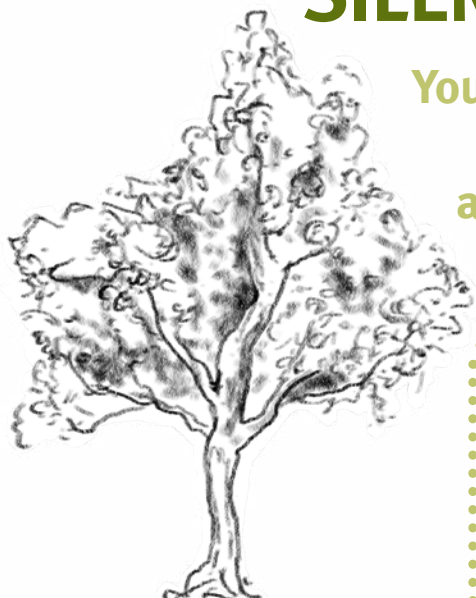


SILENCE UNDER THE TREE

You will merge with nature only
when you are alone
and for a long enough time



Goal: The children will gradually discover what it is like to be outside in a peaceful and quiet way. They will experience real nature therapy and enjoy it in their own unique way.

How long: 30–45 minutes

Who: 5–99 (all those who are not afraid to be by themselves in the woods for a while)

Where: A place with trees, a large park or preferably a woodland

When: All year round

You need: Nothing (optionally children can be offered a seat, magnifying glass, mirror, pencil and paper)

1. ALONE WITH NATURE

Our relationship with nature is formed gradually and is intimate. Nature means something different for each of us and the best way to find that meaning is completely alone, for as long as possible and in silence. When a child stays alone in the woods (when they are not lost and not wandering away), the child begins to get acquainted with nature in their own way. Some children examine nature, observe ants or leaves against the light. Some lie down, close their eyes and listen, some stare up into the crown of a tree.

2. HOW TO DO IT?

No one should be afraid; they must not feel abandoned. Smaller children should always be in sight, older ones can find a place on the map and stay there for an hour. You can accompany the children to their place in the woods and then collect them again an hour later. You can mark the route with coloured streamers and place a ribbon of a different colour every 100 m so that the children can stop at a place and stay until they are picked up but they know they can leave at any time by following the streamers back.

The children don't need anything at this point. Someone might want to explore the world around them with a magnifying glass, look through a mirror, some might want to write things down, some might need to paint, some will wish to lie on a mat and look into the crown of a tree – in any case they can choose whatever items they may need before they head out.

The longer you spend time alone in nature and in the wilderness, the more often you do this and the more alone you are, the stronger your bond with nature will grow. If a forest is your wilderness, the bond to nature will be through trees, forest birds, moss and lichens.

TIP: A child must feel safe if they are testing their experience in the woods and under some trees for the first time. They must not feel cold, hungry, afraid or lost and there must be no danger around. Experienced children (e.g. Scouts) can be left outside in the rain, or for a few hours at night; they need to get out of their comfort zone and have a more intense experience (dawn, morning birdsong, handmade tea from forest herbs, building a rain shelter, etc.).

3. LOOK BACK

The silence and time spent alone in nature is very personal so it is advisable to choose a gentle and voluntary form of sharing. Only those who want to can say a little but all that is needed is to share any pictures, ideas, written words or other expressions created during the time alone in nature. If the group manages to do this, they may sit together within some trees close by and be silent for a while so that everyone can recall what they found in the silence of nature.

EVALUATION OF THE ACTIVITY'S GOAL (EVIDENCE OF LEARNING)

Each child tried to be outside for a while alone (safely, comfortably, in the agreed space, maybe within sight).

The children experienced what it is like to be outside “only” in peace, silence and listening.

The children strengthened their relationship with nature through the personal and pleasant contact with the forest.

They found out that the forest is beautiful, majestic and that they may wish to come back to their chosen place.

In the group, the children had the opportunity to reflect on and share their experiences if they wished to.

