

Nature Painting, *Start Your Morning*

AUTHOR(S):	Daniel Abramson
SUMMARY:	Participants will start their day with awe and wonder by looking closely at nature and by creating simple watercolour images. - <i>Submitted by Daniel Abramson</i>
TOPIC(S):	Tefillah (Prayer), Mindfulness, Nature, Visual Art
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will learn how to incorporate art into a nature-based mindfulness practice that they can do at camp.
AUDIENCE:	This program is best done in small groups or about 10-15 participants. Participants of any age can enjoy this activity.
TIMING:	60 minutes
APPENDICES:	Brachot for nature
MATERIALS NEEDED:	Black Crayons or Black Oil Pastels Watercolour Paint Containers for water Paintbrushes Small empty slide frames or cardboard cut into frame shapes
SET-UP DETAILS:	This program is best done outdoors, so making a rain plan is advisable. Participants should have clipboards or hard surfaces to work on. Large rock or bare ground often work fine, but consider the location where participants will settle to draw and paint.

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

5 minutes: Practicing unclosing your eyes

Ask participants to sit in a circle and close their eyes. Tell them that they'll be sitting like this for a few minutes and that they should focus on noticing everything that can about the environment with all their senses except for sight.

Explain that "Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel used to say that we go through life with our vision obscured with a latticework of memorized knowledge. He said "The world is full of wonders, special radiance, and marvelous secrets, but all it takes is a small hand held over the eye to hide it all." Then let everyone sit, and listen, and feel, and smell with eyes closed for 5 minutes.



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Explain that “As artists, it is our goal to see with clarity, and to actively uncover our eyes so we will really feel what it feels like to open our eyes and notice what we see when we learn to remove our small hands from over our eyes.”

10 minutes: Framing the subject

The facilitator explains that artists are constantly thinking about what is and isn't seen in a frame. Artists make choices about what is worth noticing. In this way, framing guides our attention to what is important. In a similar way, some *brachot* (blessings) are meant to help us direct our attention.

The facilitator reads a few of the *brachot* for nature, and explains that the goals of this session will be to find our own images of awe and wonder and to use our artwork to record them. In this way, our work can become something akin to visual *brachot*.

30 minutes: Making our Masterpieces Part 1 – Resist and Watercolor

Participants receive a piece of watercolor paper, oil pastels, and an ice-cube tray with watercolor paints in each cube. Everyone chooses something amazing to paint and uses the oil pastels to create the outlines of the image. Once the outlines are complete, they will use the water color paints to fill in the background and the inside of all the shapes. Participants can make several paintings if they want, but encourage everyone to go slow and focus on details.

15 minutes: Gallery Walk

Participants are invited to bring their work together and to arrange all the pieces into an informal gallery. Participants spend a few minutes looking at each other's art work and are then invited to share their experiences with the group. Conclude by asking participants “When might this activity be useful at camp?”

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

This program is meant to be very transportable. It is a great idea to make a box with all the materials needed so that you can bring the box with you into a nice space somewhere at camp.