



PARTNERS FOR YOUTH
EMPOWERMENT

Live Forum - July 18, 2019

NATURE CONNECTION FOR EMPOWERMENT

WELCOME

KATHY BUTT-ELLWAND

Dear 3rd Thursday Assemblers!

Welcome back, or, if it's your first time WELCOME! This is an exciting monthly online forum where people all over the world can gather to share ideas and good practice about different aspects of group facilitation.

Below you will find: A Check-in Question (please answer!); Goals and Agreements for today's session (please add anything you need/want to the agreements, and hit "like" to agree to uphold these agreements during the session); 4 discussion questions and 3 case studies (posted approximately every ten minutes; answer in any order). I will be facilitating this experience for 90 minutes. There will be a pdf transcript posted on the pyeglobal.org website, as well as the files of this facebook page, in a short while. These transcripts are so great we're thinking of making a book out of them!

Remember to keep refreshing the page to read the latest comments, and scroll down the page to read all threads. The threads will appear in order of most active, which can be confusing!

This month we are discussing Nature Connection for Empowerment. We are at a moment of global environmental crisis with climate change, extinction of species, deforestation and plastics in our ocean threatening to tip the balance. Technological advances are affecting the way children play and learn, with many children in the global north especially spending much more time indoors, interacting with video games, ipads, TV and smart phones and much less time in nature than their parents. For example, in the UK children are rarely allowed to



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‘roam’ and wander freely outdoors. In a single generation, since the 1970s, children’s ‘radius of activity’ - the area they are allowed to roam unsupervised outside of home – has declined by almost 90% (Sanford Gaster, ‘Urban children’s access to their neighbourhoods’, 1991). This is having a measurable effect on wellbeing, mental health and physical health, as well as environmental stewardship. Sir David Attenborough, a British environmentalist and broadcaster said: ‘No one will protect what they do not care about, and no one will care about that they’ve never experienced’.

As facilitators from many different disciplines and backgrounds, we may view ‘nature connection’ as a specialised branch of facilitation, available to outdoor learning specialists and environmental educators, or those who work in a rural setting. However, increasing our skills and confidence in this area can open up exciting possibilities to weave nature connection into different areas of facilitation, and help open up opportunities to connect to nature in diverse settings, to create powerful, sustainable change for those we work with and our collective relationship to nature.

This brings us to today! We will be sharing ideas and examples of how we can ‘connect with nature’ for empowerment of the groups we work with, and ourselves.

Kathy Butt-Ellwand Alys Huws, Jo Ridley hope you can join us!

Jo Ridley This sounds excellent Kathy - I can't make it today, but I will keep tuned in for future events x

Kathy Butt-Ellwand Jo Ridley lovely to have you as part of the group! You are welcome to add comments to this discussion over the next couple of days - I know you've got some great knowledge on this topic x

Jo Ridley Thanks, Kathy, so nice to hear from you - still fondly remember the residential we did together. Yes, I will keep an eye and contribute x



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Kathy Butt-Ellwand Thanks Jo that was an awesome programme!

AlysForest Skool I'm here !

Kathy Butt-Ellwand Hiya!!!

CHECK-IN

KATHY BUTT-ELLWAND

Check-in Question for 18th July 2019: Please describe your mood as a type of landscape, or as an object found in nature....

Anuschka Ruge My mood is like a deep green valley in spring still wet from the early morning fog.

Kathy Butt-Ellwand Hi Anuschka! Lovely to see you here today!

Anuschka Ruge Kathy, yay, I was excited all day for it!

Kathy Butt-Ellwand Yay! Me too!

Kathy Butt-Ellwand Some deep green slimy seaweed and shells in a rockpool on the seashore

AlysForest Skool My mood is an open grassland but wanting the cool shade of a woodland

Kathy Butt-Ellwand ahhhh that cool woodland shade! Lovely to have you here Alys Huws xx

Hatem El Wakeel My mood is like a mountain high but easy to climb .

Kathy Butt-Ellwand Hi Hatem El Wakeel thanks for joining today!

Hatem El Wakeel Kathy Butt-Ellwand it is always a pleasure for me to learn more from your Thursday online meeting 🌹

Kathy Butt-Ellwand I love 3rd Thursdays I get so much inspiration each time!

Kitty Jackson My mood right now is like a slightly foggy woodland glade - fairly serene but slightly moody and brewing

Kathy Butt-Ellwand Feeling that image Kitty Jackson

Sezin İlbasmış Dindaroğlu a stone in the sea in low level of seaside

Joanne Lauterjung I love these. My mood is late-day, warm sunshine on a smooth and flowing river.

Sumanth Raj My mood like black rock with shades in a deep forest

Disha Karn Arora My mood is like that cloud with a silver lining...

Soma Ragab My mood is like a rain cloud

GOALS AND AGREEMENTS

KATHY BUTT-ELLWAND

Goals and Agreements for this session on 18th July 2019:

- 1) To explore what Nature Connection means to you
 - increasing our understanding of nature connection and our relationship with the natural world opens up a field of possibilities to become more fully alive, present and joyful.
- 2) To share ideas and tools for using nature connection in our work with groups
 - deepening our skills in Nature connection and adding to our toolkit means we can draw on this beautiful and ever-present resource of



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Nature and increase our effectiveness and joy as a facilitator, and help our groups to access deep transformation and healing by experiencing new ways to connect with nature.

3) To have fun

- Joy and happiness helps everything along 😊

In order to achieve these, here are some suggestions for COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS to make our time together flow really well. Be sure to add what you need or want AT ANY TIME DURING THE PROCESS. Let the group know or privately message the facilitator if you are concerned that an agreement is being broken.

1) No put downs of self or others. Keep a positive, lift-up vibe. If the facilitator finds your comments aggressive or inappropriate in any way you will receive a personal message.

2) Be willing to entertain simultaneous truths. Rather than proving a point, try to listen to understand, and be willing to agree to disagree. At the same time, if you have a strong belief be willing to stand up for it. This will make our conversations rich!

3) Show your presence, by LIKING and by responding to keep the flow. Ask questions, make comments, connect. The technical trick for this format is to REFRESH your browser fairly often. The questions move around depending on how many people are answering, so please scan the whole page for new questions now and then.

4) Maintain CONFIDENTIALITY by not sharing names or personal information about the participants in your groups, sharing from your own perspective, and asking permission before sharing someone else's story.

5) Answer any questions in the COMMENTS below the question to keep the conversation organized and readable. Only open NEW questions in new threads.

6) You can come and go as you please, take as long as you like to respond, and basically enjoy the text-format to make this work no matter whether you are just waking up, just going to bed, or on your lunch break (time zones unite!!) A pdf transcript of the conversation will be provided. Feel free to continue the conversation even after the 90 minute period has ended.



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DISCUSSION QUESTION #1

KATHY BUTT-ELLWAND

Discussion question #1: Please share a short story of an activity that gave you (or a group you worked with) an experience of deeply connecting to nature

Kathy Butt-Ellwand Alys Huws Naya El Anuschka Ruge here's the first discussion question - sometimes facebook organises the posts with most comments at the top of the page, so keep scrolling down and refreshing your page to get the latest question :)

Naya El I don't have a story. I'd love to incorporate nature into activities that I lead though.

Kathy Butt-Ellwand Great! Feel free to share an experience from your life if you like, or just call to mind a time when you felt deeply connected to nature, no pressure to share here!

Anuschka Ruge I rarely have the opportunity to work in or with nature... So my deepest connect would be more with a place/space than with nature in itself. The centre which I had my first Training for Trainers at is one of the most magical places for me. It is based in rural Spain and combines architecture and nature in a way that it creates a diverse range of very different outdoor learning spaces. Every time I return there, I feel lighter and can breathe easier.

AlysForest Skool Oooh where in Spain?

Anuschka Ruge AlysForest Skool Mollina, close to Malaga

AlysForest Skool Anuschka Ruge wow would love to have more info!

Kathy Butt-Ellwand Lovely, thanks for sharing Anuschka Ruge



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Anuschka Ruge AlysForest Skool sure, here you go:

<http://www.ceulaj.injuve.es/ceulaj/>



ceulaj.injuve.es

CEULAJ - Centro Eurolatinoamericano de Juventud

[CEULAJ - Centro Eurolatinoamericano de Juventud](http://ceulaj.injuve.es)

AlysForest Skool Anuschka Ruge amazing, thank you I'll check it out 😊🌻

AlysForest Skool Lots of moments in Forest School but I think last summer I had a group of 3 year olds. It hadn't rained for a while and felt really hot, the children made magic potions, and did a rain dance which came from us talking about how sad the trees looked and how much they needed water. I also ran a Forest School Leader course last year and we spent the week of the course working in the woods, one lady had never spent time in a woodland before but after she said she had always longed for that connection with nature, now she goes to the same woodland with her kids

Anuschka Ruge I love the fact of the children having the intrinsic urge to do something good for the trees 🥰

Kathy Butt-Ellwand Rain dance sounds gorgeous Alys!

Anuschka Ruge When I am looking more at my personal life, I find it life-changing to meditate in the early morning hours on my balcony. Even though I live in a big city, I am fortunate and have a balcony pointing out into the green with large and wild trees. Opening my mind through the meditation in this space feels like connecting myself to the plant and every living thing in it.



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Kathy Butt-Ellwand A couple of years ago I was on a retreat with a group of facilitators who were all sharing their practice. One woman was part of the Forest School movement in the UK, leading nature workshops with young children. She asked me to help her demonstrate a pair activity called 'meet a tree' where she blindfolded me, spun me round a few times and lead me around the woodland we were in. I felt quite scared, but I trusted her. My senses were alive with the smells and sounds around me. I felt like a little kid. She led me to a tree and invited me to explore it with all my senses. I had the chance to feel it with my hands, hug it and try to remember it and its unique features. She led me away from it. She removed the blindfold, That was a strange feeling, to suddenly have my sight back. I then had to try to find 'my' tree again. I spotted it straight away!

Hatem El Wakeel I had a chance to participate in an activity with Power of Hope Canada in the forest of Vancouver, it was about covering my eyes then asked to go inside a forest guided by the facilitator to choose one tree to be my tree, the facilitator asked me to hug the tree, smell and touch, then take me back outside, uncovered my eyes, then asked me to go back and try to discover my sister tree ..

Kitty Jackson Also at Power of Hope in Canada, I participated in a blindfolded forest walk where we were guided by the voices of other community members and the beat of a drum. It was magical and risk!

Sezin İlbasımış Dindaroğlu Last Jam that we organized in Çanakkale, we had an inner circle for artists under pine trees to share handling stories. In the middle, stories got deeper and wind was getting stronger, soon to the end after some deep sharings wind and the voice from trees also calmed down. They were definitely great witnesses.

Kathy Butt-Ellwand That sounds magical Sez!

AlysForest Skool so magical!



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Joanne Lauterjung Really enjoy reading these - so many great experiences, in so many parts of the world. I lived in Turkey in 1985, so reading about Canakkale is really cool! Thanks, Sezin İlbasmış Dindaroğlu that that.

I took a class called the Moral Imagination, and we had an exercise where we sat in the “lap” of a tree and asked it questions. This was at Eastern Mennonite University, and we went to Shenandoah National Park and had a whole day of interacting with nature in a beautiful and creative way.

Kathy Butt-Ellwand oooh I just love the metaphor of sitting in a tree's lap....THANKYOU for that gift Joanne Lauterjung

Soma Ragab My experience with nature was my first experience with the English artist Adam Weymouth and participated in the Earth Art Workshop and the use of nature materials to make this art. The second experience 10 months ago at the World Forum of Facilitators in Fantasia Luxor in a workshop with the beautiful Xoli from South Africa. This experience is similar to the Kathy experience with Tree but with stone in the desert.

Joanne Lauterjung Oh yeah - Soma Ragab, you just reminded me of Andy Goldsworthy. He’s an artist, and I sometimes do mini-versions of ‘art in nature’. Check his work out - very inspiring. And it’s all temporary - the wind or rain comes along, and it’s gone.

Soma Ragab hi Joanne 🙌 Yes art makes us see details of nature

DISCUSSION QUESTION #2

KATHY BUTT-ELLWAND

Discussion question #2: What does ‘nature connection’ mean to you, and why is it important in empowerment work?



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Anuschka Ruge As modern humans, we are so boxed in with our devices and ways, that we are completely detached from nature. We lost the ability to feel ourself and the connection we have with everything around us. I believe it is essential to rebuild this connection. Nature is a great energy source and surrounds us everywhere. With the reconnection, we will also almost automatically establish a sense of respect and responsibility for nature. That will be more and more crucial for the survival of this planet and everything on it.

AlysForest Skool To me nature connection is about working on our relationship with the natural world, changing it from a one sided extractive relationship to one that is based on exchange and inter-dependency. It's about understanding our place in the world and acknowledging the value of the other species we share the planet with

Anuschka Ruge Beautifully said!!

Kathy Butt-Ellwand These are beautiful perspectives Anushka Anuschka Ruge and Alys Huws...and also a call to action and radical change perhaps?

AlysForest Skool I think definitely radical change is needed!·

Anuschka Ruge Kathy YES, definitely! I firmly believe the current situation the planet is facing is based in this disconnect. We have children growing up, who never touched or even saw what ends up on their plate or as their furniture. We need to rebuild the basic but essential understanding that we are part of a living and breathing ecosystem, which is affected by each of our actions!

AlysForest Skool I was talking to my boyfriend about this yesterday after we watched the film Women at War, we were talking about what the change could look like, and how radical it needs to be. I think things like Extinction rebellion are so good to disrupt an abusive system, I think this is going to have to be very radical to completely disrupt it. And we also need to repair our



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own personal relationship, our emotional connection to the earth.

Kathy Butt-Ellwand A lot of work to be done, inside ourselves and collectively...

AlysForest Skool yes, where to begin?!!

Anuschka Ruge AlysForest Skool, you are right! We need a systemic change. Our individual actions won't be enough if we remain in a society that only focuses on consumption and extraction.

Sezin İlbasmış Dindaroğlu nature connection has different layers, first it helps a lot to connect inner voices and it reminds that we all are part of the same being! I think as a result of this is it is easier to build listening capacity for different voices around. I believe it has also physical effect, brain is calmer so more open to try new things. When all these getting together, nature helps a lot to empower individual and group dynamics.

AlysForest Skool Yes so true! It is about training ourselves in deeper listening and opening and engaging our senses

Kathy Butt-Ellwand Love this Sez...I feel nature connection has layers too...connecting us inward and also to something magical larger than ourselves, bringing benefits to our own wellbeing and to our communities. Could helping young people find their love of the land, nature and environment be a first step towards the kind of systemic change needed Alys and Anuschka? Sometimes I feel like I can't do anything significant, but then small actions like the work we do with groups could help tip the balance back?

Joanne Lauterjung Kathy Butt-Ellwand small actions combined to be big change. Remember butterfly wings beating can affect weather patterns! That's why connecting to each other is sooo important. To know we're not alone, and to be reminded of all the great work being done. Most of what we do doesn't make the



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news. I highly recommend subscribing to Optimistdaily.com - they have a daily message of good things happening in the world. And sometimes I get exercise or discussion topic ideas from their articles.



OPTIMISTDAILY.COM

Home

Kathy Butt-Ellwand Thanks for sharing this link Joanne Lauterjung - will check it out

Joanne Lauterjung I'm reading these quickly, but look forward to coming back and going through them more slowly. I think it's SO important. We have so much to learn from nature about diversity, complexity, patience, listening, observing, abundance!! And how can we care for our environment if we don't feel connected to it? Hugely important.

DISCUSSION QUESTION #3

KATHY BUTT-ELLWAND

Discussion question #3: In the context where you live and work, how connected are young people to the natural world? What are the consequences of this?

Anuschka Ruge I believe that in my day job for a global youth NGO similar to the scouts, the youth sees nature more as an adventure space. You use it for outdoor activities like hiking or camping. In broader general society, I would say this divide goes even further to a point where nature is not really a consideration. But, I am having a lot of hope seeing so many really young people



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engaging in climate change activism. I really wish that they will be able to transfer it into their daily lives and amplify it into their direct environment.

Kathy Butt-Ellwand That sounds hopeful....anyone have any ideas how to support young people to put this passion into action in their daily lives, in their local environment?

AlysForest Skool I think young people have been taught to engage with nature through a scientific way or as a place that is seen as you said Anuschka Ruge as an adventure space, I think using the arts can really help develop an emotional connection to nature. Or something like bushcraft (not marketing itself as 'survival skills' and just focusing on trapping animals), something where they can learn skills that deepen their understanding of the environment.

Sezin İlbasmış Dindaroğlu most of people live in cities in my country, especially young people because of educational opportunities. So mostly, connection with nature is smt that you need to put effort to make it happen. Sadly even parks are not so many in big cities. for interested people, nature is a place for trainings, camps, gatherings or group camping etc, so for fun and learning (if learning experiences has some connection opportunities lucky them). Even though we have really nice natural landscapes.

as consequences, I notice they are having problems to aware natural problems and their connection with problems in small and globe scale. Also, I can say reading the nature is forgotten every day for following wind, rain and what can come next...

In my city we have a NGO, they have special programs for young people like bird observations, butterfly observation, olive's courses (these are important in here) etc. I really like seeing some young people to see who are trying to listen and recognize the voice of a bird :)



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Kathy Butt-Ellwand Thanks for sharing Sez...really interesting. Great that there is hope...how to connect to nature even in city life?

Joanne Lauterjung Interesting to see how different the relationships are with nature, depending on where we are. Myanmar is 80% rural, subsistence farmers, so those people outside the cities are connected to nature for their livelihoods. And yet . . . Plastic and trash everywhere. But a large part of that is a traumatized population that's just not tuned into their environment. There are a couple Trash Heroes groups in the country that have young people fired up and picking up trash every week, so it's a start. It will take time.

Kathy Butt-Ellwand Thanks for sharing your experience in Myanmar. Loving hearing about all the diverse perspectives around the world.

DISCUSSION QUESTION #4

KATHY BUTT-ELLWAND

Discussion question #4: Please share a favourite activity to help groups connect to nature, or something you love to do to connect yourself to nature

Anuschka Ruge I like activities that show similarities between nature or animals and human life or that use nature as a metaphor. Also sensing activities are great!

Anuschka Ruge For me personally, dance with closed eyes or meditation in nature are powerful tools to recharge.

AlysForest Skool It depends on the age of the group but I think getting the group to open up to the space and slow down, getting them to find



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something that to them could be treasure and then sharing with the group why they chose that thing

Sumanth Raj Sound, action, dance, action song with clap ... It will connect inside and out side nature

Sezin İlbasmış Dindaroğlu get a partner, one of them close eyes, and discover the nature with different senses by guidance of the partner, touch to different texture smell different herbs, stones, trees. And change the eye bandage! At the end, as a closing circle sing together to thanks to nature :)

Joanne Lauterjung These are great. I do something calling, “listening near and far” - what can you hear nearby, and what’s further away? The contemplative photography stuff is a good way to get people addicted to their phones to start seeing what’s in front of them in a new way. I love the idea of touching different textures - anything that increases mindfulness while in nature. I recognize that in some highly traumatized countries, people are afraid of nature - it represents the unknown, or their village was burned down, or soldiers were hiding in the woods. So finding ways to create safety in nature is an important first step.

CASE STUDY #1

KATHY BUTT-ELLWAND

Case study #1: You are facilitating a weekend residential training with a group of adults. You have completed the first day, the group are well bonded but tired and starting to lose focus. It’s day 2, a hot and sunny day, and one of the group begs you to let them do the afternoon session outside. Your venue is a training room in a hotel, there is some outside space with a large open grassy area and trees. You have planned to do an experiential drama session where small groups explore some case studies through role play, followed by a focussed debrief discussion



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with the whole group. What are the costs and benefits to changing your plan and taking this session outside?

Anuschka Ruge I think the session could benefit from the change of scenery, even though moving outside where outsiders can see you might put stress on the safe space. I would open up for the small groups to work outside where they see fit. For the presentation and debrief I would see if there is someone who would prefer to move back inside. If we stay outside, I would change the debriefing method to something with small and rotating groups as it is easy to lose focus in a large group discussion outside.

Joanne Lauterjung I might do something mixed, depending on the weather. I have a mindful photography exercise I do in pairs, where people walk in silence, in pairs, and take photos to “give” each other. They come back and share the photo they took for their partner, and explain why they do it. It gets people outside for a brief time, they bond nicely, and then sometimes we might be ready to start inside again.

Sezin İlbasmış Dindaroğlu I might reframe the exercise to add asking some inspiration from the new place whatever they see and it depends on the sun and its strength maybe recheck for timing if under the sun. Perhaps I would put some extra attention for being on the stage part so it can balance not to sweat a lot and also not to get tired by being outside.

Benefits, changing and connecting somehow new place can help to focus again. If it is not being handled carefully it can be dangerous as well to disintegrate.

AlysForest Skool I think there could be a lot of benefits to going outside and getting some fresh air, but yes could make the group feel more exposed which could mean everyone may not be willing to share. I think I would go out and get the group to form a circle and feel the safety of the circle each throwing a word into the circle about how they feel, I would then ask them to turn outwards but still stay in the circle and say a word for something they notice, could be sky, soil, tree, leaf,



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but still feel the safety of the circle on their back, I would rotate the circle a few times so they noticed different things. I think it would be good to keep checking in especially with the sun and bring water if possible, also try and stay closer to the trees. I think small groups for the role play and reflections could be done in pairs, they could find a natural object to stimulate what they want to say in the reflection, or they could write their reflections down, or make a picture from natural objects if there are enough around.

CASE STUDY #2

KATHY BUTT-ELLWAND

Case study #2: You are facilitating a youth empowerment summer camp for teens. A lot of the young people come from cities, and the camp will be in a beautiful natural setting with a lake, woodland and gardens growing vegetables and herbs. You are running a tried and tested arts based programme. What ideas do you have to help the group connect to nature, that make the most of the opportunities of their surroundings? Are there any activities or practices that they could take back home, that they could also do in an urban environment?

Anuschka Ruge Using things from nature like leaves, stones, branches etc. as tools or materials during art activities. Making colours from natural sources like sand, berries, plants. A creative writing exercise like 'Tell something about yourself from the perspective of the trees around you' or 'If you would be a lake'. Change settings for each session and always start with a sensing exercise in which they need to articulate how the different spaces are affecting them.

Sumanth Raj Starting with rhythms and asking their moods and present thoughts about nature. They easily connect with nature and asking them which plant or place you like most



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AlysForest Skool I think starting by giving them some time to arrive and take in where they are is important, maybe go for a group walk around and if you have enough facilitators take smaller groups off in different directions, each group is given information by their 'guide' about the area then they have to come up with some other information, it doesn't have to be true, it could be a story about the whole place. Each group then become guides themselves and lead each other around the area. I think Natural navigation skills would, how to make a fire, foraging workshop where they made medicine and their own natural creams, harvesting some of the food and planting, dyeing using natural dyes, a movement in nature workshop kind of like parkour but through the branches of the trees, poetry workshop where they wrote the poems on leaves and left them around the sight, a morning bird walk really focusing on the bird song followed by a singing workshop, they could make a stage in the woods and put on a play where they had to make their costumes out of natural materials, a bat walk, get them to sleep outside, skills on lighting and cooking over the fire, swim in the lake if it was safe enough, natural cordage workshop and wood craft, meditation in nature, dance workshops bare foot on the grass.

Anuschka Ruge OMG! I want to do all of these!!!!

Sezin İlbasmış Dindaroğlu There are already great suggestion, I can only add to them maybe after harvest it can be given some examples to give some idea to do in cities as well. "You can try your own this writing activity in park under a tree you choose"

CASE STUDY #2

KATHY BUTT-ELLWAND

Case study #3: You are planning a nature connection discussion session, and realise with an ache in your heart that you feel disconnected to nature. What practices or activities can you do in under an hour to connect to nature?



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Anuschka Ruge I would spend time in nature while being still. I really love the idea of sitting in the lap of a tree that someone else mentioned. Or I would do an act of kindness towards nature.

Sezin İlbasmış Dindaroğlu I visit the place for the session, I find a spot close my eyes, take some deep breath, listen and maybe a short voice answer and thanking to the place.

If I'm still feeling disconnected I share with the group before we start and add similar short exercise as a group, if I cannot do it alone we all can do it together :)

AlysForest Skool Lie on the ground if possible and look up at the sky or trees, look under a rock or at some flowers and watch mini beasts usually working really hard, close my eyes and try and see how many different types of birds I can hear, breath and know that the oxygen has been given by a tree

Soma Ragab I take a trip to the group for an hour that we only contemplate without talking and after the hour we begin to discuss our feelings around it and shape our lives without it 🙄🤔

END

KATHY BUTT-ELLWAND

Thank you all!

Our live facilitated discussion is over for this month....please feel free to keep adding comments