

Nearby Nature Activities

Meet a Tree Pair off. One partner is blindfolded, the other partner leads her to any tree that attracts her. The “blind” child explores her tree and feels its uniqueness. When time is called or the partner has finished exploring, lead her back to the beginning but by a different indirect route. Remove blindfold when everyone is back “home”. When everyone is back, the “blind” person tries to find her tree. Trade places and do it again. Encourages trust, cooperation, develops tactile learning skills.

LEADERSHIP TIPS: 1. Set boundaries, 30 yards in multiple directions is a good size. 2. Give specific suggestions: “Rub your cheek on the bark” “Can you put your arms around it” “Can you reach the lowest branch” “What does it smell like” “Are there any insects or lichen” “What’s it like around the bottom” “Is it smooth or rough” 3. Review techniques and safety considerations when leading a person who cannot see. 4. You’ll find that suddenly, as the girl searches for *her* tree, what was a forest becomes a collection of very individual trees.

EQUIPMENT: Blindfolds

Camera Pair off. One child is the photographer and one is the camera. The photographer looks around and points the camera. The camera makes a small circle with thumb and forefinger, looks through the lens and describes what she sees. Trade places and do it again. Share/discuss what did you see that was different, discoveries, do you look at things differently now that you’ve looked up close. Encourages creativity, develops observation skills.

LEADERSHIP TIPS: 1. Set boundaries 2. Encourage photographers to focus the camera for close ups (a section of bark), long shots (look at the sky through the branches) different angles (from the ground, far away) etc.

EQUIPMENT: None

That’s My Leaf Each camper finds a leaf and studies it for a minute or two. All leaves are put into a container and mixed up. Each girl finds her original leaf. Give permission to pick up a fallen leaf or pick one green leaf. Develops observation skills.

LEADERSHIP TIPS: 1. Set boundaries. Point out different trees (plants) in the area, different types of foliage. 2. Show a picture of poison oak leaf if appropriate. It is most unlikely that poison oak will be found in any developed camp area, but may be nearby off hiking trails. The G.S. mountain camps do have wild strawberry which looks similar. 3. Share/discuss what was special about your leaf. 4. Depending on group size, age level and skill; you can make the exercise more challenging by having some leaves in the bowl to mix with the ones they bring.

EQUIPMENT: Container to put leaves in (bowl, plastic, whatever). Poison Oak leaf picture as needed.

Sound Off Ask how animals communicate? (by sound) Does an animal have more than one sound? (alarm, find others of species, lead others) Explain the activity is to find another animal of the same species as yours by the sound. The object is for each pair with the same noisemaker to find each other and move to the safe zone. Spread out over the play area.

LEADERSHIP TIPS: 1. Use a large site that is obstacle free and quiet. Designate a safe zone. 2. Demonstrate noise maker. Mix up noisemakers so two alike are not next to each other when handing them out. OK to carefully open lid in safe zone to be sure you are a pair. If not a pair, rejoin the group. 3. Shout “Sound Off” to start. 4. Discuss What listening techniques did you use? Which noisemakers worked best for finding partner?

The game can be changed to demonstrate predator/prey relationships. Depending on size of group and age of girls at least one girl is a predator, the others are prey. Designate a capture zone and a safe zone. Everyone wears a bag mask which allows them to see their feet, but not

straight ahead. Ask what's a predator (an animal that captures and eats other animals) What's prey (an animal that predators eat). Spread out over the play area, put the bag masks on, hand each a noisemaker or predator card. The object is for the predator to tag prey by sound location while the prey searches for their partner and moves to the safe zone where they can remove the mask. Tagged prey take off their masks and go to the capture zone. The predator needs to make sure the prey knows they are captured, not just that they bumped into someone else.

Discuss – What happens to prey that make a lot of noise all the time? What was it like not being able to see ahead? If you made rule changes, what would they be and how would they affect the game? Try one!

EQUIPMENT: Prey noisemakers: a small container (film can or other) with different contents in each pair. Use a variety of things; salt, coins, rocks, acorns, dried beans, etc) Bag Mask: Paper sacks with holes in the side about where the persons' ears will be.

No Name Scavenger Hunt 1. Each small group (2 or 3 people) explores the area and describes five different objects the members find interesting. No name is to be written, just a set of descriptive words which identify the object. (smaller than a breadbox, rough texture, blue) 2. Regroup and the teams exchange lists so now each has a set of descriptions written by others. The second group tries to find (identify) the objects. 3. Recall teams and share findings.

LEADERSHIP TIPS: 1. Set boundaries 2. Discuss during the introduction how an object you are holding might be described to demonstrate the activity. 3. In the sharing ask were the descriptions adequate? Were some objects easier to find than others? How does this help you look at an area differently? 4. The 2nd team can talk to the 1st to see if they found the correct item.

EQUIPMENT: Paper and pencil for each group. Having a clipboard or piece of cardboard with a rubber band is helpful as a writing surface.

Explore Your World Scavenger Hunt Give each person/pair a copy of the list of items to find, a container to put them in or yarn to identify the location if not possible to bring it in, and a pencil to write on list for sharing.

1. The largest natural thing 2. The smallest natural thing 3. Something yellow 4. Something blue 5. The coolest place 6. The warmest place 7. The prettiest thing 8. Something with 6 legs 9. A seed 10. A perfectly straight natural thing. 11. A round natural thing. 12. Something soft 13. Something that changed the environment 14. Something that has no place in nature.

LEADERSHIP TIPS: 1. Set boundaries, 2. Talk about where you might use the yarn, when you might write something down eg largest natural thing might be a tree, the warmest place might be on a large rock in the sun. 3. Process the exercise; groups share what they found. Did more than one group find the same things? Which were the hardest to find? Etc.

EQUIPMENT: Paper bags for found items, paper and pencil, some strands of yarn. Be sure to clean up the yarn before you leave the site!!

Kims Game Use a tray, cookie sheet etc. Find at least 9 natural items from your site. Lay them out as if they were in the squares on a tic tac toe game. Cover with towel. Give group instructions – work individually or in pairs. They are to find each of the items you have in the display. It is more difficult if they are also to arrange them in the same order as you have on the display. Set the boundaries. What's the buddy rule? Must they stay together, or can each hunt for selected items? Uncover the tray, give the girls a few minutes to study the items. Recover the tray and let them start searching. Recall group when most seem to be finished. Each girl/pair share what they found. Process the exercise. Ask if they can name each item and describe its' role in nature.