

# WELLBEING WITH NATURE



## Overview

*A series of activities and games which support learners to reconnect, build communication and trust, and develop their emotional literacy.*

## Curriculum links

**PSHE:** communication, trust

**Science:** adaptation

**Wellbeing:** emotional awareness and articulation, nature as a source of wellbeing

## Activity: Nature mindfulness (5-10min)

In a circle (ideally sitting), introduce idea that being outside in nature can help people relax.

Ask students to close their eyes and take a deep breath in through their nose and out through their mouth. Ask them to first focus on the sounds of nature. After a while switch to what they can feel, e.g. the wind/sun/rain on their face, the weight of their body on the ground, or the feeling of grass through their fingers. To finish, tell students: “take a deep breathe in... as you breathe out, stretch your arms up as high as you can... wiggle your fingers... now open your eyes”.

Try and do this in a quiet spot

Use sit mats or logs to sit on if the ground is damp



## Activity: Mirroring (15min)

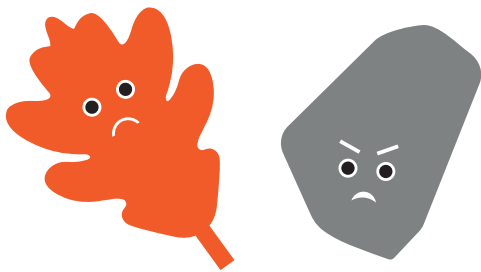
Partners face each other. One child does a movement and their partner copies their movement as if they were a mirror. No talking is allowed. Swap after a few minutes.

Review: how did you feel when your partner mirrored you? What did you have to do to mirror your partner? Feeling connected with others is really important for humans and lots of other animals. How do you stay connected with your friends and family? You can use the ‘5 Ways to Wellbeing’ to frame this discussion—see page 4.



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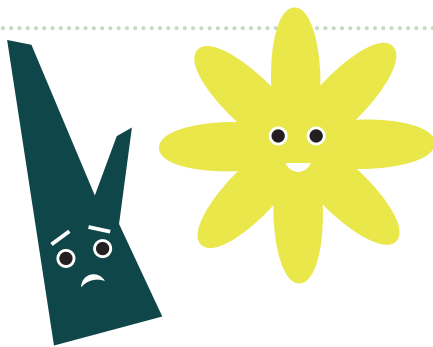
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### Activity: Emotion game (20min)

Best done somewhere with lots of natural materials

Emotions can be put into four categories: joy, sadness, anger and fear. Animals have these emotions too, they are all normal. Ask learners to collect natural objects that make them think of each of the emotions. Children interpret this in many different ways, and should be reassured that no interpretation is wrong. Children might find a thorn for fear, a rock for anger, a flower for joy, a dead leaf for sadness. Encourage children to talk about one of their objects. You might introduce idea that nature is a place where we can express our emotions more freely, it never tells us off!



Draw or mark out a cross on the ground with an emotion word in each section

Take a bag to collect extra natural objects if needed

### Activity: Create a mindful area

Nature can benefit our mental health in many ways. Work with students to design part of your school grounds to be a beautiful, calm place where children can immerse themselves in nature.

### Activity: Emotion mandalas (30min)

Mandala is a Sanskrit word meaning 'circle'. Mandalas represent how nature never ends, it goes around in cycles and everything in connected. Like spring flowers come up after a cold winter, if you are feeling sadness you will feel joy again soon. Make mandalas individually or in groups— try to represent each emotion within your mandala.

Use the Wildlife Watch Mandala sheet as a guide— page 3

# Make a nature mandala



wildlife  
watch

## You will need

- Bags or baskets to collect natural materials

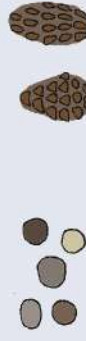
### Natural materials:



Grass



Feathers



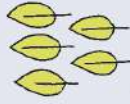
Pine cones



Flowers

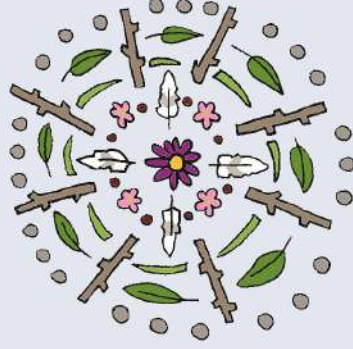
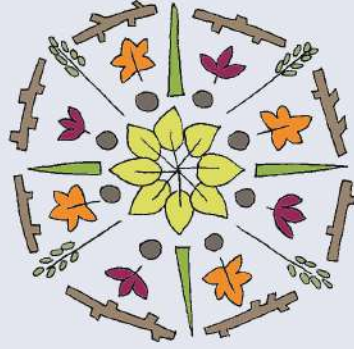
Only pick from your own garden and leave plenty for pollinators!

- 1 Head outdoors and collect your natural materials. Try to find a few of the same thing as this will help with your shape (eg. five yellow leaves, four twigs of equal length).



- 2 Find a flat surface – maybe a table or even your lawn or yard outside. Place one of your finds down first to act as the middle of the mandala.

- 3 Use the rest of your finds to make a pattern coming out from the centre. Consider the symmetry of your pattern, making one side mirror the other. You can be as creative as you like.



The word 'mandala' is Sanskrit for circle. The circular shape symbolises how nature doesn't begin or end, but is always connected.

- 4 Remember to take a photo of your finished mandala!

# FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING



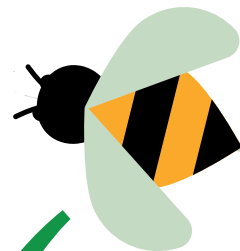
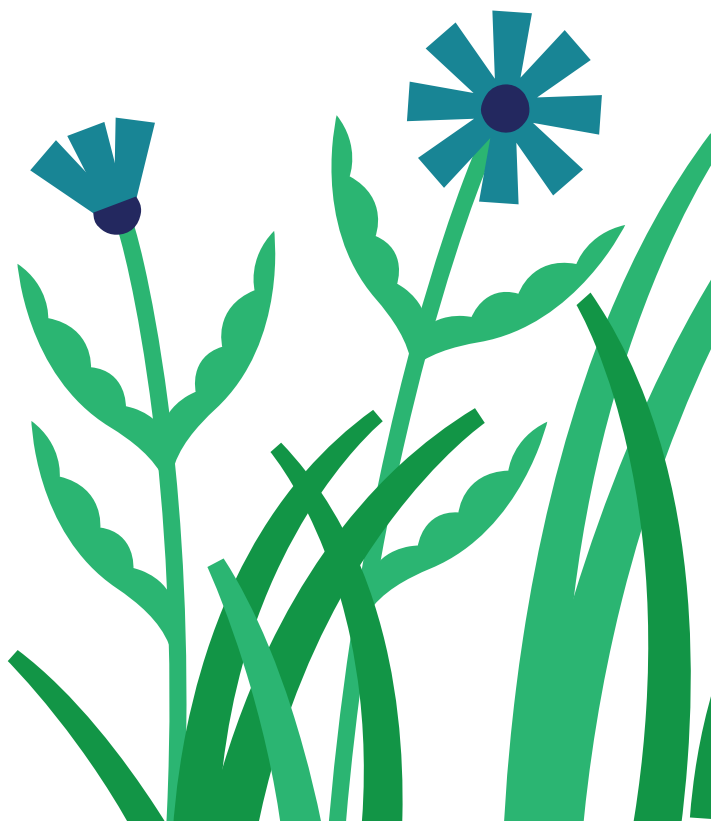
This is an approach to supporting wellbeing, which we use at the Wildlife Trusts. Outdoor and nature-based learning support all of the 5 ways to wellbeing.

- 1 Be Active:** Wild play, gardening, exploring nature
- 2 Connect:** Feeling part of and connected to the natural world and each other
- 3 Give:** Creating homes for nature by planting wildflowers, building bug hotels, litter picking
- 4 Take notice:** Slowing down & using all your senses to observe nature
- 5 Learn:** There are endless opportunities to learn about local wildlife through first hand exploration



This video by Dr Amir Khan gives more information on the 5 ways to wellbeing

[www.wildlifetrusts.org/nature-health-and-wild-wellbeing](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/nature-health-and-wild-wellbeing)



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