

Emotional responses to nature

Do we take time to reflect on how nature makes us feel? This activity helps learners to reflect on how different parts of their outdoor space make them feel, as well as having conversations around self-regulation and what we can do to change the way we are feeling.

Creating a space for recording information and reflection, this activity can be repeated at different stages of your Nature Park journey to document and discuss any differences.

Teaching time

10–30 minutes

Learning outcomes

- understand the effect of nature on their health and wellbeing
- make close observations of nature in an outdoor space
- spend time outdoors in nature and share how they feel when interacting with nature

Step by step

Make sure there are a range of the face print outs available for learners to choose from – they should be printed double-sided so that the word of each emotion is printed on the back (or this can be written).

Children can help to make the different emotion faces by cutting out the faces, remembering to cut out the eyes too. Then, the faces can be fixed to a stick or lolly stick with tape, to be held up as masks.

Facilitate a discussion based on each emotion – what do you look like when you feel this way? What sorts of things make you feel this way? What sorts of things can we do to change the way we are feeling?

You could explore learners' feelings about nature and their environment further with more prompts: How does being outdoors make you feel?

Taking the masks with you, go outside and explore your site. Learners can choose a mask and find things that make them feel this emotion. Example: a piece of litter might make them feel sad, whilst a flower might make them feel relaxed, or a tunnel in a play area might make them feel excited.

Allow time for learners to explore with different emotion masks, and prompt discussion from their findings. If you are near the beginning of your Nature Park journey, you may want to focus on the spaces or sights that make learners feel sad or worried, and ask why that is or what could be done to change this.

Once learners have explored their outdoor space, come together to collect the data. Using the Feelings Grid resource, draw or write the names of five spaces that the children reflected on. These should include any improvements for nature you have made (if you have made any), and a mixture of natural and human-made features. For example: pond, tree, concrete corner, flower patch.

Green Skills



Suitable for

Early Years

Location

Outdoors

Season

Spring
Summer
Autumn
Winter

What you'll need

A range of emotion faces printed out, ideally onto card

Lolly sticks

Tape

Scissors

Key vocabulary

Emotions

Nature

Names of emotions, e.g. relaxed, worried

Support and extension opportunities

Learners may have a broad range of emotions that they wish to express and explore – why not give them a chance to make their own emotion faces?

If learners are struggling with all the emotions provided, you could introduce them one at a time, one day at a time, or select just a couple to explore through this activity



Ask learners to share how each feature or space made them feel, first through discussion, and then by adding a tick in the relevant box on the grid. Collect all responses on one grid so that you can observe the trends together. What do learners notice? What spaces had the most responses of each emotion?

Reflection

If you have already made changes to your space, you could compare how the old and new spaces make learners feel – if learners feel happier, or more relaxed, ask them why that is.



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