



Mindfulness : Connecting w/ Nature

Supplies: No supplies needed

Age or Grade: Any

Time: Varies

Background: The resources used to create this learning experience include *The Healing Magic of Forest Bathing* by Julia Plevin, *Little Renegades: Growing Mindful Minds* by Blake Lown Beers and *Planting Seeds: Practicing Mindfulness with Children* by Thich Naht Hanh.

Project Goal: This activity is aimed to connect youth with nature through mindfulness and three foundational concepts of gratitude, respect, and recognition.

What to Do:

1. GRATITUDE – Venture out and find something from nature that speaks to you. Once you have found your object, observe it very closely. What do you see? What do you feel, smell, hear, or taste?
2. RESPECT – Read the attached story and text, entitled “Rata the Warrior”.
3. RECOGNITION – Quietly sit and observe a tree.

Reflect:

1. GRATITUDE – Showing gratitude is essential for connecting with the natural world. Why do we have cause to show gratitude to Mother Nature? What does she provide for us?
2. RESPECT – Why do you think we have lost this “original instruction” for asking for permission before we take anything from the Earth? How might things be different if we still lived by this way of living?
3. RECOGNITION – What does this tree do for other plants and animals? Do you share any qualities with this tree? Recognizing our similar qualities with nature is a great way to create connection.

Apply:

1. GRATITUDE – Ways to show gratitude for nature can include leaving seeds, singing a song, giving a tree a hug. Maybe bring that piece into your home and integrate it into your life through decoration or functionality (a flower bookmark) so you may have a constant reminder of your gratitude for nature.
2. RESPECT – The next time you venture out into nature and take from it, practice asking for permission. How does it feel? Try to make a practice of it and see if you begin to feel more connected.
3. RECOGNITION – Go to the *Little Renegades* card attached and follow the instructions.



RATA THE WARRIOR

From the Maori Tradition

Excerpt from
The Healing Magic of Forest Bathing
by Julia Plevin



Rata needed to build a waka (canoe), so he went into the forest and cut down a very tall tree. It was getting late, so he returned to his village and planned to come back the next day to finish. Meanwhile, the insects, birds, and forest spirits that guard the forest - the *hakuturi* - were very angry that he had cut down the tree without asking permission, so they worked hard to stand it back up. When Rata returned the next day, he was surprised to find the tree standing again, completely whole. Confused but undeterred, he cut it down again and returned home. Again, the *hakuturi* worked through the night to restore the tree. Rata returned and cut the tree down for the third time. Then he hid in the forest and watched the *hakuturi* as they worked. When he revealed himself and asked them why they did this, they told him that he had insulted, Tana Mahuta, the god of the forest because he did not ask permission and perform the proper rituals and incantations before cutting the tree. Embarrassed, Rata asked permission to cut down the tree again, and this time the *hakuturi* happily helped him make the canoe.

LITTLE RENEGADES
GROWING MINDFUL MINDS
"Giving Tree"

