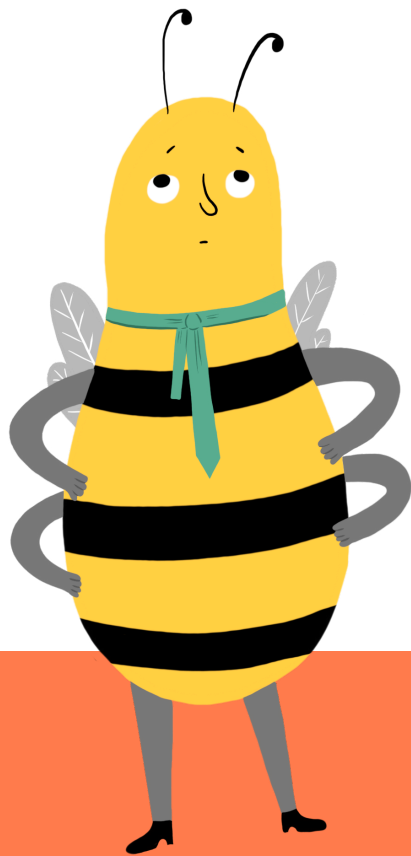


Learning to Thrive

in a climate of uncertainty

learning and support materials



Pathway 1

Caregivers

Ideas and activities inspired by the animation *Learning to Thrive* to support adults with caregiver responsibilities for children and young people.

BOLD

POSITIVE
NEGATIVES



Lifeworlds
Learning



Noticing

The importance of noticing

Noticing can help us to feel connected to other humans and our wider environments. When it comes to our relationship with nature, how we relate to nature is more important than simply spending time in nature - it is about quality, not quantity, moments, not minutes.

Noticing is a big part of this. In this element we have gathered **five ways to notice** that aim to help you and the children or young people you care for, to better notice and connect with nature in your own environments.

Noticing through time

Creating opportunities to notice nature as part of your regular routine can enhance the benefits further. Repeated engagements strengthen the connections we make and noticing over time can help us to observe change. To make noticing nature part of your routine you could try:

- Actively noticing one thing in nature every day
- Revisiting the same place at regular intervals throughout the year to see how things change
- Creating a *nature notebook* to record your observations in nature
- Sharing your observations with others (you could even share them on social media to encourage friends and family to get involved)

Learning to Thrive

Noticing things in nature can...

- ...improve mental wellbeing
- ...make us happier and more content
- ...make us feel part of nature
- ...make us more caring and responsible
- ...help develop a positive outlook on life

Noticing fully

Noticing is not just about what we see or hear. Try to notice the feelings that you experience when you notice things in nature. This wider sort of noticing supports social and emotional wellbeing and connecting observations with emotions can build stronger memories and meaning.





5 ways to notice: listening

Pathway 1: Caregivers



It is common to associate noticing with things that you see, but sight is only one of the senses that you can notice with. Noticing through sound, through listening, can help us to discover new things. This idea uses 'sit spots' to encourage more active listening to the world around you.

1. Find a suitable place where you can safely pause and listen. If you can, this is best done away from regular and dominant background noise such as traffic on roads.
2. Stand or sit in silence and listen carefully without speaking to anyone. How many different sounds can you hear? Try to go deeper with your listening, reaching for more distant or quieter sounds and not just the more obvious ones.
3. After a few minutes share what you noticed. It doesn't matter if you don't know what a sound was, you can still describe it and maybe have fun trying to find out what it was. The following ideas could be used to support your sharing.
4. The following prompts could be used to support your sharing:
 - How many sounds were made by nature?
 - How many were made by human activity?
 - Were some sounds more likeable than others?
 - Were there sounds that you recognised? What about ones that you didn't know?
 - Were there any surprising sounds? What was surprising about them?

You can develop using sit spots over time, taking longer to sit each time or trying different locations or times of day/year. Here are some ideas to consider:

- Does closing your eyes make it easier or harder to notice sounds? Why might this be?
 - Does it make a difference if you stand up, sit down, or lie down?
 - How easy is it to stay still and silent? You could challenge yourself by slowly increasing the time you take to sit in silence and notice. Do you hear more if you stay silent for longer?
 - Do the seasons and the weather change the sounds that you can hear?
 - If you stay really still, can you hear inner sounds (e.g. breathing, heartbeat)?
5. A creative way to record what you notice is to make a sound map and mark on the direction and distance that different sounds came from. This may require some estimating rather than precision but can give you an idea of how sound relates to nature in your local area. Why might more sounds come from particular areas?

Linking back to the animation

You can link back to the animation by connecting to the soundscape and the way that sound is used alongside the images to create a story and influence feelings and emotions:

- When watching [Learning to Thrive](#) what sounds do you notice? How are these sounds similar or different to those in your locality? How do the sounds in the animation connect with your emotions and feelings?
- Watch the version of the [animation without any soundscape](#) included. How does this change your experience of the animation?

A fun activity to try would be to sketch a scene of your own locality in the style of the animation and record sounds from your environment to bring your scene to life? Which sounds would you want to capture?



5 ways to notice: collecting

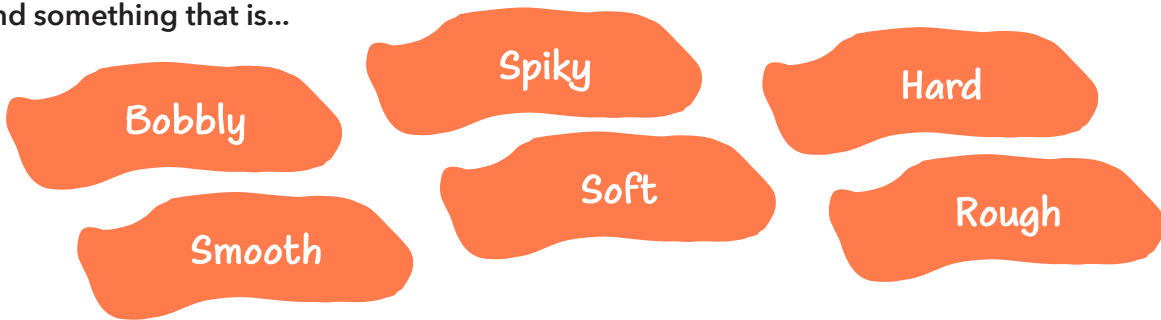
Pathway 1: Caregivers



There is much to see in the nature that surrounds us, even if you don't live in a particularly nature-rich place. When nature is very familiar, we may barely notice it unless we make an active effort to do so. If nature is less familiar it can sometimes be overwhelming, however. These ideas suggest a number of ways that you could actively connect with nature by noticing through textures, colours, shapes, numbers and words.

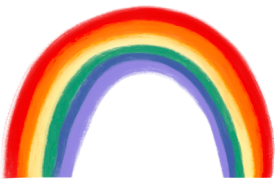
Textures

Find something that is...



Note: When you are collecting, make sure that you stay safe, and only collect natural things that can be found on the ground.

You could extend this by making rubbings of your textures to put in a nature notebook or writing something to explore the textures further (e.g. "my stone is as smooth as...")



Colours

Use the colours of the rainbow to explore your surroundings by noticing something in nature that connects to each colour. An alternative is to create natural rainbows using a board with a piece of sticky tape (sticky side up) and use this to gather and stick tiny pieces of leaves or flowers onto the board to make a rainbow (be sure to only use things you find on the ground or check what can be picked and used).

Shapes

Explore your local environment to try and find something that is round, oval, triangular, square, rectangular, diamond, heart-shaped etc. Take in your whole surroundings and include man-made as well as natural objects if you need to.

Numbers

Write the numbers 1-10 (or to 20 for more challenge) on a piece of paper or in your nature notebooks if using them. Try to notice something in nature to represent each number. 1 might be a tree trunk, 6 might be the petals on a flower etc. You could include "too many to count" or "I estimate there to be..." categories for larger numbers, such as the number of leaves on a tree.

Words

Similarly write the letters A to Z down the side of the page and collect words from nature that begin with those letters or things that are shaped like those letters. The book [Lost Words](#) has poetry inspired by nature which is organised alphabetically. This could be an inspiration for your thinking, or just a great book to deepen your nature connections further.



5 ways to notice: zooming

Pathway 1: Caregivers



Zooming in on nature can be a great way to notice new things or to connect to your local environment in a different way.

This idea encourages you to become tiny explorers and to zoom in on nature in order to discover new connections.

The naked eye is all you need for this activity, but if you have a magnifying glass, then you might be able to zoom in further and notice even more!

1. You might like to prepare for your exploration by imagining you are the bees in the animation, leaving the hive to discover a new world...
2. Do some research about bee's eyes first. Did you know bees have 5 eyes? Learning more about bee eyesight could inspire you to notice more.
3. Notice something that you are interested to zoom in on more closely. What do you notice that you might not have seen before? What is the benefit of zooming in to connect with nature?
4. For a bit of fun why not use a camera and zoom in on nature to create a quiz for others to solve. An example of this is shown below. Look at these zoomed in images from nature and see if you can guess what they are. You can find the answers and full-size images [here](#).





5 ways to notice: framing

Pathway 1: Caregivers



Frames can be a useful device to help us notice things more with greater purpose. A window provides a frame on the outside world and can connect us with nature even when inside and the weather is wild! What can you see from your windows? How does what you see change over time?

When actively encountering nature, frames can help us to focus with greater detail. A frame can be made simply from scrap cardboard by cutting out the centre to leave a frame.

Cardboard frames are good because you can annotate them with observations, feelings, thoughts, or questions as you use them.



1. When making your frame think about how big the frame is - smaller ones can be good for close-up observation, with larger ones allowing a wider scale and view. It doesn't have to be square either! What if it was a wide rectangle or even a circle? Try different frames to vary what you notice.
2. What can you see in your frame? What is beyond the frame? Why did you decide to include or exclude certain things?
3. You can relate this framing activity back to thinking about photographs. When we use, take and share photographs these are another type of frame. Next time you look at a photograph ask yourself what has the photographer chosen to include and what might be outside of the frame?
4. If you have access to digital cameras/devices you could try taking some photographs of your local environment using different frames to create a different impression or feeling. The example below uses a still from the animation [Learning to Thrive](#) to show how you might create different frames from the same scene.





5 ways to notice: look up

Pathway 1: Caregivers



This activity takes a slightly different angle on connecting with nature and encourages us to look up at the skies and clouds that are the natural ceiling to our lives.

The founder of the Cloud Appreciation Society, Gavin Pretor-Pinney, reminds us in his [TED Talk](#) that clouds often have negative associations.

When we are feeling a little low we might say we are 'under a cloud'. When looking ahead we can sometimes talk about obstacles or doubts as 'clouds on the horizon'. And yet, clouds are an incredibly important part of nature and of our survival on Earth. Clouds bring us the essential rains that are needed for all life, and they offer protection from the rays of the sun at the hottest times of year.



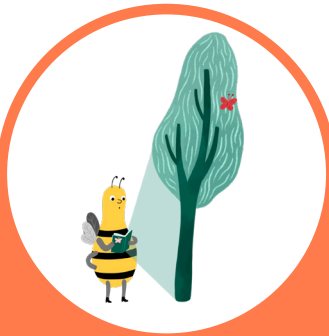
If we find time to actively notice them then we can find great beauty in clouds, just as many people do when looking up to enjoy the stars of a clear night sky. Taking time to stop, notice, observe, record and learn from the rhythms of our skies can inspire curiosity, dreaming, deep thinking and enquiry, whether it's the stars or the clouds.

1. Try going outside at the same time every day for a week, or on the same day once a week and just spend 5-10 minutes looking at the clouds. Sit or lie down if you can.
 - What shapes can you see?
 - What colours do you notice?
 - How do the clouds change minute by minute / day by day / week by week?
 - What weather do you notice with each type of cloud you have spotted?
 - Notice your breathing. Does it change, the longer you are there?
2. Clouds change all the time, just as our feelings change. Pick out a cloud and imagine what it is feeling. If it is on its own, perhaps it is feeling lonely or lost. As it moves and changes, perhaps joining up with other clouds or drifting away into the distance, how might its feelings change?

If you are feeling creative you could use ideas from this to write a poem or short description of your cloud. You could put this in your nature notebook if you use one.

3. Use a [cloud spotting sheet](#) to identify the scientific name of the different clouds you can see. You could try drawing and labelling different clouds to create your own cloud guide.
4. Some parts of the world will mainly have just a few types of clouds that depend on the normal weather patterns in that region. Other parts of the world will experience many types of cloud, even in a single day.

On 16th September 2022 the first Cloud Appreciation Day took place and people from around the world took more than 3000 photos of the clouds they could see that day. You can explore the clouds from that day using [interactive map](#) that was created to record them all. What were the clouds like in the area where you live?



Connecting

The importance of connecting

Feeling connected is important. It is part of how we develop our sense of identity and belonging. Our connections can take many different forms. They might be to people, to localities (places), to nature, to beliefs, to our histories, and to feelings. Connections are important for personal and cognitive development and can help us to thrive, enjoy and achieve more from the relations and opportunities that are available to us.

Finding connections

Some connections may be obvious such as our social connection to family and friends or our place connection to a favourite park, walk or café. Other connections might be less obvious. They may require a little more thinking to identify. How are we connected to nature, even when we are not in nature, for example? How are we connected with people we may never meet and with places we may never visit?

Our less obvious connections can matter because they can help us to better understand the nature of challenges and concerns in our complex and uncertain world. If we feel more connected, then we are more likely to develop greater empathy and understanding but also a greater sense of being able to do something.

The ideas and activities in this element aim to help you develop a sense of connection at a variety of scales and with a focus on planet, people, and place. The ideas are intended for use between you and a child or children in your care.

Learning to Thrive

Positive connections can...

- ...improve critical thinking
- ...encourage creativity and curiosity
- ...make us happier and more content
- ...give us a sense of belonging
- ...make us more caring and responsible





These ideas focus on our **connections with nature and the environment**.

Finding connections...

1. Open a conversation by sharing what you understand by 'nature'. What does it mean to you? What do you imagine when you think of nature? How do your ideas change if you include 'environment'?*
2. Expand your discussion by sharing ideas about how you are connected to nature (as you have defined it) in your everyday lives. Take it in turns to share connections you can think of.

You might like to push your thinking by picking up something from around your home and thinking about how that connects with nature and the environment. You could choose almost anything, but a book is a good starting point: paper from trees, water to make the paper, energy in the manufacturing process, minerals in the ink, glue for binding etc.

Look around the space you are in and see what other connections you can find or if you prefer you can download a set of [connections images](#) and identify the connections in those. There are some suggested connections on the last page of the download if you want to check with your own ideas.

3. Next time you go out, try to identify connections with nature and the environment. This could be on the way to school, a trip to the shops, visiting a friend or relative, going to a museum, playing sports, or a day trip to somewhere new etc.

* Try and reach a broad understanding that includes the environment at a local and global scale and not just plants and animals.

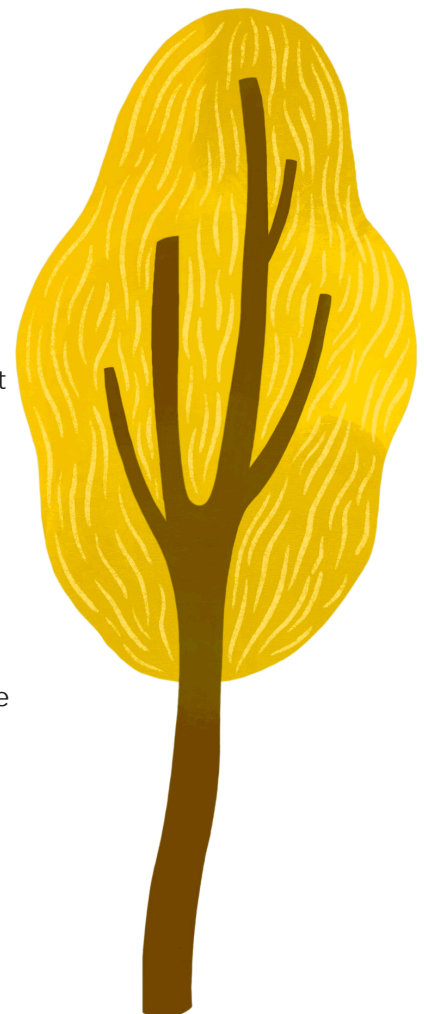
GAME: Do we need a tree for that?

1. This is a game that shares a number of objects or activities and asks you to think about whether or not we need a tree for that. Each object or activity is on a card that can be [downloaded here](#) to be printed and cut up (or you can look at them on screen if you don't have a printer).
2. Look at each image and decide whether we need a tree for what is shown in the image. If you are using the physical cards then sort them into two piles - one for YES and one for NO. If you are using the digital images then use a piece of scrap paper to record the letter of each image into two columns labelled YES and NO.

If you change your mind about any of the images then you can move them between YES and NO until you are happy.

3. When you have finished download the answer sheet [here](#) and compare the answers to the decisions that you came to. How were they similar and how were they different?

At the end of the answer sheet there is a takeaway question.





These ideas focus on **connecting with people**. In the animation *Learning to Thrive* the narrator reminds us “We are social beings who thrive through connection, communication and co-operation”.

ACTIVITY: Network map

This is a practical activity that encourages you to think about all the direct connections that you have with people. Direct connections are those that are visible or known to you. They normally include people you know by name or by association and group (e.g. running club).

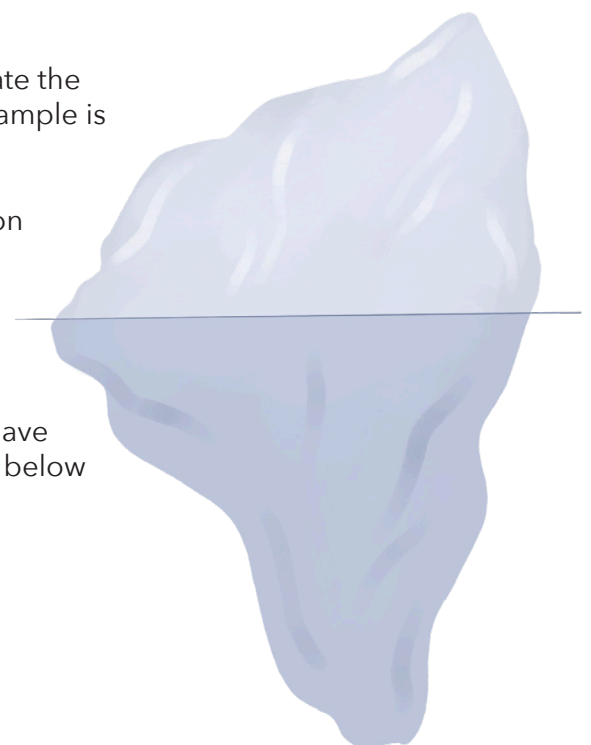
1. You can do this using a large piece of paper with different colour pens/pencils. If you prefer you can do it outside using natural objects, or by using chalks on a hard outdoor surface.
2. The idea of this activity is to create a network map of your connections. You can see an example of a finished [network map here](#). Notice the key features such as the key and symbols for different groups of people and the distance to show how close* the connection is.
3. Start by putting yourself in the centre of the map (you could do this individually or together) and then begin to think about the different connections that you have with people in your life. You might like to share these or make a list of them before you start to add them to your map. If a connection involves several people (e.g. school friends, faith group, sports team etc.) then you can use a group name rather than individuals.
4. If you want to you could create a key for your map using symbols or colours to group connections into different categories (e.g. family, community groups, friends, leisure, learning, work etc.).

* Close in this sense is not about distance (though that may be a factor). It is more about how close the connection feels to you; how important that connection is.

ACTIVITY: Connection Berg

This activity can be done on its own or can follow on from the network map activity. It uses the idea of an iceberg and the common understanding that we only see the smallest part of the iceberg. The biggest part remains hidden from view. We apply this idea to think more deeply about our connections with people.

1. Draw an iceberg shape and mark a water line to separate the bit we can see, from the bit that is more hidden. An example is shown in the image on the right.
2. Starting with the visible section, annotate the connection berg with your connections that are more obvious and visible (e.g. family, friends, school-friends, clubs, faith groups etc.). If you did the network map activity, you might use some of those ideas here.
3. Now think about the less visible connections that you have with people in your daily life. There are some prompts below if you need them to help start your thinking.
 - Where does your food come from?
 - Where do your clothes come from?
 - What happens to your waste and recycling?
 - How do we get fresh water?





- How does the energy get into our homes and schools?
- Who cares for the places we enjoy spending leisure time in?
- Who creates the laws and rules that ensure we can all live together?
- What happens if our home needs repairs?
- Who motivates me in my life?
- Do you have any role models that give you a sense of connection?

NOTE: You don't need to know the names of the people that might connect you through these aspects of your daily life. It is sufficient to know the roles such as farmer, factory workers, refuse collectors, plumber, gardener etc. The idea is to broaden and deepen our understanding of being connected to people locally, nationally and globally.

ACTIVITY: Sense of belonging

The ideas we share here focus on thinking about why connection might be important. It focusses on a 'sense of belonging'. Before starting this activity you might like to take a moment to think about whether it raises any sensitivities - for example if you have recently moved home or school etc.

1. Start your conversation* by openly questioning *"Why are connections important to us?"* or *"Why do you think it is important to have connections?"*
2. Dig a little deeper by asking *"How does being connected with other people make you feel?"* The two sentence starters could help you to share ideas about the importance of connection.

"I feel connected when..."

"Being connected makes me feel..."

3. Introduce the idea of a "sense of belonging" as a way to think about connections to others. Or sense of belonging can change throughout our lives. If we move schools or homes we may feel less of a sense of a belonging until we have made new connections, for example. You could share examples of this if you have experiences and feel comfortable to share them.
4. Expand your idea of "sense of belonging" by making clear that it can be about more than people. It can also be about things like place (e.g. environment, weather) and culture (e.g. language, food and customs).
5. Use the word 'belonging' as an inspiration to create an acrostic poem together (each taking it in turns to complete a line), or to create a piece of art that expresses your ideas about belonging.

* An alternative to talking might be to draw a picture or write a short poem about why connection is important.





These ideas explore **connecting with place**. You can think about place at a variety of scales from the local, through regional, national, and to the global. Exploring place at different scales can help us to better face complex issues with interconnections and interdependencies that tie together different locals.

An issue such as climate change for example could be daunting when considered at the global scale (“*what can I do about this?*”) but identifying actions that could be taken locally may give a greater sense of empowerment and agency (“*It’s a big challenge but I can do this!*”). The same can be true the other way too. Climate change globally might seem to be ‘out there’ and not really affecting you (disconnected), but looking at local weather patterns over time, or talking to those who have lived in a place for longer can help you to see how it might be impacting your own locality too (connected).

ACTIVITY: Imagine my place

This activity begins with what you know and understand about your place. It creates an idea of your sense of place and looks at how you connect to where you live.

1. Start with a large piece of paper and create a map of your place. There are no specific limits as to what it should or should not include. The key is to be able to say “*this is my place*” by the end.
2. Take time to appreciate your map, sharing what is represented and why. Try not to assume you know what things are, and instead discover together by interviewing the map.
3. Look at your map again and consider how many of the features are natural and how many are human-made? If there was not much nature featured on your map, why might that be? If you think more actively about nature in your place, would you want to add anything to your map?

ACTIVITY: Scales of place

Place can look very different when you consider it from different scales. This activity encourages a deeper engagement and connection with place using scale to stimulate thinking. This activity can be a standalone but would also work well to follow on from the previous activity above.

1. First check your understanding of scale. The short (3 min) film, [Eye to Universe](#) is a fun way of exploring one idea of scale.
2. Explore your connections to place using scale by using the following scale and sharing what comes to mind:
 - Your town/village/city
 - Your home
 - Your bedroom
 - Your bed
 - Your pillow

Like the film [Eye to Universe](#) that zoomed both ways, you could also consider:

- Your region
- Your country



- Your continent
 - The world...
3. Reflect on the idea that these are all places that we can connect to but that we do so at different scales. At the scale of town, the pillow as a place is probably not so important to us, for example.

The same is true for the world around us. We might see an oak tree simply as a tree, or perhaps even just see it as woods or forest but at a different scale an oak tree could be an entire world! A study in the UK by the Woodland Trust found that oak trees support an incredible 2,300 species of which 326 depend on oak for their survival and 229 are rarely found anywhere else.

4. Use your imagination and your understanding of scale to consider what the following would need in terms of place to survive and thrive:
- An ant
 - A bird
 - A human
 - Humanity

There will be some clear correct responses to this (e.g. water), but also considerable room for interpretation.

5. Returning to your own place and on what is needed for it to survive and thrive, think about any threats or challenges that you might identify. What could be done to reduce or remove those? Who might you need to connect with to achieve this?





Connecting connections

Pathway 1: Caregivers



This last idea is based on **connecting connections**. It can help to develop an appreciation of the complexity of connections that are around us every day. Becoming more aware of our connections can make it easier to think about and understand the choices and actions available to us as citizens of our shared planet.

1. Choose a familiar object from around your own home. The list of objects (right) are just suggestions.
2. Try to identify as many connections as you can to the familiar object that you have chosen. Some of these prompts might help you:
 - How do you connect with this object?
 - Where does the object come from?
 - Who made or produced this object?
 - If things make up your object, then where might they have come from?
 - How did the object get all the way to you?
 - What will happen to the object when you have finished with it?
3. You might find it useful to organize the connections by type such as:
 - How does your object connect to nature/ environment? - planet connections
 - Who is connected to your object and why (roles etc.)? - people connections
 - Where is your object connected to? - place connections

Suggested familiar objects:

- Banana
- T-shirt
- Mobile phone
- Tennis ball
- Chocolate bar

Use whatever knowledge you have about your chosen item and don't worry if your ideas and thoughts are a little uncertain - they could always be checked with a bit of internet research but having the ideas is the first step.

4. When you have finished creating the connections for your object, reflect on the process by asking yourself:

"Does thinking about these connections provoke any thoughts or feelings?"

"Do you think about the object any differently?"





Playing

The importance of being playful

Play, or having a playful outlook, is increasingly recognised as important for human wellbeing and thriving. A playful outlook is also thought to be beneficial when we are faced with situations that are complex or uncertain. Playfulness can lead to more imaginative ideas and to more generative (positive) perspectives. Playfulness can also help to build greater emotional resilience and when done alongside others, strengthen a sense of belonging.

A report from the University of Cambridge on 'The Importance of Play' emphasises these positive attributes of play, stating:

'The value of play is increasingly recognised, by researchers and within the policy arena, for adults as well as children, as the evidence mounts of its relationship with intellectual achievement and emotional well-being.'

Learning to Thrive

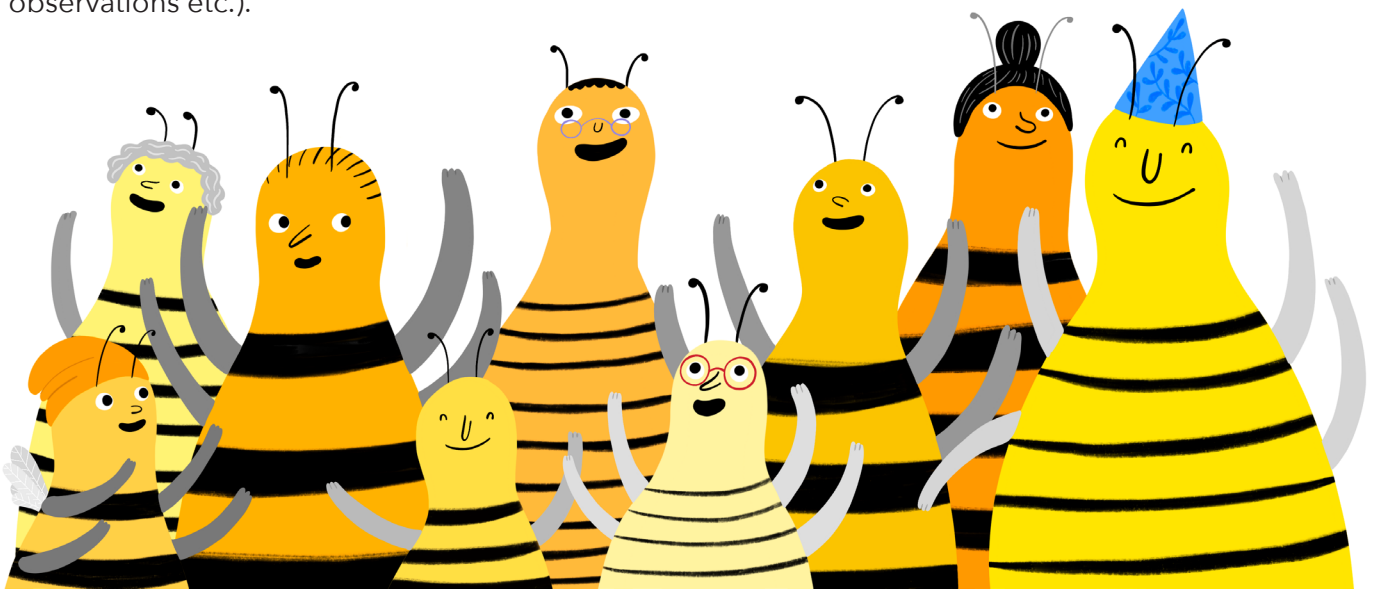
A playful outlook can...

- ...improve critical thinking
- ...encourage creativity and curiosity
- ...strengthen social skills
- ...build emotional resilience
- ...benefit mental and physical health

The ideas and short activities we share in this element focus on play and how we can support children and young people, as well as ourselves, to develop a deeper appreciation of play. Each input could be something you want to think about independently, but they have been written on the assumption that you would try them **with** children and young people.

Nature and play

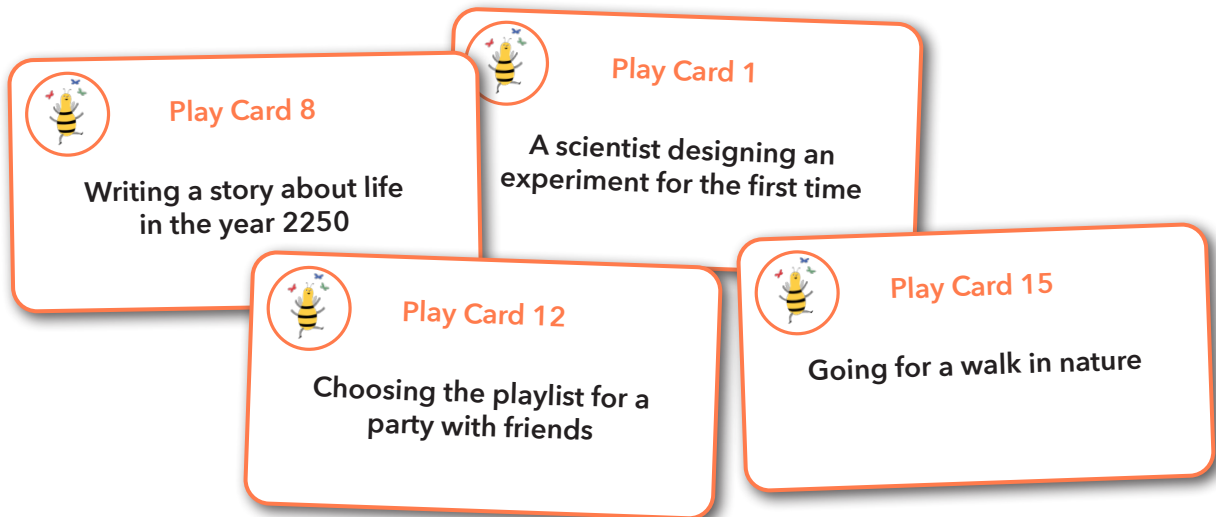
For many children, their first encounters with nature come through play. Think splashing in puddles, making mud pies, kicking fallen leaves, playing with sticks or any one of many other activities. As we age these activities might migrate to making dens, creating natural art, flying a kite, climbing trees, wild swimming, outdoor pursuits (climbing, canoeing). Nature is a great partner for play, providing us with surprises to overcome (weather, obstacles etc.) or opportunities to make the most of (resources, observations etc.).





This short activity encourages a creative approach to thinking about play. It aims to move beyond any ideas of play being seen as childish or not serious.

1. Begin a discussion by sharing what you think of when you hear the word 'play'. You could do this verbally whilst on a walk, or you could record your ideas creatively by building a mind map with words, icons or pictures that express your shared thoughts.
2. Continue your conversation by thinking about where play shows up in a typical day.
3. Use some of these prompts (or create your own) to deepen thinking about the role/s of play in our lives:
 - Can you think of something you have learned through play?
 - Have you ever become better at something through play?
 - How does play engage with your imagination?
 - What are some of your best memories of play? What makes those memories special?
4. We have created a set of [downloadable Play Cards](#) designed to help broaden an appreciation of play. You could look at each of the cards and discuss how you think it relates to play or being playful. Another way to use them is to cut them into individual cards and arrange them in a continuum from 'most playful' at one end to 'least playful' at the other. There are no correct answers to this – it is very much a matter of opinion. Play with the position of the cards until you are happy, and feel free to add your own examples...



5. If you go back to your earlier conversation about play is there anything you would want to add to your understanding of play having thought about it a little more?
6. A fun way to share what you have taken from your discussion about play is to take it in turns to complete the phrase "Play is about ..." and complete it with as many ideas as you can think of. Examples might include: experimenting, discovering, imagining, fun, adventure.

ANIMATION LINK: The importance of play is a central message in the animation [Learning to Thrive](#). You could watch the animation together to give you ideas. Try to spot all the different ways play is mentioned or talked about by the narrator. Don't forget to look at how play is shown through the characters and their actions too.



The ideas shared here are all about engaging playfully with nature. The opportunities for play will vary according to your local environment, but even an urban environment can provide many opportunities to play in nature with a little imagination.

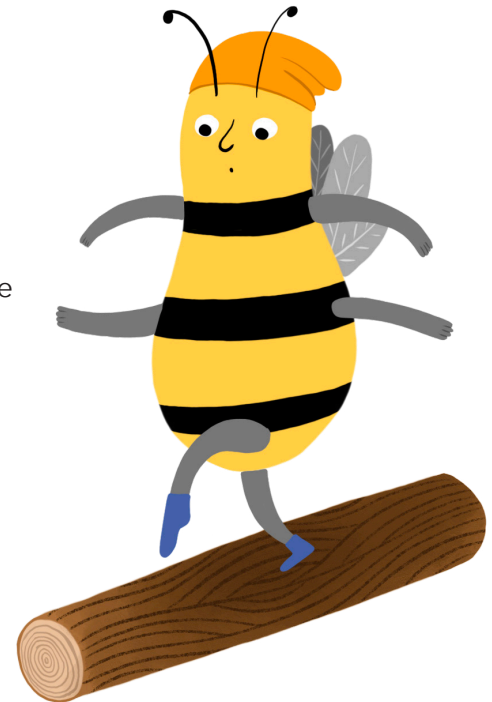
Select from these ideas or use them as inspiration to come up with your own ideas.

ACTIVITY: Obstacle course

Create an obstacle course using nature and natural materials. You might weave in and out of trees, rocks or other natural obstacles (e.g. sticks pushed into the ground). You might hop along a narrow path or create one by lining sticks along the ground. You could leap across a gap - natural (e.g. small ditch or dip in the ground) or created (marked out in some form) - or over something (e.g. pile of leaves, log, etc.). You might balance along a boundary or a natural feature. If you live in a more urban environment then incorporate urban features into your obstacle course such as gates, paving stones, bollards etc.

Imagination, creativity, and teamwork are most important for this activity, but so too is safety. Be sure to check your site for dangers and agree how you can play safe together.

A fun art activity might be to recreate your obstacle course as a drawing, map or 3D model.



ACTIVITY: Micro-obstacle course

An alternative to the above is to create a micro-obstacle course. This links to the part in the animation where the two bees notice the smaller elements of nature like the caterpillar on the leaf. What would an obstacle course for a caterpillar look like? Or what about a spider, or an ant? What about a bigger animal? You could watch these two short videos (both around 3 mins) for inspiration...

Squirrel challenge: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DkmeZwsi3HA>

Crow challenge: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVaITA7eBZE>

ACTIVITY: Tic tac toe (Noughts and Crosses)

Create a nature tic tac toe (noughts and crosses) using sticks or long grass to construct the grid and natural counters (leaves, seeds, nuts, pebbles). What other versions of games could you make using natural materials?



ACTIVITY: Nature art

Try collecting materials from nature to produce a piece of art using nature's resources. You could use earth/clay to create ranges of light brown to black, different leaves might give greens or reds, flowers could give you a range of colours. Berries (make sure they are safe ones to handle) can also create some vibrant colours.



Another way to use natural materials for art is to use the shapes, colours and textures to create a picture or sculpture in nature. Look up the Scottish artist Andy Goldsworthy as an example or look at [this article](#) for ideas and guidance.

If you want a little more inspiration these short videos share some tips and ideas:

Making natural paint: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uoM9yukjMGU>

Nature Birds: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NFvwN01NxU>

Nature sculptures/pictures: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zzdFwUc9ZI>

ACTIVITY: Imagine you're a ...

This activity was inspired by a book called *'What it's Like to be a Bird'* by Tim Birkhead and Catherine Rayner (2021) that encourages you to imagine what it would be like to be a bird. Using this idea, you could be playful by imagining what it would be like to be a bird or another animal. Stretch out your arms like wings and run around looking around as you scour for food or somewhere to rest or nest. What if you were a mouse keeping safe from a bird? How would that be? What about an ant? What about a fish?

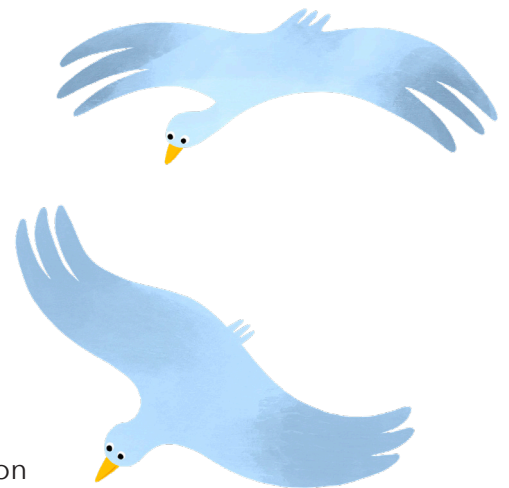
Use your local environment for inspiration and fire up the imagination about what it might be like to be a creature living there. You could extend the idea to the environment itself – imagine you're a tree, a pond, a cloud, a flower... What would that be like? Who would visit you and why?

If you wanted to you could use your ideas for some creative writing such as a short description of a day or moment, or perhaps a poem.

ACTIVITY: Qi (energy/spirit) sticks

This is an activity to do in pairs. It uses meditation techniques and two straight(ish) sticks. It is about co-ordination and movement and non-verbal communication. It is also about letting your mind rest into the action and opening yourself up to a moment of peaceful reflection. These instructions have been adapted from those produced by Westonbirt Arboretum in England.

1. Find, two straight(ish) sticks of around 30 cm in length (this is flexible).
2. Standing opposite one another, horizontally balance one of your sticks between you using the end of your index fingers (so one person using left hand and the other their right hand).
3. Choose one person to start as the 'leader'. They begin to make small slow movements (they can just move the hand, arm, or their whole body) and the partner has to follow in order to prevent the stick from dropping.
4. When it feels right (and without communicating) the 'follower' takes over and becomes the leader.
5. Once you've had a go, make it more challenging by adding a second stick between the fingers on your other hand.
6. If you want to increase the challenge, try it with your eyes closed using your other senses to keep the sticks from falling.





Wellbeing

The importance of wellbeing

Wellbeing is the state of feeling positive about life, both in the moment and as you look forwards to your future. Concerns about the wider world can affect our sense of wellbeing and this is true for children as well as adults. Caring for our wellbeing is an essential part of learning to thrive and nature can play a role in improving our wellbeing.

Engaging with nature for our wellbeing has the extra benefit of encouraging more pro-environmental attitudes. Such attitudes can help to reduce the challenges or concerns that may threaten our sense of wellbeing in the first place. This connection is emphasised in research from the University of Derby Nature Connectedness project that states:

'The need to transform the human-nature relationship has never been more important. People who feel closer to nature are happier and more satisfied with life and are more likely to take actions that help wildlife and the environment.'

Learning to Thrive

Nature-based wellbeing can...

- ...benefit mental and physical health
- ...build emotional resilience
- ...encourage creativity and curiosity
- ...build healthy relationships with nature

The ideas shared in this element aim to support improved wellbeing through a closer connection with nature. Wellbeing is a very personal thing, and what works for one person, may not work for another. Our ideas are just suggestions that you can adapt, or be inspired by, to suit you.

Wellbeing pathways

[The Nature Connection Handbook](#) suggests that nature can contribute to our wellbeing in the following ways:

- Improved mental health
- Greater vitality and happiness
- More satisfaction with life
- Greater meaning and purpose in life

They go on to suggest five pathways to nature that focus on ways of being in, engaging with, and relating to nature. These five pathways provide the framework for sharing our wellbeing ideas.

The five pathways to nature connection

- 1 Senses**
Exploring and experiencing nature through all the senses
- 2 Beauty**
Seeking and appreciating the beauty of the natural world
- 3 Emotion**
Noticing and welcoming the feelings nature inspires
- 4 Meaning**
Celebrating and sharing nature's events and stories
- 5 Compassion**
Helping and caring for nature



Senses

Use your senses to connect and be at one with nature in your local environment. Here are some ideas to use or get inspired by:

Use **touch** to make direct contact with nature. Sense different textures, temperatures (e.g. tree, grass, moss, soil, rocks, water, air, leaves). Do the feelings change if you use different parts of your body-hands, cheek, forehead, feet?

Find a spot away from immediate noise and distractions and **listen** to the natural world around you. What do you hear (birds, plants moving, wind, rain, animals)? Stay longer and listen more deeply. Do new sounds appear? Where from?

Look around you and choose something in nature to focus on. What do you see? Zoom out (you may need to move further away) to take in the wider surroundings. What do you see now and how does it relate to what you first noticed? Now zoom in (you may need to move closer) to look in greater detail. What do you see now and how does what you see relate to what you have seen before?

Smell your local environment. What does it smell of? What is the dominant smell (e.g. soil, grass, leaves, flowers). Visit different parts of the nature around you and smell them more closely. What does moss smell like? What about a stick or a dry leaf? Does the smell change depending whether it is wet or dry, warm or cool?

NOTE: We have not given guidance or ideas for tasting as this will depend on your local environment and the season. There are also safety implications to be aware of so please check carefully if you choose to taste anything in nature, and if in doubt then don't.



Beauty

Noticing and appreciating the beauty and wonder that exists in our natural environments can make a positive contribution to our wellbeing and sense of purpose in life. Here are a few ideas:

Nature notes (or talk): Gather something to make notes with and explore your local environment making notes on what you appreciate and notice. You might like to use some sentence starters such as *"I love the way..."*, *"I'm amazed by..."*, *"I notice that..."*. If doing this as a pair then take turns to share what you appreciate/notice.

Nature "I spy...": A nature-based variation of the well known I spy game where the focus for each clue is on something natural.

Capturing nature: If you have access to a tablet, smartphone or digital cameras, then you could try to capture the beauty of nature within your setting by taking photos. You could share these when you return indoors. You could even print them out to make a display that keeps you connected to nature even when inside.

Sketching nature: An alternative form of the above idea if you do not have access to camera devices is to make a simple frame by cutting out a frame from scrap card. Use this to frame a scene in nature and then sketch what you see.



Emotion

Being in nature can create a range of emotions and not all of these may be positive. We should be aware of these (see box).

Our emotional responses to nature will largely depend on our previous experiences of connecting with nature and on the socializing influence this has had on us. If we encounter warnings of nature as 'dirty', 'dangerous' or 'disgusting' for example, we are likely to have a different emotional response to those whose engagement has been framed more around 'awe', 'wonder' and 'discovery'. These ideas encourage an engagement with our emotions:

Step outside: Take the simple action of stepping outside into nature. Relax your body (maybe close your eyes) and sense what you feel and how this makes you feel. What words would you use to describe your emotion/s?

Take a breather: If you can, find somewhere to lie down in nature. Spread your limbs out so that you make good contact with the ground and stare upwards towards the sky above you. What emotions does this connect with? Stay there for a little longer, relax your body even more, concentrate on slow and steady breathing through your nose, maybe close your eyes. Do your emotions change?

Picture this: This is an image-based activity that uses photos of nature and invites you to respond to them in terms of your emotions. You can access a set of [downloadable nature images here](#). Look at each in turn and share the emotions (feelings) that it stirs in you. There are no right answers here - it is about how you feel. If you can, try to share reasons for your feelings.

Biophilia and biophobia

When thinking about emotions it is useful to be aware of the concepts **biophilia** and **biophobia**. Nature connectedness is about our relationship with our natural environment. It is often approached with the assumption that we all share a positive attitude towards the natural world - this is the idea of biophilia.

Biophobia - a negative or fearful attitude towards the natural world - is also a real feeling for some people. A study by Spanish academics with young children suggests that from an early age children will use both positive and negative emotions in relation to nature with 'happiness' being the main emotion, but 'fear' being the next most common.



Meaning

Sharing what nature means to us or how we have engaged with nature in our lives (i.e. the meaning it has given us to date), can contribute to our wellbeing. Here are some ideas:

Story walk: Head outside with a partner and take a stroll in your local environment. Whilst walking take it in turns to share your personal story about 'your best experience in nature' and 'your worst experience in nature'. Was there anything common in your stories about nature? What do your stories say about how nature can make life meaningful?

Imagining nature: This is an art-based imaginative activity that encourages you to combine your knowledge of engaging with nature with your ideals of what that could mean. Close your eyes for a moment and imagine your 'ideal connection with nature'.



Once you have the image in your mind explore your ideal engagement with nature by asking questions such as

"Where are you?"

"What can you see/hear/smell?"

"What is the weather like?"

"What is happening around you and what are you doing?"

"Are you with anyone?"

"How do you feel?"

After a moment or two, open your eyes and use the ideas that came to mind to recreate your imagination through art - a collage (maybe using natural materials), a painting (perhaps using natural paints) or a sketch, or in any other way you choose.

Mark the moment: Use days in the natural cycle of life to celebrate nature. This might be the change of the seasons or the longest or shortest days if these are relevant where you are. Look at festivals, rituals, myths and folk stories that are connected to nature and bring meaning to your life. Which ones do you know of and how have you come across them? You could adapt 'I spy...' into a short game to do this too, by going outside to spy signs of Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter (dependent on the time of year) or choose other themes such as growth, birth, death, decay (looking at life cycles for example).

National nature: Many nations have links with nature through plants or animals. This can be true for regions too. What are the national emblems associated with countries/regions that are meaningful to you? You could look these up together if you don't know them. What about other countries you have a connection with, or are interested in?



Compassion

Demonstrating compassion for/with nature can be beneficial for our own wellbeing. Here are some ideas to think about compassion with nature:

Nature friendly: Think about how you could make your local environment more nature friendly. This might mean removing some things such as litter but may include making and adding things too such as sweeping leaves into a pile, hanging up bird feeders, putting out a dish to collect rainwater for animals to drink. It might include creating areas to enjoy nature such as a viewing area for birdwatching; a growing area to produce food, herbs etc.; a resting area to unwind and simply be in nature.

Action with nature: Find out what others are doing to support nature by researching local wildlife/nature organisations and groups. Find out if there are talks, open days or visiting opportunities to learn more about their role/work and their own nature stories of how they came to be involved.

Consuming nature: We depend on nature for many of the things we use and consume in our daily lives. Think about your own consumption of nature and whether there are choices you could make that would be more compassionate towards nature (e.g. choosing eco-friendly products, organic food or clothing, local rather than global suppliers, vegetarian or vegan diet etc.).



References and Credits

Noticing

[The Nature Connection Handbook](#) from the University of Derby

Connecting

Oak tree diversity

The Woodland Trust [Oak Trees and Wildlife](#)

Playing

The importance of play

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Five pathways to wellbeing

[The Nature Connection Handbook](#) from the University of Derby

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Olivos-Jara P, Segura-Fernández R, Rubio-Pérez C and Felipe-García B (2020) [Biophilia and Biophobia as Emotional Attribution to Nature in Children of 5 Years Old](#). Front. Psychol. 11:511. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00511

Credits

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