

MEET-A-TREE

Quote:

Consider a tree for a moment. As beautiful as trees are to look at, we don't see what goes on underground - as they grow roots. Trees must develop deep roots in order to grow strong and produce their beauty. But we don't see the roots. We just see and enjoy the beauty. In much the same way, what goes on inside of us is like the roots of a tree.

-Joyce Meyer

Objectives:

1. Foster the development of a personal relationship with nature, specifically trees.
2. Build a community of learners with a shared experience.
3. Enhance trust between participants.

Time for activity: 30 minutes

Complementary programs in The Nature Kit:

- Build-A-Tree
- Planting a seed
- Reading "The Apple Tree's Discovery"

When to play: Day

Where to play: Outside. In an area with trees.

Age level: 9 years and up. This activity can be adapted for use with any age.

Players needed: 4-20 (or more)

Materials needed:

A copy of "The Lorax," by Dr. Seuss

Bandanas

-You can use shirts, hats, etc. to blindfold the person if you do not have blindfolds.

-Older campers (13 and up) can simply keep their eyes closed.

A few copies of the quote by Joyce Meyer, to be used in the discussion section (optional).

Hints for success:

- ✓ Read "The Lorax" (by Dr. Seuss) out loud to yourself before the program, in order for you to get comfortable with Dr. Seuss's tongue twisting rhymes.
- ✓ Try reading "The Apple Tree's Discovery" (A program in the **The Nature Kit**).
- ✓ If you use this program in conjunction with the "All Aboard" program in the **The Nature Kit**, a tree can be thought of as a planet, or a home for animals. You can make the tarp a metaphor for space on a tree.

Activity:

- Gather the participants in an open field or under a tree. Have them sit in a circle.
- Read "The Lorax" by Dr. Seuss and use the following questions:
 - Have you heard this book before?
 - Why do you like/dislike this book?
 - What is ironic about the "Once-ler's" name?

- He only used things once before they were ruined.
 - What's wrong with only using things once before throwing them away?
 - What is the problem for all the animals?
 - What would you do if you had a "truffula" tree seed? Sell it? Plant it? Other ideas?
 - Do you think this conveys anything happening in our world or is it just a story?
 - Why, why not?
- Have participants pair off and give each pair a blindfold.
- Explain these directions:
- One person in each pair will get blindfolded.
- The sighted participant leads their "blind" partner to a tree that interests them – s/he should lead his/her partner to the tree in an indirect way to make it more interesting.
- **Make sure the sighted participant takes care of their sight-impaired partner. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT. MAKE SURE YOUR CAMPERS ARE SAFE.**
- The blindfolded participant explores the tree with all their sense except sight, trying to imprint the tree's characteristics in his/her mind so they will be able to find the tree again. Encourage the participant's exploration by suggesting that s/he:
 - Feel for plants growing on or around it.
 - Feel for signs that animals use the tree.
 - Feel the bark. How thick is it? Is it rough or smooth?
 - Feel for interesting branches or knots in the tree.
 - Put your arms around the tree to measure it.
 - Smell the tree.
 - To add humor, you can suggest participants can lick the tree, kiss the tree, hug the tree, speak with the tree, tell the tree a secret... etc.
- Once the blindfolded participant feels they know the tree well (after 2-3 minutes), their sighted partner will lead her/him back to the starting place.
 - Encourage participants to take a different route back, stepping over imaginary rocks, ducking under pretend branches, etc. – make it a fun challenge (but not too hard) for the blindfolded participant to find his/her tree.
- Once back at the starting point, remove the blindfold and the participant tries to find the tree with his/her eyes open by walking around the trees and trying to find their tree.
- When they find their tree, or after a few minutes the partners switch roles and play the game again.
- When everyone has had their chance to 'Meet-A-Tree,' gather everyone back together to debrief the activity using the questions below.

Discussion:

Ask your participants the following questions to engage them in conversation:

- Each participant can lead the group to his/her tree to showcase something unique about it. This can take a while, so you may ask for only 2-3 people to show their trees.

- What was similar between the findings of the two participants? What was different?
- What senses did you use to explore your tree? What methods did you use to figure out which tree was yours once you opened their eyes?
 - Memory of your path?
 - Smell of the area?
 - Feeling plants around the tree, etc?
- Are there characteristics of your trees that help you understand them?
 - E.G. A nook used as a dwelling place for animals, leaves as the place of conversion of carbon dioxide to oxygen, roots holding the soil in place, etc.?
- How do you think people are like trees?
- Why are trees important to us?
- Have you ever “met” a tree before? Where? When? Why?
- Do you have a favorite tree? Is it a certain type of tree or an individual tree?
 - Where is it?
 - How did you “meet” it?
 - Do you ever do anything for the tree?
 - Does the tree do anything for you?
- Have you ever planted a tree before? Why did you plant it?
- Revisit the quote. Have participants say what this quote means in their own words. You may want to make a few copies of the quote, hand it out to participants, and have them discuss it.