

SDG3 Eco-Agency: Supporting Youth-Led Climate Action



Standalone TY Unit

Lesson 9 Exploring What we CAN do Action 2 - Connect: The More than Human World

Subject Areas:
Climate Action and Sustainable Development, CSPE, SPHE

Lesson Title and Summary: Exploring What We CAN do Action 2: Connect - The More Than Human World

With the abundance of information available 24/7, eco-anxiety can be triggered by people immersing themselves in excessive information gathering and social media scrolling. Connecting with the more than human world enables us to develop our own "Resilience Toolbox", helping use to have choice and voice in causes we believe in that align with our values and those of the UN Sustainable Development goals and the Earth Charter.

Vocabulary:

Connection, Eco therapy, Interconnected, Mandala, Mindfulness, Nature,

In this lesson, the learner will:

- Develop understanding of mindfulness
- Understand the benefits of nature connection and eco-therapy
- Experience mindfulness and nature connection meditation exercise
- Create a nature mandala

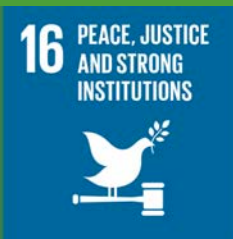
Materials

- Teacher's Guide: Be Calm, Connected and Creative
- Worksheet: Be Calm, Connected and Creative



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ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

Activity 1 Connect: Mindfulness (15 mins)

1. Take learners to a quiet and peaceful outdoor space.
2. Invite learners to sit in a large circle and explain that as a group they are going to be guided through a mindfulness exercise.
3. Explain that although talking with others and sharing thoughts and feelings is important, learning how to self soothe and self regulate is equally important.
4. Encourage learners to take a deep inhale and exhale before starting and when ready begin.
5. Choose either to dictate the script yourself from the Teacher's note: Mindfulness Meditation Script or play and join in yourself in participating in the recorded guided exercise. See Teacher's Notes for information of the choices.

Activity 1 Connect: Mindfulness and Resilience (10 mins)

1. Ask learners to pair up and when you share two words have them briefly share with a partner what their understanding is of each word. Share the words: "Mindfulness" and "Resilience"
2. Share the mindfulness explanation and distribute one copy per pair of the Worksheet and ask learners to look at the Mindfulness activity
3. Go through instructions and check understanding then ask learners to share thoughts on how therapeutic support and creativity might prove helpful and how learning about the which of the Sustainable Development Goals or Earth Charter pillars they have learned about might align with supporting resilience building.

Activity 3 Connect: Be Creative (25 mins)

1. Using the Worksheet: Be Calm, Connected and Creative's Mandala Support section, explain what a mandala is and the difference between a traditional mandala and a nature mandala, key is the impermanence of the nature mandala.
2. Task learners with gathering materials and invite them to make their own Nature Mandalas either individually or in pairs or groups.

REFLECTIVE EXERCISE: 3-2-1 (10 mins)

- Three things they feel they have learnt from the tasks
- Two things they found most interesting and would like to explore more
- One – their opinion they have about the tasks

Use Post-its or a mentimeter poll www.mentimeter.com to gather learners' reflections

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REDUCTION / EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Reduction: For a shorter class, complete only Activity 1 and 2 only allowing learners to explore the site / location and gather where possible / appropriate materials for their nature mandala, which they can complete in another class or a linked class e.g. Art.

Extension: For a longer class, allow 40 minutes for Activity 3

MEDIA BOX: (materials, online video links, extra resources, case studies etc)

Article: What is Ecoanxiety, and how can mindfulness help? <https://www.mindful.org/what-is-ecoanxiety-and-how-can-mindfulness-help/>

Video: How to turn eco-anxiety into positive action [32:52min]
<https://www.bupa.co.uk/newsroom/ourviews/eco-anxiety>

Animation: Let's talk about anxiety [4:33min] <https://youtu.be/dknTQktH5Z0> [

Video: Tara Brach Meditation On Facing the Fear of Climate Change (2022). [10:19min]
<https://youtu.be/MCavu3qcsAE>

Mindfulness Script: <https://www.metaphoricallyspeaking.com.au/mindfulness-in-nature/>

Article: Sand Mandala in Tibet and Its Profound Philosophy <https://www.tibettravel.org/tibetan-arts/sand-mandala.html>

LOCAL TRIP / EXPERTISE / ADDITIONAL WORK AND ASSESSMENTS

Encourage learners to spend 1 hour per day for one week in natural spaces and engaging in a guided meditation of their choice followed by noticing and photographing patterns they observe in nature. Have learners share their observations on a safe collective forum or the school's digital space in a class folder.

Encourage learners to keep a Nature blog or journal documenting their observations and thoughts see Dara McAnulty's Diary of a Young Naturalist's Blog for inspiration <https://daramcanulty.com/blog/>



Activity 1: Connect Mindfulness and Nature

For this activity you will need a calm and peaceful natural outdoor space like a field, park, beach or forest.

- Ensure learners are appropriately clothed and have comfortable footwear for being outdoors.
- Ensure you have the necessary permissions.

Guided meditation exercise choices are:

Choice 1: dictate the mindfulness meditation script exactly as written. Remember to pace yourself and use a calm and welcoming tone.

Choice 2: play the recording sound only of the guided meditation by the well known psychologist, meditation teacher and author - Tara Brach. See Media Box for link. For this a device and speaker is required.

Mindfulness and time spent in natural spaces and around the other than human world has been said to help people cope with eco-anxiety through building psychological resilience.

Mindfulness Meditation Script - Bianca Peel 2023

Welcome to this mindfulness meditation session designed to help you connect with nature. Find a comfortable seated or lying position, close your eyes if you wish, and take a few deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. Let's begin.

1. Start by feeling the ground beneath you, connecting with the Earth. Visualise roots extending from your body into the soil, anchoring you to the ground. You are firmly planted, just like the trees in the forest.
2. Shift your focus to your breath. Inhale slowly through your nose, feeling the fresh, crisp air entering your body. Exhale gently, releasing any tension or worries with your breath. Imagine that with each breath, you're absorbing the energy of the natural world around you.
3. Let's listen to the sounds of nature. Notice the rustling of leaves, birds singing, the distant sound of water. Take a moment to appreciate the symphony of life that surrounds you.
4. Bring your attention to your body. Starting with your toes, gradually work your way up, focusing on each body part. If you find any tension or discomfort, imagine it melting away like ice in the warmth of the sun. Feel your body relaxing.
5. Picture yourself in a beautiful natural setting. You're standing at the edge of a tranquil forest. The trees rise high around you, and you can smell the earthy scent of the woods. Sunlight filters through the leaves, casting dappled shadows on the forest floor.
6. As you continue to visualise, imagine yourself taking a gentle walk through the forest. Feel the softness of the ground beneath your feet, hear the leaves crunching as you step. Touch the



rough texture of a tree trunk with your hand. Embrace the sensation of oneness with the natural world.

7. Take a moment to express gratitude for the natural world. Think about all the beauty and wonder that nature offers. Send a silent thank you to the environment for its gifts, and consider what actions you can take to protect and preserve it.
8. Slowly, begin to bring your awareness back to the room. Wiggle your fingers and toes, and when you're ready, open your eyes.

Thank you for joining this meditation and taking the time to connect with nature. Remember that you can always return to this practice whenever you need to find peace and connection with the natural world. Have a wonderful day.

Activity 3

Go over the Mandala and Nature Mandala examples section of the worksheet and ensure learners understand the key difference between a traditional mandala and a nature mandala

Nature Mandala Instructions:

1. Collect natural materials of different shapes, sizes and colours e.g. pebbles, leaves, flower petals
2. Ask learners to find a sheltered spot outdoors to make their artwork.
3. Ask learners, to sort their materials into shapes, sizes, textures and colours etc.
4. They should then pick a natural object as the centre of their circle
5. They should then begin to create an inner circle with objects that are connected by shape, colour or category e.g. leaves or other objects.
6. Continuing in themes, learners begin to work their way outwards expanding their circle until they are finished
7. Ask learners to take a photograph as a memento of their artwork and upload to their shared digital classroom.

Learners can continue to experiment with different patterns, natural materials or colours



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Mindfulness is a type of meditation in which you focus on being intensely aware of what you're sensing and feeling in the moment, without interpretation or judgment. Practicing mindfulness involves breathing methods, guided imagery, and other practices to relax the body and mind and help reduce stress.

Mayo Clinic

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TASK: In pairs consider the suggested three ways below

- brainstorm and discuss actions people can take in each way to start building their resilience toolkit
- share your thoughts with their partner on why time in nature can be beneficial to help cope with anxiety and eco anxiety.





What is a Mandala

A mandala is beautiful design that's just a circle, named by an old language called Sanskrit. Picture in your mind a special sacred symbol that people in many different places and from diverse backgrounds love. It looks like the sun's heat, the moon's light, and the Earth's skin.

In Hinduism and Buddhism, the mandala is seen as a bright and important symbol. It's like a door to the universe and the very core of existence. Its elegant circle shape tells us about how everything is connected in the web of life. It's a gentle reminder that all the parts of life are woven together into a big, beautiful picture.



Tibetan Bhuddist Sand Mandala



The Nature Mandala

Similar to spiritual mandalas, nature mandalas creations reflect the idea of unity, forming a beautiful design that represents oneness. These mandalas are made using materials from nature, like leaves, petals, twigs, and stones, gifts from the Earth. Imagine an object, carefully designed with patterns that have the rhythm of life embedded. They always have a central feature with radiating and concentric circles as core aspects of the design.

Nature Mandala Examples





A meaningful activity:

recognizes our connection to the earth and all its living things.



A way to express gratitude:

allows us the space and time to intentionally express gratitude for our earth and all its living things.

A reminder of the connections in life:

reminds us that everything is connected.

A learning opportunity:

learn about the earth and patterns found in nature and explore art, science, religion and life itself.

A time to observe natural patterns:

the chance to observe natural patterns like seasons, moon phases, the tides, and life and death.



A fun and creative activity:

can be done independently or with a larger group.



MATERIALS

- Use organic materials found in nature. Things like twigs, leaves, grasses, flowers, berries, pinecones, and acorns work well.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Pick a peaceful place out in nature to create your nature mandala. Then, you will need to gather some organic materials around you to use. Things like twigs, leaves, grasses, flowers, berries, pinecones, and acorns work really well.
- 2. To create your nature mandala, place a meaningful item in the center. Then start placing other items you gathered near the center first and continue moving outward from the center until you've created a circular design.
- 3. Continue making patterns until your items are used up and your nature mandala looks complete. And remember, you can create it however you like! You could use bright colors or muted earth tones. Make it big or small. Make it as simple or complex as you want.