions,² and a sense of meaning in life.³ Spending time in nature increases children's school performance⁴ and creativity,⁵ and decreases signs of mental distress.⁶

LET'S GET ACTIVE!

Inspirational Outdoor Graffiti (Junior & Intermediate students)

<https://smho-smso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Inspirational-Outdoor-Graffiti.pdf>

- Self-Expression through Sidewalk art

Organizing Pause (All ages)

<https://smho-smso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Organizing-Pause.pdf>

- Support students in organizing their Environment

Leave No Trace (All Ages)

- Have a contest to see who can collect the most garbage in 5 minutes.
- Pick items up with care and discuss how litter impacts the environment.

Observing Wildlife (All Ages)

- List the wildlife that inhabits your area.
- In what ways do the wildlife in your area benefit you?
- What are some things that might disturb each type of wildlife in their environment?
- Make a list of what you, your family, and/or your community could do to minimize your impact on the wildlife in your area.
- Are you willing/able to commit to helping out the wildlife in your area?



Feeling Stressed or Anxious? Try This!

Go outside for a walk or stand in your backyard. Pause, in silence, for 2 minutes, (or periodically throughout your walk). Listen and notice all the sounds that you hear. These can be leaves rustling, a pine cone falling from a tree, a bird chirping, your own steady breath, or even a car in the distance.

To make the quietest sounds louder (and make it more fun), use a paper cup as an amplifier by cutting a hole in the sides of two cups and holding the holes over your ears, drinking side facing away from your ears.

Were there any sounds or sights that you may have missed if you didn't take a moment to stop and listen?

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Gratitude Thought of the Day

Give thanks for your food.

As you prepare your meal or when you sit down to enjoy it, imagine the people, plants and animals that made it possible and thank them either silently or out loud.

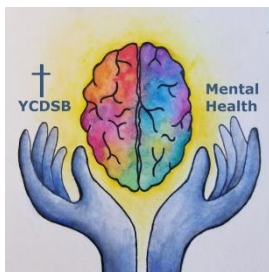
Captivating Connections

Tree Pose: Stand straight and find a point to focus on. As you breathe out, bring up your left foot. Shift your weight to your right leg, then bend your left knee and place your left foot on inside part of your right leg, just above the knee (younger children might place their left foot on the inside of their right ankle). Relax and straighten your right leg, grounding it to the floor. Imagine your leg is a strong, sturdy tree root! Stretch your arms out to the sides like branches on a tree. As you exhale, bring your hands together in front of your heart. Hold the pose. What type of tree are you? How long can you stay in this pose? What colour are your leaves?

Looking for More Information/Ideas?

- Spend time in a garden or go for a walk and enjoy the spring flowers in bloom
 - Challenge yourself to produce less waste
 - Walk and collect special things from nature for making a card
 - Build a birdhouse or feeder
- The Natures Playbook: <http://www.parks-parcs.ca/english/nature-playbook.php>

This Mental Health Week Activity Package is brought to you by:



References

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- ² E. Orban, R. Sutcliffe, N. Dragano, K-H, Jockel, S. Moebus. (2017) Residential surrounding greenness, self-rated health and interrelations with aspects of neighbourhood environment and social relations. *Journal of Urban Health*, 94, 158-169.
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- ⁴ A.F. Taylor, F.E. Kuo, W.C. Sullivan (2002). Views of nature and self-discipline: Evidence from inner city children. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 22(1): 49-63.
- ⁵ P.H. Khan, S.R. Kellert, Children and Nature: Psychological, Sociocultural, and Evolutionary Investigations (MIT Press, 2002).
- ⁶ G.N. Bratman, G.C. Daily, B.J. Levy, J.J. Gross (2015) The benefits of nature experience: Improved affect and cognition. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 138, 41-50.
- ⁷ Environmental Tree [Photo]. Clipart Library. <http://clipart-library.com/clipart/2015267.htm>.
- ⁸ Mazumder, A. Person holding Green Plant [Photo]. Pexels. <https://www.pexels.com/photo/person-holding-a-green-plant-1072824/>
- ⁹ School Mental Health Ontario. (2020). 12 easy and fun mental health practices to try with your children at home: Inspirational Outdoor Graffiti. <https://smho-smsso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Inspirational-Outdoor-Graffiti.pdf>
- ¹⁰ School Mental Health Ontario. (2020). 12 easy and fun mental health practices to try with your children at home: Organizing Pause. <https://smho-smsso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Organizing-Pause.pdf>.
- ¹¹ Canadian Parks Council. The Natures Playbook. <http://www.parks-parcs.ca/english/nature-playbook.php>.
- ¹² Adapted from Flow & Grow Kids Yoga (July 2016). Yoga Poses for Kids: Tree Pose. <https://www.flowandgrowkidsyoga.com/blogs/news/yoga-poses-for-kids-tree-pose>