

The Council of All Beings

Session Two for Children:

(The Council of all Beings is an activity which was modified from the book *Thinking Like a Mountain* by Joanna Macy, Arne Naess, John Seed and Pat Fleming for use with adults . Here we have further modified it as a home based activity which parents can use with their children, working together to become more interconnected with nature and to identify with endangered species.)

Purpose: The purpose of this exercise is to help children connect with and hear deep in their heart the cry of other species, especially those most in need of our help because their life is endangered and threatened with death (extinction).

Theme: We are all interrelated and interconnected as one species.

Introduction for Parents:

Young children have a strong connection with each other and with their animal friends. In this connection there is a sense of oneness. All life was created from the one source of energy, from the one seed of life. Therefore, every cell in our bodies is descended in an unbroken chain from the first cell that appeared on Earth 4 billion years ago through fish-like species which emerged from the oceans and learned to walk on the land. The scales of the reptiles gradually changed to fur as the reptiles became mammals, evolving through to the present. This evolutionary process tells us that in creation there is no separation, no independence. Young children have a sensitivity and sensibility which allows them to connect to the natural world in a deeper, fresher and more profound way than adults.

During this activity parents help children to

- ✓ interconnect with nature through nature walks and through these walks feel how nature reenergizes them and gives them a sense of freedom.
- ✓ tap into an energy in nature that calls their attention to see plants. This happened when their eyes find beautifully things. For example, it is the energy of a flower that attracts them to notice the flower. This is another way of thinking.
- ✓ distinguish between the words threatened or endangered and extinction
- ✓ know examples of which animals are threatened or endangered.

- ✓ identify with the feelings of animals and plants that are endangered
- ✓ speak from the perspective of animals to ensure their care and protection
- ✓ make a mask and wear it so as to help the child imagine that she/he is an endangered animal

A Family Walk through Nature in preparation for the Council of all beings:

Take a family walk in nature- Listen to the sounds of nature, to the voices of nature. As you walk let nature choose you and help you to feel some aspect of itself, maybe a beautiful flower or a bird luring you to notice it. Here you are being invited to think differently. Did you ever think that when you are attracted to look at a flower or something in nature that perhaps it is the energy from that flower that is attracting you to see it. It is this energy of the flower that is choosing you.

During your walk-discuss the fact that some animals and plants are endangered and some go into extinction. Discuss the difference between endangered and extinction with your children

Bring to your children's attention the feelings of animals that are endangered and, if they themselves were endangered they would be very frightened and would surely cry out for help. So too, some animals and plants are crying out for our help. You may discuss why they would be asking our help (we are the ones that are endangering them). One way to help them is to get in touch with the way you feel for animals when they are crying out for our help. Do they feel the cry of animals as their own cry.

When you return home after your walk you may watch the following video on Endangered Animals to further explain why animals are endangered.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2XdeLpm42i8>

After the video the children may want to ask a question or talk about something in the video. In your discussion you could focus on the child's feelings of empathy and compassion as well as on the information they have acquired about why animals are in endangered and what can be done to help the animals. Then invite the children to choose an animal that is endangered or threatened and help them decide how they can help that endangered animal or plant.

While discussing with the children which endangered animal they care most about, explain that to really feel and think like the animal they need to become that animal. In this way they will more easily identify with the terribly tear-filled and pleading feelings of the animal.

Help the children prepare to become that animal by making a mask and dressing like the chosen animal. The following pictures and video may be helpful in doing this.



<http://www.earthwell.com.au/for-children-make-a-mask-of-your-friend-in-nature>

Next, prepare the children to take action. They understand that by being an animal they can more truly plead on that animal's behalf and speak from the perspective of the animal itself rather than from their own perspective.

When all have finished their masks, they form their own Council of All Beings and go to meet with the Town Council and government officials. (The Town Council and government members would, of course, be parents and other adult family members)

A Meeting of the Council of All Beings with the Town Council

(https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#section_query/in%3Ainbox/p2?projector=1)

The children, masked and dressed as animals now, one by one, introduce themselves and tell the Town Council who they are as a Council of All Animal Beings and give their animal names. One by one, they explain what their lives are like, and how they spend their time. After each Being speaks, a member of the Town Council responds by saying, "We hear you, ____ (name of Animal Being)."

After all the Beings have introduced themselves they take turns speaking again, this time telling the Council what is happening to them, including how badly they have been treated by humans and how humans are putting their lives in danger. Once again, a member of the Council responds by saying, "We hear you, ____ and we will try to change and be kinder to you. We offer you protection and we will take greater care to make sure we do you no more harm (name of Being)."

The Promise: After each Being has spoken for the last time, the children remove their masks. As each of them takes off the mask, they turn their masks toward themselves and together with the Town Council members and government officials they make a promise to change one aspect of their lives that hurts their Animal Being.

Together they say, “These promises made shall not be broken.”

Conclusion: The Town Council then thanks the Beings who have come together to share their feelings, dreams, hopes with them and government members and asks them to stay in touch so that they all will remember that they are all one family.

Family Game to Celebrate:



Endangered species game:

Directions for the game can be found here

<https://www.amnh.org/explore/ology/biodiversity/endangered-species-game2>

The Board Game is attached in Hard Copy