



# Manual of Activities

on nature connection towards  
holistic wellbeing



## Introduction

This manual is a culmination of three years of work on the Erasmus+ project, “Belonging to Nature: The Heart of Wellbeing”. Six organisations from six different countries, including Iceland, Slovenia, Portugal, Belgium, and Spain, came together to address the growing concern of young people’s disconnection from nature and the rapid destruction of our environment. This manual is the result of their efforts and provides practical suggestions on how to promote wellbeing among youth by connecting them with nature.

The project trainers are highly experienced in youth work and completed the “Training of Trainers” program in 2019-2020, which was designed by SALTO and supported by Erasmus+. The manual is an excellent resource for anyone interested in promoting wellbeing among youth and integrating nature into their programs.

Throughout the project, we organised two residential training programs on nature-connection and wellbeing for trainers, educators, youth workers, and leaders. The first was held in Slovenia in May 2022, while the second took place in Iceland in September 2022. These events allowed us to test and refine the activities presented in this manual.

In addition to the manual and its theoretical framework, we have also developed a comprehensive training program (curriculum). The curriculum can serve as a detailed guide on how to apply the knowledge we have gathered from various contexts and settings.

Our project highlights the importance of young people’s ecological development through spending quality time outdoors and connecting with nature. By doing so, they can cultivate a multiperspectival attention to the relationships among all things that exist. We recommend a methodology that utilises participation, group dynamics, experiential learning, and nature connection practices to reveal deeper layers of understanding. This approach promotes a sense of wellbeing and human ecology, which is essential for young people’s personal growth and development.





## How to use this manual

This manual is designed as a methodological learning process, aimed at bringing young participants to an experiential understanding of human ecology through nature connection and well-being practices. Human ecology is an integrative model that views human beings as ecosystems within a multi-systemic network of life on this planet, which we refer to as the Earth community.

The manual offers a learning process that consists of four steps, corresponding to four chapters that unfold gradually and organically. Each step builds upon the previous one, leading participants towards a deeper understanding of human ecology and their place within the Earth community.

The four steps are:

1. Core routines for nature connection and wellbeing.
2. Introductory and preparatory exercises.
3. Practices to discover and explore human ecology:
  - Earth ecology
  - Social ecology
  - Self-ecology
  - Spiritual ecology
4. Reflection and integration.

Each step/chapter of this manual includes multiple activities that can be used in different combinations to create a unique learning process. Users can select practices based on their preferences and objectives, but we recommend following the learning flow. Starting with energizers and then moving from nature connection practice through preparatory exercises towards human ecology, closing the process with reflection and integration. We believe this approach enhances learning and makes the experiences more meaningful and empowering for young people.

The template used for each activity provides a complete description and clear instructions on how to carry out the activity, along with recommendations for trainers on how to reflect and integrate the experiences with participants. This ensures that trainers have all the information and tools they need to effectively facilitate each activity and make the most of the learning process.

## Heads & Hearts & Hands

The holistic approach of heads, hearts, and hands underlies all of the activities in this manual. This approach recognizes the three main faculties of the human being: thinking, feeling, and doing, which correspond to understanding, sharing, and manifesting. We recommend being aware of these three dimensions in every practice, as it can help you to maximise their potential and better support young people in gaining a wider understanding of the complexity of existence and a more holistic approach to life.





*Core routines for nature connection and wellbeing*



The core routines of nature connection are powerful techniques developed in the book “Coyote Guide to Connecting with Nature ” by Jon Young, Ellen Haas, and Evan McGown (2009). These techniques draw on indigenous knowledge and wisdom from various traditions to help us cultivate, nurture, and enhance our relationship with the more-than-human world, which is the Earth community, our true home.

Incorporating these practices into our daily lives can help us recover, reawaken, and embody a deeper and more conscious sense of nature connection and well-being. These practices can be done separately or in combination, depending on the time, space, and enthusiasm of the participants.

Below, you will find a protocol on how to practise a combination of core routines in a residential training course or youth exchange setting. These routines can help participants deepen their connection with nature and themselves.

The core routines of nature connection are:

1. **Sit Spot:** Finding an outdoor place where you can be quiet and pay attention to the environment on a regular basis, ideally 15-30 minutes per day, every day.
2. **Story of the Day:** Sharing the experiences of the day as a story told out-loud (ideally sitting around the fire) helps the storyteller to integrate the newly acquired knowledge and generate understanding. It also nurtures the sense of community and belonging.

3. **Expanding our Senses:** As it offers a multiplicity of stimulations from the diverse life forms and environments, the outdoor nature offers the best opportunities for expanding the senses. Openness and wonder are essential qualities for this process.
4. **Questioning and Tracking:** Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? A practice of questioning heightens the power of observation and attentiveness.
5. **Animal Forms:** By imitating animals in their movements, attitudes, gestures and feelings, we get to reconnect to our animality, rediscover our connection with the animal world, and reestablish a link with millions of years of evolution.
6. **Wandering:** This is an invitation to enter timelessness; be mindful of every step and of the miracle of life happening right in front of you.
7. **Mapping:** Creating maps of territories is fun and meaningful. The more we practise, the better we get at visualising with clarity every single corner of our environment.
8. **Exploring Field Guides:** Field guides are collections of collective experience that help us grow in knowledge and understanding.
9. **Journaling:** This practice consists of using our hands to connect with our heads and our hearts, creating memorable texts, drawings, doodles and imaginations, which can later assist us in the process of integrating our experiences and co-creating new knowledge.
10. **Survival Living:** We strongly feel that everybody should try to learn some survival skills, thereby gaining an appreciation of how we depend on the living world in every way.
11. **Mind’s Eye Imagining:** Imagination is an amazing faculty that can be cultivated and trained, in order to empower us to comprehend wider contexts and to put ourselves in the situation of another being, human or non-human.
12. **Listening for Bird Language:** Since the beginning of our human journey, birds have been the messengers of the environment that teach us about what is going on around us and above our heads.
13. **Thanksgiving:** This practice allows us to recognize and appreciate the gifts that we receive every single day, which helps us to live well and in harmony, making us gentler, kind and loving. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://earth-regenerators.mn.co/posts/core-routines-for-nature-connection>



## Practising the core routines

**Type of activity:** embodiment, exploration of territories and environments, nature connection practices for personal and collective wellbeing

**Group size:** between 10 to 25 participants.

**Duration:** To initiate any variation of these activities it would be good to spend around 15-20 minutes on introduction, where you explain the core routines as simply and as clearly as possible. (You will find more information about the core routines in the handouts and the theoretical framework IO1 of Belonging to Nature: The Heart of Wellbeing).

Any activity or a combination of activities can take form 1 hour up to 5 hours or more, depending on the training.

Debriefing usually takes around 30 minutes.

**Overview:** There are infinite possibilities for us to connect with nature. One of the main sources of inspiration was the 'Coyote guide to connecting with nature'.

A good combination of the core routines will always include Hands, Hearts, and Heads simultaneously.

**Objectives:** By the end of this activity, the group will have achieved an understanding of the different ways of connecting with nature daily. The participants will discover authentic ways of expanding sensory awareness. Additionally, these activities aim to cultivate a feeling of belonging and a sense of autonomy and wellbeing.

**Materials:** A journal and a pen, a backpack with all you need to explore outdoor nature: water, a knife, a musical instrument, some fruit or bread, a raincoat...

**Working space:** Outdoors (dress according to the weather conditions).

**Preparation:** A good introduction to the Coyote's Guide and the core routines would be great. Check this link: <https://www.jonyoung.online/>

As a part of the preparation, you can divide the participants into small groups and have them brainstorm on what they would possibly need to safely explore the designated working territory. They can then share their findings with the rest of the group. It is important that people know the basic protocol on how to act in case of an emergency or an accident.

Afterwards, allow some time for the participant to individually prepare whatever they need.

### Instructions:

This activity involves wandering in nature with a timeless intention, expanding our senses to connect with the environment on a deeper level. We will explore the Field Guides of the terrain, using our imagination to visualise our position in the space. It is recommended to journal everything relevant to create a mind map that will assist in remembering and integrating the experience. Listening to the bird language and tracking any clues in the environment can awaken our curiosity and sense of wonder.

We may also give thanks to the land at special spots (a river, a waterfall, some rock formations or remarkable trees).

To find our sitting spot, we will allow our body to sense the surroundings and find a place where we feel at home and revitalised. Once we have found our sitting spot, we can relax and become quiet and attentive to everything happening around and inside us for about 10 minutes. Afterward, we can make a map of the territory we crossed to arrive at our sitting spot.

This spot is a treasure where we can connect with the gold of our soul. We should do a small ritual of thanksgiving to the place for sheltering us.

After the ritual, we return calmly and silently to the meeting place. We can then open the circle to share our visions and maps in pairs or small groups, and later with the larger group if time allows.

If time permits or on another occasion, you can invite participants to share their experiences about the bird language or survival skills, as well as their observations and questions about the environment and tracking.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** When looking for your sitting spot, how did you recognize it? How do you feel after this process?

If you have time, you can make space for the participants to ask their own questions, or practice telling their Story of the Day (Can you share your journey with us by telling your story? You can use the journal as support).



**Follow up:** Can we connect this activity with something else?

Do you think you could integrate some of these core routines into your lifestyle? Why and in which ways?

**Tips for facilitators:** Practise these core routines on your own in different settings and at different occasions. Become clear about their potential for wellbeing.

**Handout:** <https://earth-regenerators.mn.co/posts/core-routines-for-nature-connection>

<https://wildernessawareness.org/>





*Starting and preparatory exercises*





# Mindful posing

**Type of activity:** energizer

**Group size:** any

**Duration:** 10-15 minutes

**Overview:** In this activity, one facilitator plays music, creates a rhythm, or claps their hands while participants move around, encouraged to dance or move freely. At a certain point, the trainer will choose a word or state of mind and communicate it to the participants. The trainer will then stop the music or rhythm at an unspecified time, and participants must strike a pose that they feel captures the chosen word or state of mind. This process is repeated several times. This activity encourages participants to express themselves physically and creatively, while also exploring different emotions and states of mind.

**Objectives:** At the end of this activity, participants will be more focused and more in tune with their minds and bodies.

**Materials:** Speaker (optional).

**Working space:** Outdoors or indoors.

**Preparation:** Choice of music (optional).

## Instructions:

1. Begin by explaining the game to the participants and inviting them to move freely without any judgement. Any kind of movement is valid.
2. Start the game by having one of the trainers play music or clap their hands.
3. After a while, choose a feeling or state of mind and communicate it to the group.
4. At a random moment, signal the trainer to stop their action.
5. Participants should then strike a pose that they feel captures the chosen feeling or state of mind and hold it for as long as they wish.
6. Restart the action and repeat the process several times, selecting different feelings or states of mind each time.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** Take some time to understand how the participants felt during the activity. Did they feel uncomfortable and anxious or calm and relaxed? Was it hard for them to find a pose that represents the given words?





## *Ha/Honza/Fijuuu!*

**Type of activity:** energizer, community building

**Group size:** any

**Aims or objectives:** To interact with each other and to become more connected as a group.

**Duration:** 5-7 minutes

**Working space:** indoors or outdoors

**Preparation:** Explain the activity and invite the participants to stand in a circle to start playing.

### **Instructions:**

Step 1 - The following energizer implies using sounds and movements.

The youth worker invites the participants to form a circle. One of the participants turns to the participant next to them (clockwise) while making the sound “HA” and keeping eye contact. The receiving participant repeats the same in a clockwise direction. The sound “HA!” is repeated until everyone says it a few times while keeping eye contact.

Step 2 – The trainer adds another element, which is “HONZA!”. The word “HONZA!” means changing direction. One of the participants starts another round of “HA”. At the point when one of the participants chooses to change the direction, he can do it by saying “HONZA!”. The participant who received “HONZA!” now continues with the sound “HA”, but in the other direction.

Step 3 – The trainer adds another element and that is “FIJUU!”. This means that in order to connect with someone across the circle, participants should make eye contact with the chosen person and say “FIJUU!”. The chosen person receives “FIJUU!” and either continues with the word “FIJUU!”, crossing the circle to someone else, or continues with the sound “HA” to their left or right.

**Follow up:** N/A





## ”Getting to know you” Card Game

**Type of activity:** ice breaker, teambuilding

**Group size:** minimum of 4 people

**Duration:** 20-30 minutes

**Overview:** Place question cards in front of the participants, facing down. Participants take turns choosing cards. They read their questions and if they feel comfortable, answer them. If appropriate, the rest of the group can also join in to share their own answers and experiences.

**Objectives:** At the end of this activity, the people in the group will know each other better.

**Materials:** cards / pieces of paper

**Working space:** outdoors or indoors

**Preparation:** cards with the questions

### Instructions:

- Place a selection of questions face down on a table and ask the young people to take a random seat around the table.
- Inform the group that if anyone feels uncomfortable or would rather not answer a question card, they are free to miss their turn.
- Ask the participants to take turns to pick up a question card, read the question out loud and share their answer with the group.
- If appropriate, the other members of the group can answer the same question or share their experiences if they are happy to do so. Only do this if you have enough time to let the discussion develop naturally. The game keeps going until all the questions have been answered or the group seems to lose interest.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** Get general feedback based on the type of questions chosen.

**Tips for facilitators:** Keep the questions relevant to the group and the activity at hand.





## Wink animal forms

**Type of activity:** energizer, nature connection, awareness and imagination

**Group size:** minimum of 6 people

**Duration:** 10-15 minutes per game

**Overview:** Randomly select a person and ask them to leave the room / get away from the rest of the group. The remaining participants then choose someone who will be the Mage. The isolated person comes back and they all walk around in a confined space. The Mage can transform other people into animals by winking at them (it is up to the participants to choose which animal they want to transform into). The person who went away must guess who the Mage is. They are given three guesses. In order to win, they must make the right guess before everyone turns into animals. No verbal communication is allowed during the game.

**Objectives:** At the end of this activity, the players will be more focused and aware of other's non-verbal communication.

**Materials:** none

**Working space:** outdoors or indoors

**Preparation:** none

### Instructions:

1. Invite the group to sit down in a circle, making sure they can all see each other.
2. Send one person outside the room / get them far enough from the group.
3. The rest of the group chooses someone to be the Mage.
4. The person who went away comes back and walks around the outside of the circle.
5. The Mage carefully winks at people who then transform into animals of their choice. They transform gradually and, when fully transformed, have to do their best to imitate the chosen animal.
6. The person on the outside of the circle has 3 chances to guess who the Mage is.
7. When they guess, they change places with the Mage, who is the next one to take guesses etc.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** Correlate the activity with themes of awareness and focus. Did the players feel more concentrated and aware of others after a few rounds of the game? Which animals did you choose? Why?





# Human knot

**Activity made by:** Telma Portela, Max Guirado and Maria Giró

**Type of activity:** energizer, community building

**Group size:** 6-10 people. If the group is bigger, it can be divided in two.

**Duration:** 10 - 15 minutes

**Overview:** team work, collaboration, hands and heads

**Objectives:** To overcome a challenge as a team, communicate with one another efficiently, to have fun.

**Materials:** none

**Working space:** Anywhere, with enough space to move freely (indoors or outdoors).

**Preparation:** As a facilitator, be ready with clear instructions.

## Instructions:

1. The participants should stand in a circle facing each other.
2. Everyone should raise their arms and move towards the centre of the circle until they are touching hands with the people beside them and there is no space between them.
3. They should then lower their arms and cross them in front of their body, holding the hands of the two people next to them.
4. The group will now be in a knot formation. The participants have 5 minutes to untangle the knot while still holding each other's hands and return to the circle shape.
5. The activity will end after 5 minutes or when the facilitator stops it, even if the knot is not fully untangled.

## Debriefing & evaluation:

- How did you organize to make the movements?
- Were you able to undo the knot? Was it difficult? Why?

**Tips for facilitators:** There is no need to help the group to undo the knot. We recommend the use of background music for this activity. This can invite people to make different moves and dance while they are trying to turn back to a circle.





## The collection game

**Type of activity:** energizer, warm up

**Group size:** any

**Duration:** 10- 15 min

**Overview:** This is a short energizer to reconnect with the group, get the blood flowing, have fun, and engage in a healthy competition. The participants engage their heads, hearts, and hands, but also feet.

**Objectives:** At the end of this activity, the group will feel awake and will be ready to engage in other activities.

**Materials:** Whatever they can find in the environment.

**Working space:** Outdoors (but could also be done indoors with a few adjustments; the participants don't collect natural objects, but artificial objects made from different materials/elements).

**Preparation:** none

### Instructions:

1. All participants gather in a circle.
2. Tell them they are going to explore their immediate surroundings as fast as they can.
3. Tell them to bring 1 natural object that represents or is connected to the EARTH element.
4. Tell them to bring 1 natural object that represents or is connected to the FIRE element.

5. Tell them to bring 1 natural object that represents or is connected to the WATER element.
6. Tell them to bring 1 natural object that represents or is connected to the AIR element.
7. Allot some time to complete the task (for example: 2 minutes) and signal them when the time is over.
8. Let them place all the objects in four piles: earth, air, fire, water.
9. Take some time to see what they brought, see if there are any objects that repeat themselves, and let them comment or explain.
10. The last step is optional: create a gallery of four art installations with the items representing the four elements, or alternatively, just one art piece that connects all the items (for example a mandala or some other sacred geometry form).

**Debriefing & evaluation:** Since this is a preparatory exercise for deeper activities, it does not need reflection time. Nonetheless, you can finish it with a short discussion or develop it into a full-time activity.

### Follow up:

1. could be developed into a full-time activity followed by a reflection (in pairs or groups); the participants share what they found, what connection they have with the elements, how they personally perceive the elements in nature, how aware they are of them etc.
2. it would also be possible to upgrade it into making an altar/shrine/installation for each of the elements.

**Tips for facilitators:** Make it fun and stressless, encourage healthy competition and curiosity.





## Blind walking in nature

**Type of activity:** nature connection and wellbeing

**Group size:** any

**Aims or objectives:**

1. To walk in nature in a mindful way.
2. To practise trusting other people and the surroundings.

**Duration:** 20 minutes

**Working space:** outdoor nature

**Materials:** none

**Preparation:** Before starting the exercise, it is important that the participants ask for consent for holding and guiding their blindfolded partner. Since the aim of the activity is to build trust, it is fundamental that everybody agrees to the way they are guiding and being guided.

**Description:** The activity 'Blind Walking in Nature' involves walking in nature in pairs, where one person is blindfolded and surrenders to the guidance of their partner. The pair will walk in silence, paying attention to their surroundings, and being mindful of their steps while expanding their senses. The trainers will indicate when it is time to switch roles. This activity encourages participants to connect with nature on a deeper level and heightens their awareness of their environment through sensory exploration.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** Get general feedback on the activity and ask participants a few questions: What was the most difficult part of this activity?

Did you notice any change in your perception of time and space?

**Tips for facilitators:** Give clear instructions and be aware of the path they are walking, be mindful of time to get the best of the activity.





# Nature Bingo

**Type of activity:** teambuilding, icebreaker

**Group size:** 12-30 participants

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Overview:** The trainers make up a list of items that can be found in the surrounding nature. The players, divided into groups, must search for the items, and take photos of them. The first group to complete the list, or the group with the most items wins.

**Objectives:** By the help of this activity the people in the group will get to know each other better and will spend quality time together. If the location is new to them, they will have the chance to explore it and get familiar with their surroundings.

**Materials:** examples of objects

**Working space:** outdoors

**Preparation:** a list of objects that can be found in the surrounding area, examples of objects

## Instructions:

1. If necessary, split the participants into groups and explain the game.
2. Provide the list of items. Make sure you show examples for each one of the items (photos or the actual object).
3. Set limits for the play territory and start a timer.
4. Begin the game.
5. When the timer ends or when someone completes the list, gather all the groups, and end the game.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** Get general feedback on the activity. Did the participants enjoy it? Did they learn anything new about the items they were looking for or the partners they were teaming up with?

**Tips for facilitators:** If appropriate, offer a snack break during the activity.







# Sneaky, sneaky

**Type of activity:** energizer, awakening nature connection

**Group Size:** minimum of 4 people

**Duration:** 10-20 minutes

**Overview:** Players make a circle. One person stands in the centre of the circle with eyes closed. One of the trainers silently points out to some of the players in the circle who then have to try to sneak up on the person standing in the centre. The “blind” person has to use his or her other senses to figure out which direction these players are coming from. If the person in the middle points towards one of the incoming players, they are out and another player (randomly chosen by the trainer) now has a chance to win. The game goes on, until one of the players succeeds in reaching the centre or until they are all eliminated.

**Objectives:** At the end of this activity, the participants feel more focused and more in tune with the surrounding nature and their own bodies.

**Materials:** blindfold (optional)

**Working space:** outdoors

**Preparation:** none

## Instructions:

1. One person stands, blindfolded or eyes closed, in the middle of a space.
2. The other young people spread out in a big circle around the blindfolded player.
3. Signal to three young people to try and sneak up to the young person in the middle (from quite far away) and tap him or her on the shoulder, without being heard.
4. If the person in the middle hears some noise and points directly at one of the sneakers, the sneaker should freeze and is out of the game.
5. The player who sneaks the closest to the middle enters the next round. The sneakiest person in the final round is the ultimate winner of the game!
6. Prompt your young people to think about how to be super quiet, move with purpose, feel their body movements, slow down their breath and thoughts (for both the sneakers and the person in the middle), and then try again and see if they are better at it.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** Take some time to understand how the participants felt during the activity. Did they feel uncomfortable and anxious or calm and relaxed? After a couple of tries, did they notice an improvement? If yes, what changed?





## *Practices to discover and explore human ecology*

Human ecology views human beings as ecosystems, interconnected and interdependent within the wider multi-system network of life on our planet. It encompasses four complementary ecologies: Earth ecology, Social ecology, Self-ecology and Spiritual ecology, which all support and complement each other. Many of the activities in this manual involve more than one ecology, highlighting the importance of being aware of the interconnectedness and potential of all these ecologies. We offer these activities in the spirit of solidarity, with the aim of promoting the well-being of young people and creating more resilient communities that are in harmony with nature and its incredible network of ecosystems that sustain life.



## *Activities on self-ecology*

Self-ecology is rooted in the Ecological Self-concept developed by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess. According to Naess, individuals can transcend the idea of the ego-self through self-actualization and come to recognize themselves as an ecological self, interconnected with all life on earth. This perspective leads to environmentally responsible behaviour becoming an act of self-interest, as the well-being of the environment is inseparable from one's own well-being.

**Examples:** Self-knowledge and self-development, awareness of our impact on the planet and acting upon it, human planetary responsibilities.



## The mind jar

**Type of activity:** brainstorming, self-reflection

**Group size:** any

**Duration:** 20-30 minutes

**Overview:** This activity is divided into two parts. In the first part, the trainers/facilitators show a representation of what our mind looks like when we are stressed or overwhelmed, using a jar filled with water, glitter, and glue (more details in the instructions). In the second part, participants are asked to focus on one single emotion and to express it through any means that they feel comfortable with (writing, talking, acting, dancing, drawing).

**Objectives:** learn / practice mindfulness through focus and reflection

**Materials:** a jar, glitter, glue, writing and drawing materials

**Working space:** outdoors or indoors

**Preparation:** Fill the jar with water and have all the other materials ready for use.

**Instructions:**

1. Get a jar and fill two thirds of it with water.
2. Add one tablespoon of glue and some dry glitter.
3. Close it with a lid and shake it to make the glitter swirl.

4. Use the following script or take inspiration from it to form your own lesson: "Imagine that the glitter is like your thoughts when you're stressed, mad or upset. Can you see how they whirl around and make it hard to see clearly? That is why it is so easy to make bad decisions when you are upset – because you're not thinking clearly."
5. Put the jar in front of the participants and let it rest before you continue: "Now watch what happens when you keep still for a couple of moments. Keep watching. See how the glitter starts to settle and the water clears? Your mind works the same way. When you remain calm just for a little while, your thoughts start to settle, and you start to see things much clearer. When we are overwhelmed, feeling a lot of emotions, calming down and breathing deeply can help us settle the mind."
6. Now invite the participants to attempt to do the same as the glitter in the jar, but by focusing on one single emotion and expressing it by writing, drawing, acting or whatever else feels comfortable (choosing not to share is also a valid option). Give the participants about 15 minutes to do this.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** Take some time to ask the participants how they felt during the activity. Was it hard to stay focused on a singular emotion? Did expressing it help you in any way, or did it make you feel uncomfortable?





## Exploring the senses

**Type of activity:** nature immersive experience

**Group size:** 8 - 24 participants

**Duration:** 1,5 h - 2 h

**Overview:** The aim of this activity is to explore the sensorial part of connecting to nature. It works on Hearts and Hands.

**Ecology or ecologies addressed:** Self and Earth ecologies

**Objectives:** to raise awareness of the sensory perception of the natural world

**Materials:** none

**Working space:** outdoors, preferably a forest

**Preparation:** choose the perfect spot for this activity

**Instructions:** Tell the participants that they will have 20 minutes to individually explore the surrounding area in silence. They need to find a spot in the proximity that attracts their attention (Sitting Spot). When they find it, they need to stay there for a while, exploring the space with their senses (touch, smell, taste, hearing, sight), and if possible, meditate and stay quiet. When they hear a signal (a signal you demonstrate to them beforehand) they need to come back to the indicated place for gathering. Split the group in pairs. Ask them to identify person A and person B. When ready, tell them they will now head off on a journey. They will take their partner to their sitting spot, their special place, but blindfolded.

You can choose to provide scarves and blindfold masks if someone wishes to use them. Tell them to use the time they will have and not get distracted by anything else (each participant can have from 10 – 20 minutes, depending on the time you have available for this activity). You might want to give an example on how to guide someone and ask for the consent to touch their body, show different ways of touching and getting in contact with the natural elements around (like putting hands in the soil, touching different textures, listening to specific sounds, smelling flowers, maybe even singing a song to their partner, walking barefoot, etc.). Use the signal to mark the time to swap the roles. When time runs out, everyone comes back to the circle.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** In the same pairs, ask participants to share with each other how the activity went for them. How did it feel to guide and be guided? How did they experience their senses in this environment? What was it like to share their spot with someone else?

**Follow up:** This activity might be interesting to connect with the activity “Nature Soundtrack” (see Social Ecology) to build up on the exploration of the senses.

**Tips for facilitators:** Before you facilitate this activity, we strongly suggest you try out this experience yourself as a participant first. If you have a chance to work in pairs with someone and guide them and be guided, reflect later how it felt. It will help you build the sequence with more comprehension on what’s behind it.





# My name is Eric and I am a stone

**Type of activity:** ice breaker, teambuilding

**Group Size:** any

**Duration:** 10 – 25 minutes, depending on the size of the group

**Overview:** memorising the names, connecting, igniting the imagination and creative thinking, etc.

**Ecology or ecologies addressed:** Self ecology

**Objectives:** At the end of this activity the participants will feel relaxed and more connected. They will have memorised some or all the names of people in the group.

**Materials:** none

**Working space:** outdoors or indoors

**Preparation:** /

## Instructions:

1. Participants stand in a circle.
2. One of them starts by choosing an object of nature and describing it – for example:
  - a. “MY NAME IS ERIC (saying their own name) AND I AM A STONE. I AM ROUND, I AM SMALL, I AM HARD, I AM HEAVY! AND I’M CALLING OUT TO ----- “(chooses another participant by saying their name).
3. The next participant then repeats what was said and adds their own, for example:
  - a. “THIS IS ERIC AND HE IS A STONE. HE IS ROUND, HE IS SMALL, HE IS HARD AND HE IS HEAVY. AND I AM MARIA, AND I’M A FEATHER. I AM LIGHT, I AM WHITE AND I CAN FLY. AND I’M CALLING OUT TO....”
4. The game goes on until everyone has taken their turn.
5. If someone cannot remember any of the names or adjectives, the group can help.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** Was that fun? Was that difficult? How many names do you remember? Did you have to concentrate hard? What helped you remember the names?

**Tips for facilitators:** It is best to use this activity after the first introduction to the names has already been made.





# Embodying the elements of nature

**Type of activity:** personal exploration within a group

**Group Size:** any

**Duration:** ideally 60 to 90 minutes

**Overview:** This activity takes the participants on an explorative journey within, helps them to connect with the elements of nature in a more meaningful way, and become aware that as we live in nature, nature lives in us. They get to think about the elements (Heads), feel more connected to nature and full of appreciation at the awareness of the importance of each element (Hearts), and engage their entire body in movement and dance (Hands).

**Ecologies addressed:** Self, Earth and Spiritual ecologies

**Objectives:** The participants will gain awareness of the different elements, how they work in their bodies and in their surroundings. Through embodiment they will connect with each of the elements on an intrinsic level.

**Materials:** blindfolds (can be scarfs), a speaker, a list of songs, altar space

**Working Space:** outdoors or indoors. If indoors, make sure the space is large enough for people to dance and move freely. This activity is best done barefoot or in socks (no shoes or slippers).

**Preparation:** Prepare a playlist with appropriate music. It is really important that the music supports the feeling of the element it is supposed to represent. Further below, you will find a list of suggested songs. In case of working with younger participants, adapt the descriptions of the elements and evaluation questions.

## Instructions:

1. Explain to the participants that they are going to use their bodies to embody the 4 elements of nature (Earth, Water, Fire and Air). It is important to tell them that although some people believe they cannot dance, this is nothing more than a belief. This activity is not about dancing well, nor is there a right way to dance or move. Everybody knows how to move, and dancing is moving.
2. If you have time, you can introduce the activity by having the group wear blindfolds and dancing to a random song to warm up and to get a bit more relaxed about the activity.
3. Introduce the first element; EARTH (always go from the densest to the most subtle element >> EARTH; WATER; FIRE; AIR). Describe the earth element: it is the element that constitutes our bones, our muscles. It is dense, heavy and supportive. It supports us even if we fall. It provides us with food. Guide the participants to close their eyes and focus on feeling their feet and the ground

beneath the feet. Guide them to relax their body, soften up, bend the knees a bit, and start swaying from side to side. Then play the music and let them move freely. Encourage them to express themselves and enjoy their bodies and movement while embodying and connecting with the earth element.

4. Describe the WATER element: it is the element that is connected to our feelings and emotions therefore it is vitally important to let them flow through us. Water is connected to our blood and our lymphatic system. It quenches our thirst. Our bodies are mostly made of water. Water holds information. Water moves and flows. How can we move like water? Sometimes we are like an ocean, stable and calm, sometimes we flow like a river or a spring, or fall hard like a waterfall? Which emotions do we feel when it is raining?





Then play the music and let them move freely. Encourage them to express themselves and enjoy their bodies and movement while embodying and connecting with the water element.

5. Describe the FIRE element: it is the element that gives us light and keeps us warm. It is connected to our digestion, mind and emotions like passion and desire for action, but also rage and anger. It is also connected to our vital energy and sexual energy. How does the fire of desire burn into you? How does your inner fire propel you to action? Is it warm and nourishing or is it destructive?

Then play the music and let them move freely. Encourage them to express themselves and enjoy their bodies and movement while embodying and connecting with the fire element.

6. Describe the AIR element: it is the element that is connected to the mind. It is very subtle and moves quickly. It changes direction like the wind. It can be a gentle breeze or the strongest hurricane. Let the winds of change blow and move your body.

Then play the music and let them move freely. Encourage them to express themselves and enjoy their bodies and movement while embodying and connecting with the air element.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** In pairs or groups: What was this activity like for you? Have you ever danced like this before? How do you understand embodiment? What do elements mean to you? Did the activity help you to recognize the different elements in your body?

**Follow up:** If you like it and time permits, you can follow up with an activity of drawing or painting the elements. You can also draw each element on a separate piece of paper, put the 4 papers on the floor and have participants go stand next to the paper that was the most enjoyable element to embody. They can also discuss and share how and why.

**Tips for facilitators:** It is really important how you present the elements. Make sure you do it with feeling. Another super important thing is the selection of music, since it enhances the experience.

**\*LIST OF SONGS:** found on Soundcloud or Spotify

- EARTH: Earth and Air, Shamanic Drum Root Chakra Meditation
- WATER: Requiem for a Dream, Scott Benson Band
- FIRE: Colibri libre, Bird Tribe, Miranda Rondeau, Luke Mandala Remix
- AIR: Everloving, Moby







# Environmental influence awareness

**Activity made by:** Naiara, Andreas & Noe

**Type of activity:** reflection through experience

**Group size:** 1-30 people (if you have enough space, more people can join the activity)

**Duration:** 30-60 mins

**Ecologies addressed:** Self, Social, & Spiritual ecologies

**Overview:** Participants will be guided to two different sites. The idea is to understand/remember through experience the importance of controlling our environment, as our environment greatly influences our state of mind, disposition, creativity, productivity, and our spirit.

**Preparation:** Find two safe places.

**SITE ONE:** Look for an unpleasant environment. It can be a basement, or a room with little or no light at all. Important: make sure the place is safe. If there are any hazards such as tools lying around, put them out of the way.

**SITE TWO:** Find a pleasant garden, beach, riverside, or another nice spot in nature with as little exposure to noise pollution from cars or other machines.

**Dynamic:** Inform the participants that they will be taken to two different sites, and they should mind their steps. Important: Let them know that they can call for the activity to stop if they feel that the level of stress is too high for them.

Once the participants are at site one, allow them to stay there for a couple of minutes. 2-7 minutes is recommended. It is up to the

facilitator to determine the right length of time. This will depend on the conditions of the place, the participants' age, and the atmosphere in the group. Note: During this time, the facilitators can create conditions that induce more stress, such as creating noise with metals, or another way to make the place more uncomfortable. Be aware of the sensitivity of the participants. A group of children for instance, may be playing and joking, while a group of adults may experience deep distress. The facilitators should be on a lookout to notice anyone asking to stop the activity.

Once the time at site one has passed, call the group to carefully walk out of site one, gather and form a circle. Ask the group to share one word that describes how they felt, what they thought, or whatever else they would like to share. Facilitators should try to remember these words or take notes. It is up to the facilitator to suggest the following activity:

**Collective story:** Participants will create a story. Each participant will contribute with one sentence. The idea is to give a story a beginning, a climax, and a resolution.

After this, a brief energizer is optional, for example throwing a ball and counting how many passes can be completed in the group without dropping the ball. This can improve the mood of the group. This is at the consideration of the facilitators, depending on how much time is available. If the group is in a good mood and enthusiastically animated, facilitators can proceed to the second part of the activity without the energizer.

Time to visit the second site: This part of the activity is much easier than visiting site one. Here the flow is natural and participants are encouraged to enjoy the space and time. Facilitators can guide the group into a light meditation session. Participants are welcomed to stretch, lay down on the grass, feel the wind, listen to the sounds of nature, and get their feet wet in the gentle water if they want.

Once the time at site two is over, facilitators will repeat the word-sharing session. It is expected that participants will choose more positive words than after spending time at site one. Optional: Facilitators can now suggest to the participants to create another collective story (as after visiting site one).

If time allows, participants can again play to check how many times they can pass a ball without dropping it. It is worth checking if the improvement in the collective mood has influenced the performance of the group!

Finally, facilitators will allocate time to reflect about this activity with the participants, so they can share their feedback.

*"If you don't control your environment, the environment will control you."*

**Unknown**





# Gratitude rounds

**Type of Activity:** teambuilding

**Group Size:** minimum of 4 participants

**Duration:** 30 minutes

**Overview:** This activity is related to the work of Joanna Macy, and it would be beneficial to incorporate her teachings when working on Self Ecology. One way to do this is by using an exercise that aligns with the different stages she describes in her work: Gratitude, Honouring Our Pain for the World, Seeing with New Eyes, and Going Forth.

**Ecology or ecologies addressed:** Self and Spiritual ecologies

**Objectives:** It is so easy to take things and beings in our lives for granted. It helps to take a step back and gain a bit of distance, in order to see how precious and how uniquely real they are. A quick turn of the lens will help us to look at things with newly gained appreciation.

**Materials:** no materials needed

**Working space:** outdoors or indoors, in a comfortable space where it is possible to sit still for 30 minutes

**Preparation:** no specific preparation needed

## Instructions:

1. Divide the participants into small groups of 4 to 6 people, depending on the size of the group. You can do this by asking them to choose the groups by themselves or play a short group dividing game.
2. Next, have them sit in a circle, so they can all see and hear each other, and ask them to imagine that they are somewhere outside of space and time.
3. After a few moments of silence, ask them to start remembering together what they loved about living on Earth. This is Round 1, which can last for ten to fifteen minutes. Participants can share more than once.
4. When the time is up, start Round 2, where you ask the participants to focus on what they liked about the humans of planet Earth.
5. After about 10 minutes, start Round 3 and ask them to reflect on what they were grateful for in being themselves.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** Ask the participants to share their experience inside the smaller groups they did the exercise in. At the end, you ask them to thank each other for sharing.

**Follow up:** If you have enough time, it makes sense to continue with another exercise linked to the work of Joanna Macy. In this way, you could do an exercise linked with gratitude (what this exercise is about), honouring our pain for the world, seeing with new eyes and going Forth!

The following link might be of great interest to you: <https://workthatreconnects.org/resources/about/>





# Mental impact - shadow theatre

**Type of activity:** role play

**Number of facilitators needed:** 2

**Aims or objectives:** To raise awareness about different natural disasters. How natural disasters can impact our mental health and how we can control it. To raise awareness about environmental anxiety.

**Duration:** 2 hours

**Working space:** outdoors

**Materials:** 6 sheets of paper with the topics, any materials that can serve as props during the theatre plays

**Preparation:** prepare topics related to natural disasters and environmental anxiety

**Description:**

1. Stage 1 (3 min): Divide the participants into groups. Every group is given a topic related to a natural disaster (hurricane, tornado, tsunami, wildfire, etc.)
2. Stage 2 (15 min): Each group is given 15 minutes to prepare a short play of 3-4 minutes on a specific topic that was given to them. Participants decide on the script, the roles and the acting by themselves.
3. Stage 3 (60 min): Each group presents their play. After the first round of performances, Shadows are included in the plays, Shadows are members of other groups, who represent the Shadows of the actors. This means each of them should choose one actor, stand or sit behind them, and repeat every move, gesture and emotion of the chosen actor. Each actor should have at least one Shadow behind them.
4. Stage 4 (27 min): The audience is invited to speculate on the topic of the performance, its main idea and the moral of the story.

**Debriefing and evaluation:** Ask for the general feedback. What was it like to be a viewer and an actor in a play? The Shadows are requested to share their experience, feelings and emotions while shadowing the characters. Start a discussion about how environmental disasters can trigger environmental anxiety and how that can impact our mental health. Try to find solutions on how to navigate our feelings and/or environmental anxiety.

**Tips for the facilitators:** Make sure you have properly explained the guidelines of the activity and that everyone understands the tasks. The facilitator can choose the topic or the natural disaster that will be the main theme of the play (earthquake, coastal flooding, ice storm, hurricanes, tsunamis, wildfires, tornadoes, etc.)





# The tunnel of gratitude

**Type of activity:** Emotional intelligence (EI), sharing love, encourage the feeling of belonging

**Group Size:** 15-25 participants

**Duration:** 1 to 2 hours

**Overview:** This activity is about creating a collective space for sharing intimacy, celebrating each person's uniqueness, offering praise and experiencing the power of gratitude.

**Ecologies addressed:** Spiritual and Social ecologies

**Objectives:** To understand the importance of gratitude and the unique contribution of each individual to the collective wellbeing of the group. To facilitate a direct experience of the power of words of love and praise. This activity focuses on the power of the Heart.

**Materials:** It would be useful to play some instrumental music (we suggest the Icelandic band Sigur Rós as an example here).

**Working space:** It has to be a quiet place either inside or outside.

**Preparation:** This activity is better to be done as a part of closing the training, after the participants have shared their experiences and have started feeling more connected with the group.

## Instructions:

1. Ask the participants to stand in a row, facing each other to make a 'human tunnel'.
2. Each participant will slowly walk through the tunnel with their eyes closed, while the other participants take turns and whisper in their ears some words of gratitude and appreciation for their unique character and contribution. It is important to notice that everybody is worthy of praise, even if it is just for showing up.
3. If you do this activity at the end of the training, the praise will combine with the sadness of saying goodbye and this will expand everyone's heart. It is important to do this exercise slowly and mindfully. Do not rush.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** Have the participants form a circle and ask them to describe their feelings with a single word or a really short sentence. Silence is also welcome!

**Follow up:** Thanksgiving is one of the core routines of nature connection and Ubuntu, it is good to remind people of that.

**Tips for facilitators:** Remind people that if they don't have anything nice to say to someone, they can at least be present and wish them well. This activity creates a sense of timelessness that should be respected. Be mindful of the soundtrack that you selected, so it will not interrupt the flow.

**Handout:** Gratitude





## *Activities on social ecology*

Social ecology is the study of how humans interact with their environment and how this interaction impacts society and the environment as a whole. Our interactions are shaped by the systems and narratives we have established for ourselves, but it's important to remember that these constructs are not universal truths and remain subject to critique. We also form social connections with the natural world and all the living beings that share our environment.

**Examples:** impact of consumerism on society, power over paradigm, norms and values within groups and society, wisdom traditions and indigenous cultures



# The great game of power

**Type of Activity:** group creation

**Group Size:** a minimum of 6 participants, ideally 8 or more

**Duration:** 30 minutes

**Ecologies addressed:** Social ecology

**Overview:** The Great Game of Power is one of the game methodologies explained by Augusto Boal in his 'Games for Actors and Non-Actors' (a standard work for anyone working with Theatre of the Oppressed).

In this activity you work with Hands and Heads.

**Objectives:** This game allows us to examine our assumptions about power and also to develop a more multifaceted understanding of power. It is an ideal exercise to start an exploratory discussion on power (and counter-power) in an animated way. It also allows you to avoid an abstract discussion, detached from the everyday realities and values of your participants. In this exercise, participants translate their understanding of power into images on the stage. Although the exercise seems highly symbolic, it easily connects to real forms of power in society. Thus, you as a facilitator can make the translation again, but in reverse.

**Materials:**

- 1 table
- 6 chairs
- 1 bottle
- a flip chart with paper is useful for the debriefing

**Working space:** any comfortable space inside or outside

**Preparation:** The participants take their place in a circle around an imaginary scene. In that scene are randomly arranged: a table, six chairs and a bottle. Make sure that the scene is ready before the participants arrive, or before you start the exercise.

**Instructions:**

There are two phases of this game. In the first, participants change the position of one of the objects. In the second phase, they enter the scene themselves.

Phase 1: The most powerful object

As facilitator ('joker' at Boal), explain that the idea is to make one chair more powerful than all the other objects. Participants may take turns to perform an action. They can stack the objects, move them, etc.

Ask the group, if they agree that one chair is now more powerful than the other five chairs, the table and the bottle. If there is no consensus, you can give the group one last chance to suggest a change.

Note: None of the objects may be taken offstage. After their move, the participants return to the circle and the next participant may proceed to suggest a change. Let this go on for a while, until no spontaneous suggestions remain.

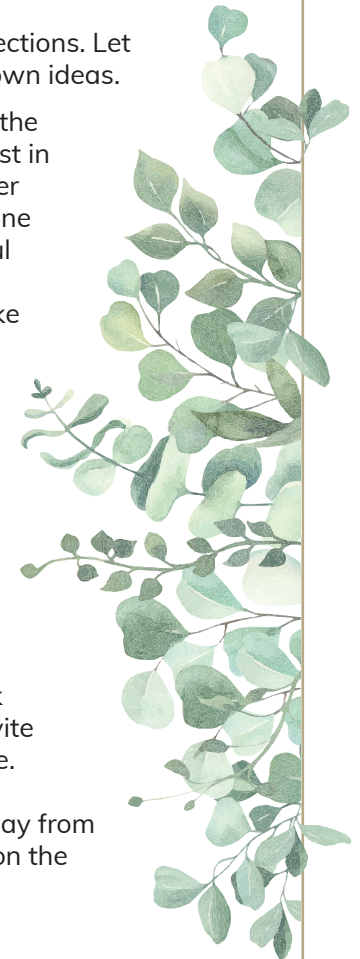
Phase 2: Take away the power!

In the second phase, participants are invited to take power away from the most powerful chair. They can do this by taking what they consider is an even more powerful position (sit on the chair, climb on the table, etc.).

Do not give suggestions or directions. Let the group come up with their own ideas.

Example: Mohamed climbs on the chair and stands on it with a fist in the air, looking over all the other objects. Check whether everyone thinks he is now more powerful than the chair. Then ask if anyone has an idea how to take away Mohamed's power.

As a facilitator, never judge the success of an intervention yourself, but reflect the question back to the group. "Did Pete succeed in taking power away from Mohamed?" If the general feeling is that he has not been successful, thank Pete for his suggestion and invite the group to try something else. If, according to the group, Pete succeeded in taking power away from Mohammed, then he remains on the scene.





Again, ask the participants whether anyone thinks they can succeed in taking an even more powerful position than Pete's.

When you feel the group has run out of inspiration, end the exercise. The participants may award themselves with applause and the objects are set aside.

For the debriefing, take your place in the circle.

### Debriefing & evaluation:

Possible questions to ask are:

- What do you think of the game?
- What did you notice about the different interventions?
- Why did some interventions seem successful and others not?

Stick to the exercise itself for a while and then make the link to society. Questions here can be:

1. What does this exercise teach us about power in society?
2. What are the characteristics of power?
3. What types of power have we seen?

At the last question, you refer to the different kinds of power we see:

'Power over', 'power with', 'power to' and 'power within'.

**Follow up:** By doing this exercise, you create a common language with the participants. This can be used throughout the rest of the training course.

### Tips for facilitators:

1. Do not stop the game too soon! We have observed that participants often start with a stereotypical way of looking at power in our activities. However, as the game progresses, they become more creative in their approach. We suggest referencing this observation during the follow-up discussion and connecting it to real-life situations. While visible power may be the first thing that comes to mind, it is not the only or most enduring form of power. What forms of power can we develop?
  - a. If the group finds it difficult to connect the game to real life, help them by going back to the exercise. Refer them to the images in the exercise.
2. Now ask explicitly:
  - a. Who or what do you recognise in this image?
  - b. What does this pose remind you of?
  - c. Who could he/she be?
3. This is how you get the discussion going.





# Enjoying nature and human sculptures

**Activity made by:** Telma Portela, Max and Maria Giró

**Type of Activity:** group creation and self-reflection

**Group Size:** 6 to 20

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Overview:** In fact, these are two separate activities; the first one is about enjoying nature, while during the second one, the participants make a sculpture that depicts how they felt while enjoying nature. The aim of the second activity is integration.

**Ecologies addressed:** Social and Earth ecologies

**Objectives:** self-experience, creativity, group creation, team work, Hands, Hearts

**Materials:** a bell and a clock

**Working space:** Wide open space in nature, ideally a quiet place with not many people around (park, forest, field, etc.).

**Preparation:** As a facilitator, be ready with clear instructions.

**Instructions:**

1. The group is outside in nature. The trainers say to the participants: "Now you have some time to enjoy here without talking". It is important that the instructions are exactly that. If participants start asking questions, remind them that their only task is to enjoy, nothing else, and leave it open to interpretation.

2. Allot some time (15 minutes) for them to spend without talking. They can 'enjoy' in any way they want.
3. After 15 minutes, ring a bell. Once the participants come back together, divide them into small groups of 3 to 5 people (depending on the number of participants).
4. Next, they should share their feelings and impressions of 'enjoyment' with their group. After everyone had finish sharing, each group should select one value (related to enjoying nature) that they would like to transmit to the future generations.
5. Once they have agreed on the common value, they should portray it by making a 'human sculpture' which will involve all the members of the group. They are given 10 minutes to choose the value AND create the sculpture.
6. Every group than chooses a name for their sculpture and presents it to the rest of the participants, who are asked to comment on what they see (not on how they interpret it).

**Debriefing & evaluation:** While observing the 'human sculptures', the participants can offer one-word descriptions of how they feel about them. After that, the group shares their "original" title of their sculpture.

Possible questions:

1. What ideas came to your mind while enjoying nature?
2. Did you feel connected to the Earth? And to the rest of the group?
3. Do you think that you honour the value that your group chose? In which ways?

**Follow up:** What have you learned during this activity? What was the process of working together as a group like for you?

**Tips for facilitators:** In order for the participants to make the sculptures, it is important to give them short instructions and go step by step. For example, tell them to share their feelings about the activity. Then ask them to select a common value. Once they had agreed about the value, instruct them to make a 'human sculpture'. Also, tell them how much time they have available to make the sculptures, so they can organize their time. We proposed 10 minutes for creating the sculptures, however, if you have more time, use it!







# Nature soundtrack

**Type of activity:** group creation

**Group Size:** 8 – 24 participants

**Duration:** 1,5 hours

**Overview:** The aim of this activity is to become more aware of the sounds in nature and to explore sounds as the means for group creations. The focus is on the Hands and Hearts.

**Ecologies addressed:** Social and Spiritual ecologies

**Objectives:** To create short stories using the sounds of the objects of nature. To enhance communication skills.

**Materials:** One object per person. Objects should make sound, although they were not designed for the purpose of making it. Depending on the experience of the group, they can bring the objects with them, or look for them in nature.

**Working Space:** Outdoors. A cosy place, where participants will be immersed in the sounds of nature (forest, birds, water, etc.).

**Preparation:** Find the ideal place for the activity. Ask the participants to bring their objects with them if necessary.

**Instructions:**

1. Give some time for participants to get to know the place you have chosen for the workshop. Ask them to walk around in silence and simply listen.

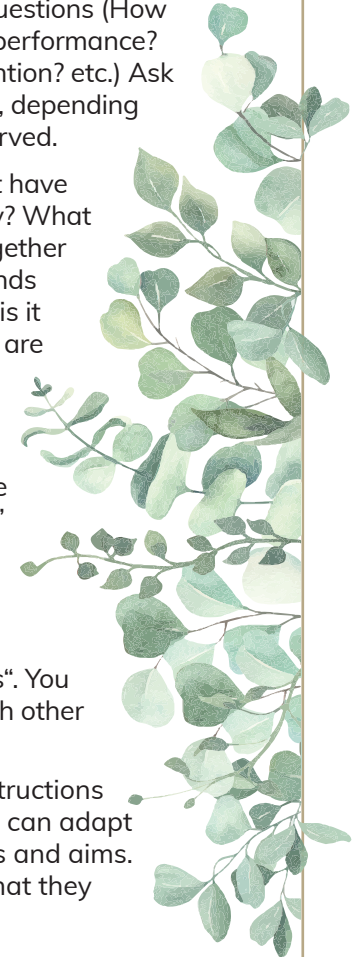
2. After several minutes, ask them to find a natural object that produces sound and not show it to anyone. If they find it hard to choose their “instrument”, remind them they can also use the object they brought from home instead.
3. When they are ready, ask them to form pairs and decide who is person A and who is person B.
4. They now have a chance to introduce their object to the partner. Person A starts, while B listens with their eyes closed. Person A makes the sound and can also invite person B to touch the object, smell it, or even taste (it if they wish) in order to identify the object.
5. Then they swap the roles. After both participants have finished, invite them to share their thoughts and feelings about the experience.
6. Next, ask people to make groups of four, and not show the object yet.
7. They now repeat the exercise in pairs, as duos.
8. When all groups have finished, tell them they will now work in these groups of four and their task is to create a story based on their sounds. It can be any story, the main element of it is their group Soundtrack.

9. The audience will listen to the performance with their eyes closed and it should last no more than 5 min.
10. When ready, all groups perform.
11. After each performance, the facilitator can ask the audience questions (How did you feel during the performance? What caught your attention? etc.) Ask questions that come up, depending on what you have observed.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** What have they learned during this activity? What was the process of working together like? Do they notice similar sounds around them every day? What is it that they notice? How different are the everyday sounds from the ones in the forest?

**Follow up:** This activity can be nicely combined with the Image Theatre activities, also “staged” in natural surroundings. It can also be combined with other sensorial activities, such as “Blindfold Sitting Spot”, or “expanding sensory awareness”. You can build up on this activity with other storytelling techniques.

**Tips for facilitators:** These instructions are there to guide you, but you can adapt the exercise to your own needs and aims. Listen to the group and see what they come up with!





# Political, ecological, and civic responsibility

**Type of Activity:** teambuilding

**Group Size:** 15-25 participants

**Aims or objectives:** to encourage critical thinking, to exchange viewpoints and share worries about society, to promote active citizenship by making people understand how they can help co-create a better “future”

**Duration:** 30 minutes

**Working space:** indoor or outdoor

**Ecologies addressed:** Social ecology

**Materials:** sheets of paper with written statements

**Preparation:** Prepare the questions and write/print them on A4 paper, depending on the number of groups (3-4 people per group).

**Description:** Divide the participants into groups of 3-4 people. Put papers with statements on the floor, far enough apart for each group to have some space. Groups have 4-5 minutes to discuss their allotted statement and exchange points of view. After the 5 minutes, each group moves to the next paper or the trainer exchanges the papers between the teams.

The statements could be the following:

1. If you had the opportunity to speak with the President of the European Union, what subject would you like to discuss with them and why? What policy would you ask them to change or implement?
2. If you had the opportunity to be a president of your country for one day, what would you change and why?
3. If you were given one million euros to create your own social or environmental enterprise, what would that be and why? Which people would you like to include?
4. What do you think is the biggest problem that the young people in your society (or those you work with) are facing today?
5. What can you do in your community to make it a better place?





# 'Power with' and 'Power over' game

**Type of activity:** group activity

**Group size:** at least 8 players

**Duration:** 60 - 80 minutes

**Overview:** In this activity the group will play a game that deals with themes of power dynamics and natural resources.

**Ecology addressed:** Social ecology

**Objectives:** To engage in topics and discussions that originate from the participants' own experiences with the game.

**Materials:** 1 large container, 3 medium containers for half of the groups (3 per group) and 2 more for the other half (2 per group), 1 small container (1 per group would be optimal but not necessary), paper and pen/pencil

**Working space:** outdoors or indoors

## Preparation:

- Set up a "camp" for each group (do this in such a way that the groups cannot see into one another's containers)
- Distribute the roles: assign half of the groups with "Power With" and the other half with "Power Over"
- Write the roles on separate pieces of paper and place them in camps for visual reference. We also recommend you write a short description of each role.
- Distribute the containers: "Power With" camps get 2 medium size containers; "Power Over" camps get 3 medium size containers.
- In the middle of all the camps place a large container filled with water (volume of water = number of medium sized containers).
- It is recommended to create some form of visual support for the rules of the game.

## Instructions:

1. One at a time, the groups take water from the large container in the middle and pour it into their group's medium size containers using a small container (maximum of 1 small container worth of water per group per round).
2. After all the groups had finished, they again take turns (in the same order) to use their respective roles.
3. "Power Over" groups have the ability to 'steal' water from the other groups, which means pouring it into their own containers. They may use this ability only once per round and take a maximum 1 small container per round. All transactions must be made by a trainer so that the volume of water in each group's container remains a secret. "Power With" groups have the ability to transfer water from their own containers to any other group's containers. Like "Power Over" groups, they can only use this ability once per round and only offer 1 small container per round.





4. The trainers can decide on the maximum number of rounds, depending on the materials used and the results desired from this activity.
5. At the end of the game, the groups who were able to fill at least half of the total volume of their containers “survive”, and the others “die”.
6. The group with the most water in their containers is the winner.
7. However, if the large container is emptied out the game automatically ends and all the groups lose. Once it is collected, no amount of water can be returned to the large container. Water that is wasted during transfers cannot not be replaced.
8. There can be no sharing of information or any other form of communication between groups.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** After the game, try to understand what the participant’s interpretation of the game was. Remember that there are no wrong interpretations; it is a versatile game that can be used as a starting point for many different conversations and viewpoints)

**Tips for facilitators:**

1. The number of containers, the volume of water in the large container, or even the order in which the groups play can all be adapted to better suit your vision of the game and its objectives.
2. Since it is a complex game, we advise you to create some sort of visual support for the rules.
3. Having some form of reward for the winners and some form of penalty for the losing group can help to raise the stakes. Just sit back and enjoy the chaos! Or not... who knows.





# The system game

**Type of activity:** group creation

**Group size:** a minimum of 8 participants

Duration: 30 minutes

**Overview:** This game is taken from *The Work that Reconnects* by Joanna Macy and focuses on Hearts and Hands.

**Ecology addressed:** Social ecology

## Objectives:

This lively, engrossing process provides a direct experience of the dynamic nature of open systems. It dramatises two features of the new paradigm view of reality:

1) that life is composed not so much of separate entities, as of the relations between them, and 2) these relations allow life to self-organise.

**Materials:** No materials needed.

**Working space:** Preferably an outdoor space. Indoors is possible when there is enough space to walk around.

## Preparation:

Make sure that the space you are using is safe.

## Instructions:

1. Have people stand in a circle within an open space large enough for them to move around freely.
2. Then give two instructions:
  - Mentally select two other people, without indicating whom you have chosen.
  - Move so as to keep at all times an equal distance between you and each of these two people.
3. Note: This does not mean just staying at the midpoint between the two others. There is also something like a triangle figure between two people (demonstrate if needed).
4. At your signal, people begin to circulate, each movement triggering many others in an active, interdependent fashion. People find they are, by necessity, maintaining wide-angle vision and constant alacrity of response. The process is purposeful, suspenseful, and mostly laced with laughter. It speeds up for a while, then may abate, accelerate, and again slow down toward equilibrium, but it rarely comes to stasis. Let it continue for some minutes, then tell people to stop and reflect together.

## Debriefing & evaluation:

The simple question, “What did you experience?” evokes fruitful discussion. Possible follow up question: How can we relate this exercise to the functioning of our society?

- People’s reflections usually bring out some key features of self-regulating systems, such as the interdependence of all parts, and their continual activity in seeking and maintaining balance.
- People may realise that they thought the point of the game was to achieve stasis; you can bring out and challenge that assumption. The self-regulation of open systems requires constant internal activity.
- People may articulate perceptual and psychological shifts they experienced in the game. These can include a radically widened sense of context, and a larger, more porous sense of self. A temporary eclipse of self-consciousness may be noted, as one’s perceptions focused more on others’ actions than one’s own— that is, not on separate entities so much as on relations among them.





- “Is this a closed system or an open system?” you may ask. If people think it is a closed system because no one entered from outside, you can point out that energy originating from the sun powers everyone present. We would not last long without food or drink from outside the system we just created. Individually and collectively, we are open systems dependent on inputs of matter-energy and information. Closed systems do not exist in nature.
- “What feedback enabled us to fulfil our function (that is of staying equidistant from two others)?” If there is no answer, you may ask, “Could we have done it with our eyes closed?” You may note that not only visual perceptions, but feedback of all kinds guide us in our daily lives.
- “Would anyone volunteer to organise this process?” It is obvious that no party or person on the outside could direct the movements necessary to keep this system in balance.

**Tips for facilitators:**

It is important that you as a facilitator give the two instructions in a clear way. After you give the signal, you do not interfere with words anymore.

**Handout:**

It can be interesting to have a look at this website: <https://workthatreconnects.org/resources/about/>





# Risk management in nature

**Type of activity:** role play, team building

**Number of trainers:** 1-2

**Aims or objectives:**

1. To help participants overcome their fears (fear of animals, insects, etc.)
2. To bond with other people.
3. To become more aware of what exists in nature.
4. To trust other people and the environment.

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Working space:** outdoors in nature

**Materials:** none

**Instructions:**

This activity involves walking in nature in pairs. One person will be blindfolded while the other person will guide them. They will walk and discuss a specific topic, such as how nature can support mental health or who inspires them. By walking and talking about these topics, the blindfolded person will learn to engage their other senses, overcome their fears and apprehensions, and develop trust.

**Debriefing & Evaluation:** Get general feedback on the activity and ask participants a few questions (What was the most difficult part of this activity?)

Did it help you to overcome any fears? If yes, how? How are you going to use what you have learned from this activity in your future life and work?)

**Tips for facilitators:** Give clear instructions. Explain that the facilitator will give a signal when to switch the roles (maybe by making a sound with a musical instrument or by hitting together two rocks, etc.).





## *Activities on Earth ecology*

Earth ecology refers to every interaction between living and non-living factors (for example light) on planet Earth. As any other species of life on Earth, we exist in a process of continuous and constant restoration of our biological organisms — ecosystems— through the assimilation of earth elements, in a process of sharing, receiving, and giving back. In this way, humans take part in these multiple earthling interactions, albeit often unconsciously. Although we might not perceive them with our senses, we must be aware that these interactions exist and influence us.

**Examples:** influence of the sun and the moon, interaction of trees with their surroundings, mycelial network and soil structures, mountains, and rivers, etc.





## Meet a tree

**Type of activity:** teambuilding, awakening nature connection

**Group size:** minimum of 2 people

**Duration:** 25-30 minutes

**Overview:** This activity is done in pairs. One of the partners will close their eyes and the other will guide him or her to a nearby tree. The “blind” person will then have 5 minutes to explore the tree with their other senses (touch, smell and hearing). After the 5 minutes are over their partner will guide them back to the starting point. The “blind” player can now open their eyes and search for the tree. After some time, switch the roles.

Note: if the person is not comfortable being guided while impaired of vision, invite them to still do the activity by choosing a tree by themselves, exploring it with their senses and then share the experience with their partner.

**Objectives:** To explore and experience nature through the senses we normally use less.

**Materials:** blindfolds (optional)

**Working space:** outdoors, where there are trees

**Preparation:** Find a safe place that is easy to navigate.

### Instructions:

1. The participants form pairs and decide who is person number one and who is number 2.
2. The participant number one closes their eyes or is blindfolded.
3. Person number two safely guides their partner to a tree of their choice.
4. Person number one spends five minutes getting to know the tree as well as they can, using their senses of touch, smell and hearing.
5. After five minutes, they are guided back to the starting point, still with eyes closed.
6. Now they can open their eyes and try to find “their” tree.
7. Switch the roles and repeat.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** Ask for feedback on the activity. Was it enjoyable? How did it feel to explore nature with the senses we are not accustomed to use that often? Did it make you uncomfortable to be impaired of vision?

**Tips for facilitators:** Make sure people are comfortable with being blindfolded. Be sure to offer an alternative to the exercise if they are not.





## Greeting to natural world

**Type of activity:** group discussion

**Group size:** 8 – 16 people

**Duration:** 1,5h

**Overview:** The aim of this activity is to explore the indigenous wisdom (of Haudenosaunee people, Native American confederation) and the power and significance of gratitude as a key Earth ecology element. It works on Heads and Hearts.

**Ecologies addressed:** Earth and Spiritual ecologies

**Objectives:** To explore the way one particular nation and culture related with Earth and experienced belonging towards it.

**Materials:** handouts of the Thanksgiving Address

**Working Space:** Both indoors and outdoors, depending on the weather. The activity does not involve much movement.

**Preparation:** You need to be familiar with indigenous Native American (hi)stories. We suggest you read at least one chapter (the Allegiance Gratitude) of Robin Wall Kimmerer's book "Braiding Sweetgrass; Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants"

### Instructions:

Introduce the activity by referring to the contemporary tradition of daily loud reading of "The Pledge of Allegiance" in American schools, which is 'a patriotic recited verse that promises allegiance to the flag and the republic of the United States of America'. Ask if anyone knows anything about it and if yes, what is the message behind it. Have a short discussion around it. Tell a story of the Haudenosaunee Nation that has another type of morning routine, which consists of the collective reading of the Thanksgiving Address (Greetings to the Natural World). You can base your story on the book or on the suggested chapter.

Distribute the handouts and tell the participants that you are now going to read the address out loud (one by one, as a group, repeating the final sentence in each paragraph, simulating how they do it in schools). When finished, tell them to go for a silent walk and reflect on the text; what touched them, was there maybe something they did not like (as a foreign culture to most Europeans, some might perceive the text as too religious or too mystical; sometimes they focus on details of the order of the elements in the text, etc.) Ask them to feel the essence of it and to imagine what it would have been like if they had been reading this every day since they were kids. After 20 minutes of individual reflection, ask them to come back, form groups of three and share their thoughts on the experience. When done, they can share their thoughts with the bigger group.

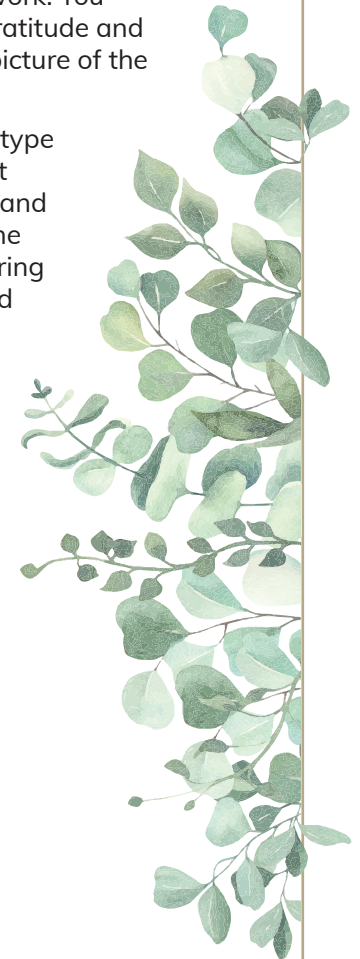
**Debriefing & evaluation:** Ask the group what they learned from the activity? How does it relate to Earth and Spiritual ecologies? What are they taking with them from this activity?

**Follow up:** This activity works very well in connection to Joanna Macy's work. You can expand on the notion of gratitude and help them to see the broader picture of the reality we are facing today.

**Tips for facilitators:** With this type of activities, it is important that you are familiar with the topic and you understand the depth of the message. Be prepared, ask daring questions, make this go beyond just reading the text, help the group be challenged and surprised.

**Handouts:** printed in advance, one per participant

[https://americanindian.si.edu/environment/pdf/01\\_02\\_Thanksgiving\\_Address.pdf](https://americanindian.si.edu/environment/pdf/01_02_Thanksgiving_Address.pdf)





# Group mandala

**Type of Activity:** Group creation

**Group Size:** 8 - 24 participants

**Duration:** 1h

**Overview:** The aim of this activity is to support the awareness about the natural surroundings and the elements we can find in it. It works on Hands.

**Ecologies addressed:** Earth ecology, Spiritual ecology

**Objectives:** To explore human creativity in relation to natural elements in connection with other participants in the group.

**Materials:** natural materials (branches, leaves, shells, stones) of the surrounding area; permanent markers (for writing on stones)

**Working space:** outdoors (small spot chosen for the mandala) and the surrounding area that can provide natural elements easy to reach.

**Preparation:** Choose the purpose of this exercise in relation to the other activities of your programme. You can create the mandala at the beginning of the course and later use it as for the closing activity and thanksgiving. It can also be done as a separate activity and can take form an hour up to a day or even a week, depending on what the group wants to achieve.

## Instructions:

Ask the group what a mandala is. Encourage them to share what they already know or to do some research on its origins and the philosophy behind it. Explain that mandalas have the power to chaos into order and “encrypt” messages into the final form. If necessary, show some examples of mandalas (printed pictures, art works, etc.).

Now tell the participants they are going to create their own group mandala. Ask them to go for a walk (20 minutes) and collect the elements they wish to include. After they return, they can start putting these elements together and create a form. Try to refrain from interfering with the creation process and let the group take the lead and own their creation. When the mandala is finished, encourage the participants to walk around it and look at it from different angles and perspectives. Encourage them to close their eyes and feel what the mandala is transmitting to them. What is creativity? How does nature inspire or nurture creativity?

**Debriefing & evaluation:** Ask them to find a small stone (one per participant) and write in one word how it felt to do this activity. Give space to the group if someone wants to share their thoughts.

**Follow up:** You might decide to come back to this activity at some stage during your project and use it in a different way, building up on the exercise.

**Tips for facilitators:** It can be interesting to do this exercise during different seasons (summer materials are very different from the autumn or winter ones). If you are working with your group long term, you can make a different mandala every year. If you decide to use this activity during a youth exchange, it can be a powerful team building exercise. If challenges arise, address them as key elements of their individual and group learning process.





# Restful resistance

**Type of Activity:** non-doing activity, mindfulness, and sensory awareness

**Group Size:** from a single individual to as many people as the natural space and weather conditions allow.

**Duration:** 40 minutes to 1 hour

**Overview:** This activity is about connecting with the Earth and with us, experimenting with letting go and relaxing as much as possible, as well as practicing quietude and silence/non-linguistic communication.

**Ecologies addressed:** Earth and Self ecologies

**Objectives:** To sense ourselves as part of the Earth, to allow silence and quietness to pervade our mind and body, and to let go of our mental structures and habits of behaviour.

**Materials:** none

**Working Space:** outdoors/indoors (dress accordingly)

**Preparation:** Explore how the participants experience the rush and acceleration of contemporary times and how they deal with the pressure. Look for a safe space for the activity.

## Instructions:

The purpose of this activity is to encourage participants to explore rest and surrender as forms of resistance to the rush of linear capitalistic time. The goal is to find unusual body postures that promote relaxation and quiet the mind. During the activity, a bell will sound several times to signal a change in positions, but participants should focus on exploring different postures without shame or judgement. The key is to breathe through each position and let go of any physical or mental tension that arises. By practising rest and surrender in this way, we can resist the pressure of a fast-paced, capitalistic society and find moments of peace and relaxation in our daily lives.

Babies and toddlers can teach us interesting positions for restful resistance and how to enter and exit them. We should pay attention to children and learn from them. Breathing and attention are essential to this practice. When breathing in, focus on what is happening within yourself. When breathing out, imagine releasing any tension or conflict. Be careful not to hurt yourself while doing these exercises.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** How do you feel in your body after this experience? Which images, symbols, feelings, thoughts, intuitions have shown up while doing this exercise?

**Follow up:** Can we connect this activity with something else? How does this activity relate to Human ecology?

**Tips for facilitators:** It is important that you try it on your own at least three times in different settings. Remember to focus on breathing. From a political perspective, restful resistance is a revolutionary exercise because it can become an embodied critique of the rush for productivity and consumption, which is an essential feature of our contemporary society.

**Handout:** How to do nothing

**Further readings:** Rest in revolution





# Animal forms

**Type of activity:** individual and group creation, teambuilding, imaginary experimentation, embodiment practice

**Group size:** ideally between 10 and 20 people

**Duration:** 40 minutes to 1 hour

**Overview:** The aim of this activity is to explore and embody our animal nature and engage in imitating animals through making sounds, breathing, exploring movement, attitudes, facial expressions and more. This activity is hands on, but with the aim of nourishing Heads and Hearts in the long run.

**Ecologies addressed:** Earth and Self ecology, indirectly also Social ecology

**Objectives:** To explore the animal potential of the human body and the forgotten wealth of its wild heritage.

**Materials:** none

**Working Space:** outdoors/Indoors (dress accordingly)

**Preparation:** Warm up the body and voice with physical games and sounding. Ask people about their favourite animals and what they like about them. As everyone is different, it is important that people have the time and space to work at their own pace and without stress. Let the activity be fun and joyful.

**Instructions:**

We are going to explore our animal nature and create new species of animals. This means that we begin by allowing ourselves to feel like

certain animals which we can recognise and imitate. The aim is to pretend to be them, looking for what makes them feel well. Then we explore another type of animal in the same way, and then a third, and perhaps a fourth. From this exploration, each one of us is going to select some animal features (including sounds, facial expressions, movements, emotions). We are then going to combine these features (from different animals) to create a personal experience.

We begin individually. Each participant has to find a spot to embody some animal features that come to their mind at that very moment.

Remember that life on Earth is a miracle, something full of wonder. Perhaps we cannot picture the whole animal, but we can only use a fragment. You can use this fragment or feature to combine it with others; an undulating fish becomes a flying bird and then a puma running over the mountains. After some time, each participant has to find a partner and engage in animal form communication about what they like about the world. This communication has to be enacted through a combination of animal forms that the participants use as their own animal language. After some time, they should form groups of four and engage in animal form communication, sharing their ways of being in the world. One last step is to engage in animal form communication as a group, expressing our role in the world as different animal species, including the functions they fulfil in the ecology of their territories.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** How do you feel after the exercise? What did you learn about yourself and others? Did you learn something about your relationship with your own body?

**Follow up:** Can we connect this activity with something else? Think of your relationship with the animals? Do you perceive them as strangers or as kin? Why?

**Tips for facilitators:** In traditional indigenous communities, certain animals occupy special positions in the cosmologies and worldviews, acting as teachers and elders. Recognising our animality is part of being connected to the greater Earth community to which we really belong. Try this activity at different times and allow yourself to discover your animal forms.

**Handout:** <https://dora.dmu.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/2086/17231/Seven%20Pathways%20to%20Nature%20Connection%20Pre-Publication%20Copy.pdf?sequence=1>





# Nutrition chefs

**Type of activity:** simulation game, team building

**Group size:** 15-30 participants

**Aims or objectives:** To increase awareness about healthy lifestyle in the frame of global responsibility among youth workers. To empower youth workers by providing knowledge, tools and resources about healthy lifestyle in the frame of global responsibility. To better understand healthy lifestyle and global responsibility and act as multipliers on these issues.

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Working space:** indoors

**Materials:** kitchen appliances; raw, vegan and healthy food

**Preparation:** To begin this activity, divide the group into international teams. Next, prepare tables with the same materials and place the ingredients on a shared table. This will ensure that all teams have access to the same ingredients and materials.

**Instructions:**

The participants are divided into groups (depending on the number of participants, 4 participants per team). Then they have to go to their table and, one by one, each team has to go to the shared table and take the ingredients needed for them to create a healthy, raw and vegan meal. They will have 30 minutes to create the meal and write down the recipe.

Finally, each team has to try the food prepared by the other teams and rate it. The winning team is declared the Master Chef of the training.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** General comments and feedback on the activity. Also ask these questions: How do you feel after the exercise? What challenges did you face? What did you learn? How will you use this knowledge in your life?

**Tips for facilitators:** Describe the activity very clearly in the beginning and when the time is about to finish, inform them that they have for example 8 minutes left. Also let them know that when they hear a signal from the facilitator, it means that their time is up.





## Group litter picking

**Type of activity:** community connection and awareness

**Group size:** any

**Duration:** 30 – 60 minutes

**Overview:** The participants work together to clean a space in nature. They also invent a story which explains how a certain piece of garbage ended up in the place where it was collected.

**Ecology addressed:** Earth ecology

**Objectives:** To clean a natural space. To create and share stories that raise awareness about pollution and waste in public spaces.

**Materials:** gloves, litter pickers, rubbish bags, hand sanitizer

**Working space:** outdoors

**Preparation:** Safety precautions like a first aid kit for small cuts.

### Instructions:

1. Locate a space for the activity to take place.
2. Gather the materials necessary and get to action!
3. Divide the participants into small groups and have a friendly competition to see who picks up the most garbage.
4. After the time for garbage collection, invite each participant to choose a garbage item and to write its “personal story” about how it ended up in the place where it was collected.
5. Invite participants to share some of their stories with the bigger group. You can also invite the people passing by to listen to at least one story, in order to help raise community awareness about garbage and waste.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** After the activity, gather all the garbage so that it can be recycled or reutilized. Make sure to give positive feedback to the participants and to invite them to do it again on another occasion, or to share the experience with others, so that they, too, may be inspired and take action. Close the activity by asking each participant to share one value they believe is important to cultivate (personal or community level), in order to be more accountable in relation to the garbage/waste problem in public spaces.





## *Activities on spiritual ecology*

Spiritual ecology recognizes that we cannot rationally understand everything about the natural world — ourselves, our connections, encounters, and situations included.

It also relates to the ecological crisis, as we need to shift our mindset towards a connection to nature and act accordingly.

**Examples:** rituals and ceremonies, falling in love, burning a candle for a loved one





# Medicine wheel - orientation in nature

**Type of Activity:** experiential activity, group creation

**Group Size:** ideally 16 to 32 participants

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Overview:** Participants explore the surrounding environment in nature. They take time to connect with the natural environment (Heart), think about the elements it includes (Head) and create the medicine wheel (Hands).

**Ecologies addressed:** Spiritual, Social and Earth ecologies

**Objectives:** To gain more awareness of the environment that surrounds us and about our participation in the cycles of life.

**Materials:** Whatever they can find in the immediate environment, especially sticks, stones, etc.

**Working space:** Outdoors, preferably in a forest or large open space in nature.

**Preparation:** It would be good to give an introduction about the medicine wheel.

## Instructions:

1. The group gathers in a natural environment and makes a circle.
2. Everyone goes to find a long stick and returns to their place in the circle.
3. The participants touch their sticks in the middle of the circle. Thus, they symbolically connect with each other.

4. They place their sticks on the ground, but make sure the sticks stay connected in the centre. Thus, a circle forms on the ground. It consists of sticks that form triangular sections (like a pie chart).
5. The participants then turn with their back to the circle, so that they are still standing in a circle. Each of them then scans the landscape in front of them, and chooses a reference point in the distance (all choose the same distance, for example 150 m). The space between their place in the circle and the reference point will be their territory.
6. They now take 20-25 minutes to explore their allotted territory in silence. They gather different objects that they use to create a map of their territory in the medicine wheel (for example, if there are strawberries growing in a certain part of the territory, they will pick up some strawberries and place them in their slot in the circle at the relatively same distance. It is important that they collect elements without ravaging the natural space (breaking branches, picking up live plants, etc.)
7. After 25 minutes, the facilitator signals it is time to return to the group and finish the map.
8. The participants bring the materials they have collected back to the medicine wheel and create a map.

9. Then the participants in the circle start to rotate in silence going around and seeing the maps of other people, inviting them to go in rhythm and be mindful of the others' pace.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** Everyone gives a short presentation of what they found. They also share their emotional experience and awareness (Was this easy, fun, boring, etc.? How did they feel alone in silence in nature? What does the map say? Would it help you to survive in a group in a natural environment? What did you find out about yourself and the space that surrounds you?)

**Follow up:** Use this activity to discuss the cycles in nature (life and death, seasons, water cycles, etc.)

**Tips for facilitators:** Guide the activity step by step to enhance the element of surprise and discovery.





## 'Plant a tree' ceremony

**Activity made by:** Kim, Joke, Kirra and Anna

**Type of activity:** group creation with introductory energiser

**Group size:** minimum 6 people

**Duration:** 1h 30 minutes

**Overview:**

- Find a common ground by following each other's rhythms (Hearts).
- 'Plant a tree' ceremony (Hands and Hearts), be grateful to nature!

**Ecologies addressed:** Social, Spiritual and Earth ecologies

**Objectives:** To learn how to plant a tree. To find connection with other people during the energizer and the ceremony. To explore gratitude. Know how to be grateful to nature and how to repay her (and take this lesson with us!) To be more conscious of the different ecologies and their interconnectedness.

**Materials:** trees, fertilizer, water and sticks (to plant the trees), speaker

**Working space:** outdoors (you need to have a lot of space)

**Preparation:** Prepare the materials (see above) in the spot where the trees will be planted, a speaker for the music, selection of songs.

**Instructions:**

1. **Energizer:** Start by playing some music. The participants should then look for a partner and form pairs. After that, the partners should find a common rhythm. When the music starts again, each pair should search for another pair and they should all search for a common rhythm together. The rounds of music should continue until you have one big group that has a common rhythm, where everyone has a place in the chain.
2. **Making Groups (in a playful way):** All the participants have 10 seconds to run out in the open. When we say stop, everyone should stop where they are. Then, we ask them to find a natural object that speaks to them in their personal circle and come back together. We then resemble all the objects and let the group make groups naturally (of 2 or 3) depending on what objects they will put together. After that, we ask which objects belong to who and thus our groups are formed.
3. **'Plant a Tree' Ceremony:** The trainers/facilitators give a short explanation about how to plant a tree. We ask every group to do something that shows thankfulness or gratefulness towards nature. This can be done by putting your object (from the previous exercise) in the ground while planting, singing, or any other way that comes naturally to the group. Then we

discuss the guidelines and proceed to the spot where we will plant the trees. We suggest minimising questions about practical aspects of planting to allow for silence and support the process. The trainers/facilitators will be around in case of any questions.

4. **Reflection (see below):** After completing the tree planting ceremony, we will take some time to reflect on the experience. Participants can share their thoughts, feelings, and insights about the activity in a group discussion. This reflection helps participants to connect with nature, appreciate its beauty and understand the importance of protecting it.
5. Overall, these activities aim to promote teamwork, creativity, and a sense of responsibility towards the environment. By engaging in these activities, participants can learn to appreciate and respect nature and understand the importance of working together to preserve it.





### **Debriefing & evaluation:**

Explanation: We don't choose where we are born or who we are born with, and as we grow up, we encounter different people and environments. Each person has a unique human ecology, which is influenced by various factors. However, one thing that unites us all is our connection to nature, which is the base of our existence. Therefore, it is crucial to treat nature with utmost respect and appreciation.

Questions: What was the activity about? (a group discussion) How do you feel about it (individual question); Participants can express their emotions using Dixit cards without words.

By conducting these activities, we can help people develop a deeper understanding of their relationship with nature and encourage them to take actions to protect it.

**Tips for facilitators:** Make sure you are familiar with how to plant a tree and create the right atmosphere for this activity to become a true ceremony.





# All about love (inspired by Bell Hooks)

**Type of activity:** moving debate

**Group size:** 8 - 24

**Duration:** 1,5h

**Overview:** The aim of this activity is to explore the notion of love, the challenges it brings, and the importance of enhancing balance in Human Ecology. This activity uses Heads and Hearts.

**Ecology addressed:** Spiritual Ecology

**Objectives:** To reflect on the role of Love in Human Ecology and to share and exchange personal viewpoints with others.

**Materials:** none

Working space: Outdoors (a cosy space) or indoors, a room should be spacious enough for people to move around freely.

**Preparation:** Before conducting this activity, it is essential to familiarize yourself with the work and philosophy of Bell Hooks. Her book 'All about Love' has inspired the design of this exercise. You can also check out her podcasts and interviews to gain a better understanding of her work. It's crucial to conduct this activity when the group feels safe and has worked together before.

## Instructions:

Ask the participants to finish the following 3 sentences in their learning journals (individually):

- Love is..
- To be loved is..
- Without love, there is..

The participants are now ready to move around the room. The facilitator will point out two corners that they will use for physical movement. The first corner is labelled "Relate to," while the second corner is labelled "Don't relate to."

The facilitator will then read out a series of statements, and the participants need to position themselves according to whether they relate to the statement or not. After each statement, the facilitator will ask the participants why they positioned themselves in that way.

## SENTENCES:

Note: challenge the participants to think beyond romantic relationships and consider love as a feeling that can be experienced in various forms, such as love for a pet or a morning routine.

1. I am in love, or feeling love.
2. My first thought when it comes to LOVE is about romantic love between two (or more) individuals.
3. You can never love anybody if you are unable to love yourself first.
4. Do not expect to receive the love from someone else you do not give yourself.

5. The longing for love and the movement of love is underneath all of our activities. (Jack Kornfield, Love gives life meaning)
6. To know genuine love, we have to invest time and commitment. (John Welwood)
7. Love your neighbour as thyself. (a quote from the Bible)
8. Genuine love is a personal revolution. The real power of love is to transform us. (Bell Hooks)
9. To love somebody (or something, or some element) is not just a strong feeling – it is a decision, a judgement, a promise. Love is an act of will, both an intention and an action. (Eric Fromm)
10. In capitalism only the individualistic love model is possible, based on the market "offer-demand" paradigm.
11. By giving me fruit to enjoy, grains to nurture myself, and water to drink, I feel that Mother Earth loves me.





12. Forgiveness is an act of generosity. By forgiving we clear the path on the way to love. It is a gesture of respect.
13. Bringing love into the work environment can create the necessary transformation that can make any job we do, no matter how menial, a place where workers can express the best of themselves. When we work with love, we renew the spirit. The renewal of spirit is an act of self-love, it nurtures our growth. (Bell Hooks)
14. While a heart connection lets us appreciate those we love just as they are, a soul connection opens up a further dimension - seeing and loving them for who they COULD be, and for who WE could be under their influence. It is a sacred alliance whose purpose is to help both partners (our change: persons in love) discover and realise their deepest potential. (John Welwood).
15. The notion of becoming someone who is lovable, is a mistake. We need to become someone who is able to love.

4 QUESTIONS (to be shared in pairs/or explored through the body statues technique, where one group takes poses and another observes as in a museum; groups change roles)

1. Where do you feel love in your body?  
How does it express itself?

2. Where do I feel love most safely? In what kind of environment?
3. How do love or absence of love influence my wellbeing and the wellbeing of my community?
4. Where do I see love in the Natural World?

Ask the group to go back to their personal journals and finish the following sentences:

- I feel love when..
- I am able to love because..

They can make changes to the previous sentences if they feel like it.

In groups of 4, share the sentences written in the learning journals with each other and inquire on those elements that caught your attention.

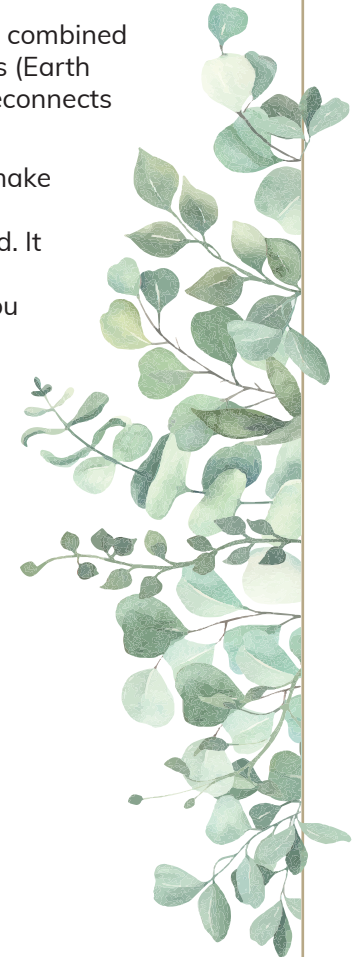
To conclude the activity, the facilitator will connect the topic of love to Earth Ecology. If possible, the facilitator will take the participants to a place where berries, fruits, or clear running water are available. If not, the facilitator will provide a bowl of fresh blueberries. The participants will be asked to take a full palm of berries, find a quiet spot, and eat them one by one, savouring the taste, texture, and freshness of the berry in silence. Afterward, they will be asked to write a note of gratitude to the land that has given them this gift. The facilitator will collect the notes in a bag, mix them, and ask the participants to pick one that was written by someone else. They can keep it as a reminder of the love they feel from the land, collectively as humans.

#### Debriefing & evaluation:

The participants will be asked to come back to a bigger circle, where they will be invited to share one thing that touched them, something they haven't thought about before, something they completely disagree with or something they wish for when it comes to love.

**Follow up:** This activity can be combined with the Thanksgiving Address (Earth Ecology) and the Work that Reconnects by Joanna Macy.

**Handout:** You might want to make handouts for the sentences on Love that you will read out loud. It might be challenging to follow the sentences only by ear. If you do make the handouts, make sure they are folded in such a way that participants can read one sentence at a time (accordion folding style).





# Sprouting the seeds

**Type of activity:** brainstorming, gaining personal perspective, reflection

**Group size:** any

**Duration:** This is a 2-part activity.

Part 1: approx. 25-35 minutes for the activity itself, but only in a setting where the group stays together for at least 3-4 days (to see the results)

Part 2: 30-45 min for analysing the results, discussion, and reflection

**Overview:** This activity is a personal reflection. It helps individuals gain perspective on their life and their sense of 'Belonging to Nature'. It also helps them to reflect on what they are calling into their lives.

**Ecologies addressed:** Spiritual, Self

**Objectives:** To gain awareness of our desires, as well as of our existence in and as a part of Nature and the bigger circle of life.

**Materials:** Seeds to sprout (alfa-alfa, mung, soy or any other. Mung and soy are best, because they sprout in 2 to 3 days), 1 big or many smaller pots, cups, jars with lids, and water.

**Working space:** anywhere warm enough for the seeds to start sprouting

**Preparation:** Prepare the seeds, jars and water, also divide the participants in pairs or groups if necessary.

## Instructions:

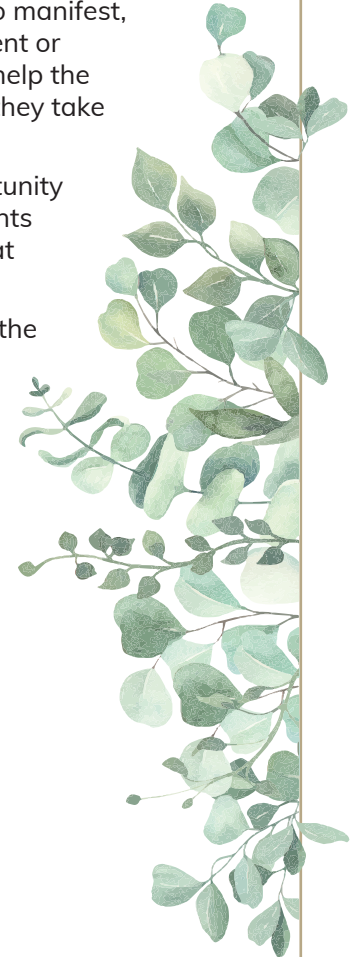
1. Introduce the topic by asking questions about the Circle of life (the life cycle of every living thing).
2. Where in nature do we see those cycles? How do we see them in human beings? Does that make us closer to nature? If so, then how?
3. Divide the participants in pairs or smaller groups. Let them share among themselves what are 1 – 3 things they would like to call into their life. What would you like to grow in your inner garden? What would you like to see manifest physically in your life? Remind them to only think about things that are beneficial to everyone and are not harmful to any living thing.
4. In order for the things to “grow” we need to water them with our intention. What does that mean?
5. Let the participants share in pairs in smaller groups, and when they are ready, let them collect some of the seeds and put them in their jar (or the bigger group pot), and water them.
6. During the next few days, let them come back to their jar, tend to the seeds and watch them sprout.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** On the last day, gather the group, inspect the sprouting process and finish the activity with some reflection: How do you feel at this moment? Does it feel like this is something nice to do? Does it take a lot of effort? Do you see any parallels with waiting for your desires to manifest, to come true? Do you feel patient or impatient? Open questions to help the group reflect on the learnings they take from the activity.

**Follow up:** If there is an opportunity and time to do it, the participants can plant the sprouts in soil, eat them, etc.

**Tips for facilitators:** Facilitate the reflection process as much as possible, but also have fun playing with the seeds.

**Handout:** You could make a chart for the participants to mark the process of sprouting (colour it if they are young, assess it if they are older kids, reflect on it for 15 years and more...)





# Exploring human archetypes

**Type of Activity:** self-exploration of memories, symbols and psychic contents, group creation, embodiment.

**Group Size:** between 10 to 20 participants

**Duration:** 60 to 90 minutes

**Overview:** Archetypes, according to Jungian deep psychology, are primordial images and symbols that reside in the collective unconscious of humanity. They shape patterns of behaviour and influence ways of being in and understanding the world. This activity aims to discover some of the primary archetypes that have played a significant role in our personal lives and work with others to give them a renewed and integrative creative expression. The activity requires active participation from the participants, engaging their heads, hearts, and hands.

**Ecologies addressed:** Spiritual and Self ecologies

**Objectives:** The purpose of this activity is to encourage a better understanding of ourselves and the psychic contents that influence the way we have been and want to become. It also aims to provide a creative way for individuals to honour their ancestors and elders.

**Materials:** journal and pen, clothes or costumes of different sizes and colours (if available).

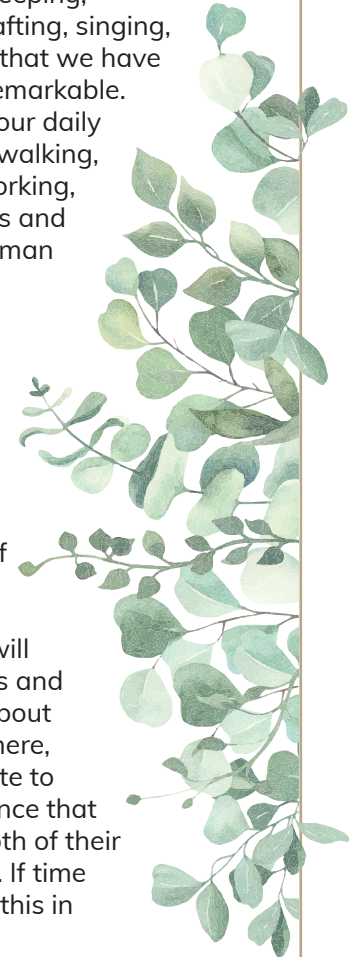
**Working space:** indoors/outdoors (dress accordingly)

**Preparation:** To introduce the concept of archetypes and cultural practices, it may be helpful to provide a handout about the twelve archetypes as an example. It is essential to note that there are many archetypes, and they express different traits in different people.

**Note:** It is crucial to be aware that exploring archetypes can trigger unpleasant memories, especially when focusing on family constellations. It's essential to remind participants that archetypes belong to the collective unconscious, and they don't need to search their family history if they're not ready for it. Instead, it can be helpful to focus on specific cultural traits or folk stories that are significant to each participant. Participants should be aware that they have the freedom to set their own pace and leave the group if they feel the need to do so. It is essential that the group provides a safe and supportive environment that allows for this. Otherwise, participants may need to work independently, which can prevent them from creating performances. After the activity, participants will have the opportunity to share their experiences in small groups of two to four people, with those they feel most comfortable with.

## Instructions:

1. To begin, we will work individually by creating a list of meaningful actions and images that we find valuable and significant. These could include things like cooking, hunting, sleeping, dancing, cultivating, crafting, singing, or playing - something that we have witnessed and found remarkable. We can also reflect on our daily rituals, such as eating, walking, talking, playing, and working, and explore their origins and how they fit into the human archetype of everyday performances.
2. Once we have our list of images, we will choose some and create a two-minute performance that represents our own version of a new kind of ritual that incorporates these meaningful practices. In pairs, we will share our performances and engage in a dialogue about their meanings. From there, each pair will collaborate to create a new performance that creatively integrates both of their previous performances. If time allows, we can also do this in groups of four.





3. Finally, we will share our new performances with the entire group and hold a brief inquiry about the archetypes present in each performance. We will discuss what was witnessed and which human archetypes were present. What did you see, which human archetypes did you witness?

**Debriefing & evaluation:** How do you feel after this activity? Can you imagine introducing meaningful practices into your life more consciously? What will they be?

**Follow up:** How can we connect the knowledge of archetypes with the attributes of nature-connection and wellbeing?

**Tips for facilitators:** It is important to remember that cultural practices are the ways in which a community has learned to adapt to their surroundings, including the environment and society. In order to explore meaningful practices, it can be helpful to focus on basic trades that are learned within the socio-natural environment. Additionally, dreams can also provide meaningful events, such as flying or swimming in fire. It's important to note that all actions and images can hold significant meaning, even seemingly insignificant things may hold great importance for someone.

“To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour”  
William Blake, Auguries of Innocence.

**Handout:** [https://www.uiltexas.org/files/capitalconference/Twelve\\_Character\\_Archetypes.pdf](https://www.uiltexas.org/files/capitalconference/Twelve_Character_Archetypes.pdf)







# Hapa zome

**Type of activity:** thoughtful, brainstorming, teambuilding

**Group size:** any

**Duration:** 30- 40 minutes

**Overview:** To begin, participants will find a spot in nature and take some time to reflect on the things they are grateful for. After 10-20 minutes, they will return with a leaf that has already fallen from a tree. Once everyone has arrived, participants will use a Japanese method called “hapa zome” to imprint the leaves onto a large piece of fabric. They are free to arrange the leaves in any way they wish, giving them creative liberty. This activity serves as a symbolic way to express gratitude to nature, and words or drawings can also be used to complement the final piece of fabric.

**Ecologies addressed:** Spiritual, Self and Earth ecologies

**Objectives:** to practise gratitude through ‘hapa zome’

**Materials:** markers and pencils for drawing and writing, a big piece of cotton fabric or a cut-up bed sheet, kitchen roller

**Working space:** outdoors and indoors

**Preparation:** Ensure that the area where the activity will take place has a plain, hard surface available such as a table, chair, or a large smooth rock. You can show this video for clarification.

## Instructions:

1. Invite the participants to spend 10 – 15 minutes alone in a spot of their choice, reflecting on what they are thankful for in nature.
2. Instruct them to return with a leaf that caught their eye (and that has already fallen from the tree).
3. One by one, imprint everyone's leaves onto the fabric by repeating the following steps:
4. Place the cloth on a hard surface.
5. Place the leaf flat on the cloth.
6. Fold the cloth in the centre to cover the leaf and hold it in position.
7. Gently tap over the leaf with a bashing tool and you will start to see the colour coming through the fabric. Continue tapping until you have imprinted the whole leaf. Remove the leaf from the cloth.
8. Once all the leaves are imprinted, participants should be given the freedom to add any additional words or drawings that represent the gratitude they reflected on during the first part of the activity.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** Allow some time for everyone to observe the piece of fabric and the contributions everyone made. Provide a space where people can share their experience and the things that they are grateful for.





## *Reflection and Integration*

The purpose of this session is to provide participants with effective options for reflection, feedback, and integrating the learning process. While trainers and facilitators are free to use any methodology they see fit, we strongly recommend dedicating sufficient time and energy to this important process, as it will have a significant impact on the long-term success of the activity. By providing participants with effective tools and strategies for reflection and feedback, we can help them better understand and internalise the learning objectives of the activity.



# Reflection

**Type of activity:** reflection activity

**Group size:** 7 to 20 people

**Duration:** 15 minutes

**Overview:** reflection, sharing.

**Objectives:** To share ideas and feelings in a group.

**Materials:** none

**Working space:** The working space for this activity can be anywhere that the group feels comfortable sitting in a circle and where everyone can clearly see each other.

**Preparation:** Prepare the questions you want to ask.

**Instructions:**

1. The group sits down in a circle
2. The trainers ask some questions about the activities and the participants are invited to share their thoughts and feelings.

**Debriefing & evaluation:**

- How did you feel when doing this activity?
- What was this activity about for you?
- What are you taking with you from this activity?

**Follow up:** During the activity, it can be helpful to remind participants about the model of Hearts, Hands, and Heads and encourage them to reflect on their own experiences within this framework. Ask questions that are pertinent to this model, such as:

- Where did you find your heart, hands or head were more active during the activity?

**Tips for facilitators:**

In addition to the questions mentioned earlier, you can use various open-ended questions that are relevant to the specific activity you have facilitated, in order to avoid simple “yes” or “no” answers.

To facilitate evaluation and reflection activities, various creative methods can be used, such as poems, photolanguage cards, Dixit game cards, natural objects (found in natural surroundings or chosen from our kits), plasticine, drawing, journaling, discussions in pairs, and more. Choosing the right method for reflection is an essential part of the activity itself, as it facilitates the integration of the learning that occurred and deepens the overall experience.

**Handout:** none





## Light vision quest

**Type of activity:** reflection

**Group size:** any

**Duration:** The duration of this reflection exercise can vary depending on how deep you want participants to reflect. The minimal amount of time recommended is 20 minutes.

**Overview:** This exercise is designed for participants to reflect on their experiences after a full day of practice. Heads, Hearts, Hands...

**Ecologies addressed:** All

**Objectives:** To set aside some alone time to reflect upon any activity or even the whole training day. Done individually.

**Materials:** a booklet, a journal, or paper to make notes

**Working space:** outdoors

**Preparation:** Make sure you selected a spot where there is enough space for the participants to sit alone. Also prepare some pens or pencils and some extra paper for the participants to take with them.

### Instructions:

1. To facilitate this reflection exercise, gather everyone together and explain that they will have 20-30 minutes to find a comfortable space outside to reflect on the activity or day that just passed. Participants are free to spend this time however they wish, whether it be writing in their booklet or on paper, taking something from the ground that represents something that came to them during the activity or day, or even taking a mental picture.
2. Emphasise that this is personal time for individual reflection, and that they are free to use it in whatever way feels most comfortable and meaningful to them. After the allotted time, make a pre-agreed sound so that participants can gather back together. Alternatively, you can choose not to mention the time and ask participants to return when they feel that the given time has passed.

**Debriefing & evaluation:** If desired, you can ask participants to share what came to them during the reflection exercise in one sentence. However, it's important to emphasise that sharing is optional and that participants should only share what they feel comfortable with.





# Story of the day

**Type of activity:** reflection activity

**Group size:** 10-25 participants

**Duration:** 30 minutes to 2 hours, and then it can be repeated more times on other occasions.

**Overview:** to reflect, share.

**Objectives:** To share stories in a group, strengthening the community and sense of belonging, and integrating the experience through storytelling.

**Materials:** journals and pens

**Working Space:** The working space for this activity can be anywhere that the group feels comfortable sitting in a circle and where everyone can clearly see each other.

**Preparation:** Remind participants about the core routines and emphasise storytelling and its importance. Remind participants about the basic structure of any story which has to have a beginning, a climax and an end.

## Instructions:

1. Encourage participants to review their journals or notes from the day or previous day and take some time to prepare their own story about their learning process.
2. Invite participants to tell their story aloud, at their own pace, and in their own way. Emphasise that there are no judgments and no right or wrong way of doing it.
3. The only requirement is to tell the story that they want to share based on their experiences from the training.

## Debriefing & evaluation:

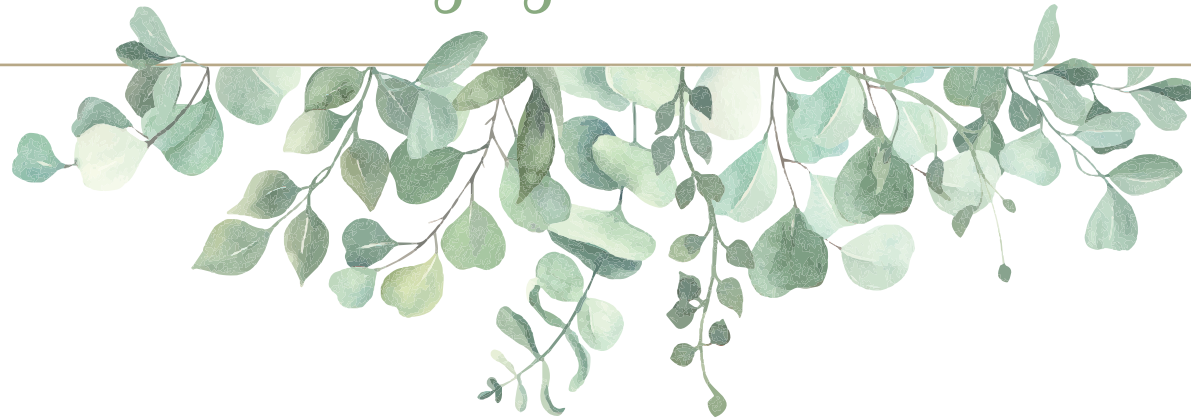
- How did you feel when doing this activity?
- What was this activity about for you?
- What are you taking with you from this activity?

**Tips for facilitators:** Ensure that participants are mindful of the listeners, but also allow each storyteller to be themselves and feel safe while sharing their story.



To learn more about the project, visit:

[belongingtonature.com](https://belongingtonature.com)



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