

## **CREATE A SENSE OF WILD**

“Come forth into the light of things. Let Nature be your teacher”. Wordsworth

It is important to create a sense of wild for every child. We have found that if there are no real wild places to explore we allow our imaginations to create the sense of wild. We have observed how children who are raised with other species will understand about the cycles of nature, make them more aware of others and start forming a sense of responsibility. This may be achieved by having a dog or cat, or even things like flowers, fruit, birds, butterflies and planting in gardens.

Author of “Last Child in the Woods”, Richard Louv, coined the phrase “nature deficit disorder” which describes the disconnection between today’s indoor children and the natural world. All children need unstructured time to play outdoors. Direct exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood development and for the physical, emotional, spiritual and social health of children - and adults. We have found that children who do not have much experience of being in wild places, given some time, will begin to appreciate where they fit into the bigger scheme of things.

As a parent or teacher when last did you take you and your children sit under a tree and just gaze at the clouds passing by and imagining they are faces or creatures? When last did you let everyone have a chance to tell stories around a night time camp fire? When last did you go for a long walk in a nature reserve or forest and find a spot to sit quietly and listen to the sounds of the bush and after this walk feel exhausted but thoroughly rejuvenated in spirit?

Sitting in a chair, at a desk, is one way to learn but this cannot be maintained for longer than 10 – 20 minutes. Studies have suggested that interaction with nature can help children pay attention, motivate them to learn and improve classroom behaviour. We have found doing short indoor activities mixed together with an outdoor activity will help with concentration and learning.

Some teachers will be fortunate to be in very rich natural surroundings and yet others will find themselves in ecological disaster areas but in both cases there is always an environment, natural or manmade - it is there! Sometimes the difficulty is seeing it and this is where ones imagination must be put to work.

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