



Ideas for nature engaging and nature enhancing practices with babies

Attentive



Be attentive to what babies are interested in, follow their lead and tune in to natural processes and cycles (such as weather, light and the seasons.)

- Explore fallen leaves by touching and crinkling them to see how they feel and listen to the noises they make.
- Bring leaves inside for further opportunities to explore them.
- Try to catch raindrops on your hand or your face.



Do attend to your everyday outdoor environment and become familiar with what it offers.

- Find somewhere comfy and pleasant to lie down on your back and look at the sky, clouds and nature overhead.
- Lift up stones, bark and leaves to search for minibeasts and hold them in your hand.
- Give yourself time to just stop and listen to what you can hear - birds, trains, cars, rain, wind...

Nurturing



Be a nurturer of babies' interest in natural environments, observing and valuing the connections they make, helping them to understand how everything links.

- Don't worry about resources, let the child take the lead in what they notice in their environment and talk about what you can see.
- Take your time. Stop to look every time a child shows an interest in the world around them.



Do model nurturing behaviours outdoors, showing how to protect and care for both humans and nature, exploring what they need to flourish.

- Grow edible plants and herbs and involve the children as much as possible in tending, eating and composting these.
- Provide bird feeders and water for birds to bathe in.
- Tend to plants and herbs by watering them, in the morning if possible.



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Responsive



Be responsive to babies' needs outdoors, value passive and slow ways of being outdoors to facilitate feeling, thinking, sleeping and sensory engagement.

- Offer bottles, snacks and lunch outdoors.
- Take off your shoes and socks and walk around barefoot to explore the textures outdoors.
- Provide cribs or comfy spaces for babies to crawl into when they feel sleepy.



Do respond to the specific needs of your outdoor environment, adding natural elements, creating wild spaces and supporting biodiversity.

- Take breadcrumbs outside after snack time to leave for the birds.
- Use sticks and bark to make a home for an insect.
- Sow wildflower seeds to attract pollinators and provide a habitat for insects.

Questioning



Be a questioner, observing how babies from different social and cultural backgrounds engage outdoors and be prepared to challenge dominant ideas of who belongs in nature.

- Take time to chat to parents about what they've noticed about how their child reacts outdoors.
- Notice if children appear to be reluctant to spend time outdoors and question why this might be.
- Start conversations with families about what the children have enjoyed doing outdoors at the setting.



Do question ideas about what counts as nature.

- If you spot weeds in your outdoor area, leave them there for the children to explore.
- Start a conversation about birds when you find a feather. How does it feel on the back of your hand?
- After dusk, go and look at the stars to see how many you can count. Sing a song about them.