

Nurturing the Body, Mind & Spirit

EDUCATING THE HEART



THROUGH NATURE ART

Rediscovering the wonders of Life around us

Introduction

“Every artist dips his brush in his own soul, and paints his own nature into his pictures.”

—Henry Ward Beecher



The Arts and time in Nature are fundamental to a child's development - combined they provide the child with creative explorations that help nurture their whole being - **body, mind, heart and spirit.**

Method and Practice:

I take my inspiration from the Natural World, ever since I was a very young child I have been in awe of nature, that sense of wonder and curiosity about the natural world has never left me, it has grown deeper with age. My work is deeply based on my belief that nature and art are interwoven in us, they are part of what makes us human and when we are separated from either, it creates an in-balance. Mother Nature embodies everything I know to be true...love, beauty, creativity, purity, soul, breath, sustenance.

This Nature Art Program is based on my own early childhood, my personal experiences as a mother of 3 and my experience running an outdoor nature-based art classroom for 8 years for age groups - 5 -7 years (we frequently had both younger and older children join us for the day) The nature art processes and activities can be adapted for younger and older age groups.



The nature art examples in this program are invitations for each child (and educator) to create their very own unique art. To be inspired, a starting point. During the creative process, the child begins to form “**relationships**” with the art materials and the natural materials. It is through this journey of expressing their individual feelings and ideas that they form their very *own unique Art Style*.

You will discover how one playful nature based art exploration leads into another organic creation and the dance is afoot...a most joy-filled journey and so it goes on flowing from one creation to the next. It is my spirit and imagination that unlock the stories that are secretly hidden in the treasure gifted from our Mother Earth, waiting for the right moment you too can unlock the beautiful stories through playful, creative exploration using mediums of your choice - the possibilities are infinite.

As you journey through the program you will begin to form your own personal art style too and you will soon begin to visualize wonderful art projects and art explorations for your students to experience. The process is what gives the most joy.

At Educating the Heart we believe in the freedom of expression and provide children opportunities to explore different art mediums, art forms and experiment at our own individual pace

Art is like play, we give children the freedom to run wild and free, to follow their own curiosity and interests. To explore many different mediums, to help form relationships with the art materials so that when invited to create a product they feel confident and excited to do so.. Over time, each student begins to form their own unique art style and a deep appreciation for the Arts and a love and respect for each other and the natural world and all its inhabitants.



To help explain my method and practice, I would like to share with you two short passages, one from Rachel Carson charming book - A Sense of Wonder and the other is from one of my favourite authors Thich Nhat Hahn poem - "Interbeing" - Please take a moment to view both videos below:

VIDEO ONE

VIDEO TWO

A Sense of Wonder by Rachel Carson

If children are to keep alive their inborn sense of wonder, they need the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with them the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in. For those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. Parents often have a sense of inadequacy when confronted with a world of complex physical nature, inhabited by a life of various and unfamiliar that it seems hopeless to reduce it to order and knowledge. In a mood of self-defeat, they exclaim, How can I possibly teach my child about nature - why, I don't even know one bird from another!



Rachel Carson believed that for the child, and for the parent seeking to guide him, it is not half so important to know as to feel. And I wholeheartedly agree. If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow.

Rachel continues with - The years of early childhood are the time to prepare the soil. Once the emotions have been aroused a sense of the beautiful, the excitement of the new and unknown, a feeling of sympathy, pity, admiration or love, then we wish for knowledge about the object of our emotional response. Once found, it has lasting meaning. It is more important to pave the way for the child to want to know than to put him on a diet of facts that he is not ready to assimilate.

This passage highlights the lack of confidence parents experience when taking their children outdoors, this is true for some educators too. This is also applicable to some educators in regards to arts their lack of confidence, not being an artist.

Creating art in nature evokes joy, sparks imagination and laughter, awe and wonder, love, peace, contentment and enthusiasm.

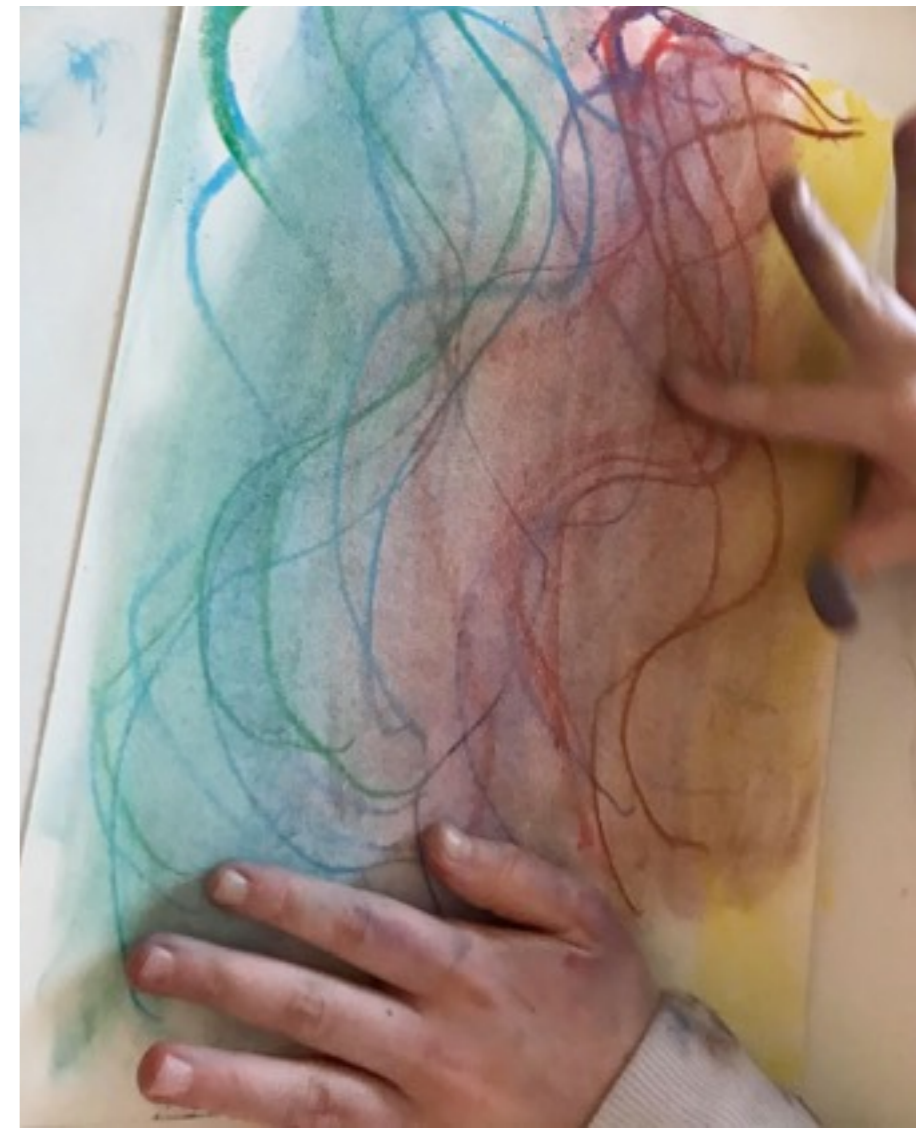
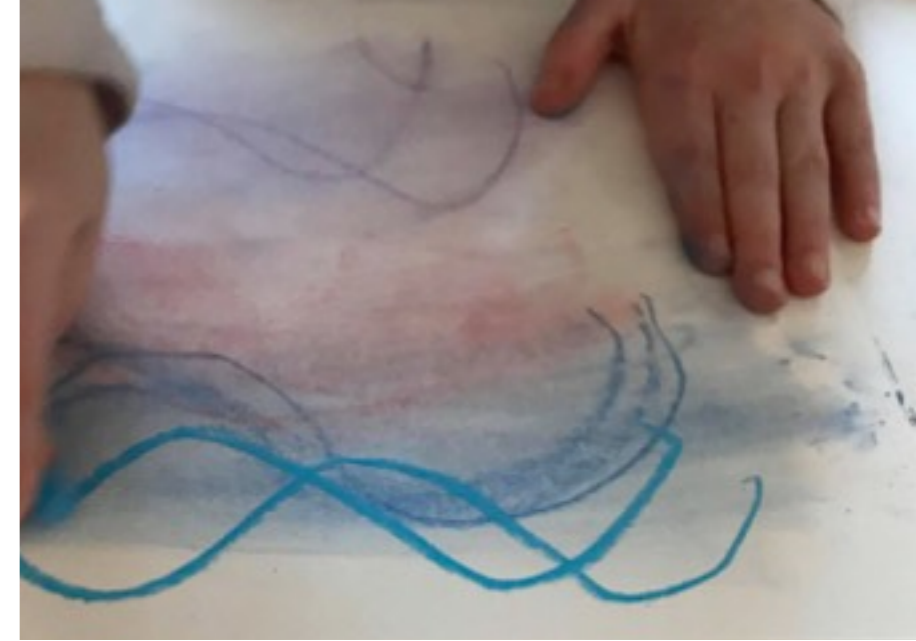


Creativity is at the core of being Human - Richard Wagamese

The natural world for me - is alive with the Arts; music; poetry and the abundant stories of the land. It is the wild organic arts that I wish to share with my students both young and old so that they too can feel the love, appreciate the beauty and wonder of the world, and express their feelings, thoughts and ideas; helping to develop their curious minds, grow a love and understanding of the arts and their unique way in which they experience, view and express the world around them.

Nature is forever inviting us to play, explore and create. I believe this to be one of the most natural, pure, organic ways of learning, through creative play that explores many mediums and art forms, enabling us to express our creative outputs.

Poetry is powerful - the second passage is about our interconnectedness and I believe if all children learned this poem at school along with their teachers and parents; the world would indeed be a happier and more peaceful place. The first time I read this poem - it stirred my creativity, and I immediately began planning an art project using the passage as our focus for creative expression and which could infuse art into every subject. (The Music and Spirit of the Trees).. We explore this inspiring poem later in the program.



BUILDING CONFIDENCE and an appreciation for the Arts

My findings over the years after running art workshops in many different schools both here in BC, Canada and Britain was that some educators lacked confidence in taking the children outdoors and equally some educators lacked confidence in their own creativity. This may stop the educator from sharing outdoor time and certain art projects that are fundamental to a child's development. I also found most art was cookie cut, rushed and was almost always product over process.Â

Addressing these issues: Nature Art by combining nature with art we can help the educator reawaken their deep- rooted connection to the natural world and their unique language with which the arts ignites. I have found this nature based art process incredibly successful in building confidence and awareness. Helping educators fall in love with nature and the arts is a joy-filled experience. We protect what we love!!!

Infusing the arts into all subjects is possible, we just need to put our imaginations to work. This is an incredibly fun and joy-filled experience, exploring possibilities and learning along side our students. Playful nature art helps develop a child's unique perspective and individual style of creative expression.

We are learning through our senses as we play, observe, explore and investigate the changing seasons throughout the year. Our senses allow us to grow, to feel, to protect ourselves, and to enjoy the world and appreciate its beauty.

First, we need to realise we are all artists, to be creative is to be human. It is in our DNA Secondly, we need to understand that we are part of nature, we are not separate from the natural world.



PLAY IS EVERYTHING!

We learn through Play and Nature Invites us to Play...Explore, Imagine, Create!



Childhood is a time of Wonder. A time to explore the natural world through our senses - nature invites us to be creative. Creativity is brought to life in children's exploration of and relationship to the natural world. It is our relationships that hold true to a joy-filled learning.

In this program you will discover how you can combine nature and art in ways that provide opportunities for the students' curiosity to engage their minds, their imaginations to take flight and their creativity to blossom and flourish, gifting great joy in expressing their ideas, thoughts and emotions through playful creative adventures.

When your heart is fully awakened you hear the music, the poetry, the love, the invitation to dance with nature and when you do, the music, the love, the beauty seeps into every part of your being and how can you not feel inspired to create...it is an organic flow of love; of spirit.

Play Explore Imagine Create

Rediscovering Our Connection



Our first step on this beautiful journey together is to identify ourselves as part of nature.

Building confidence and contentment by connecting to nature.

In our increasingly busy world of technology we tend to lose sight of the small things in life. We rarely take time to connect to nature. And yet - we are nature, we depend on nature to survive, nature is the source of our food, our water, our air.

We find a constant source of health and happiness through nature when we understand our connection. In this chapter we begin our journey by rediscovering our connection.

- Walking Barefoot – establishing the physical and spiritual connection.
- Journey Stick - To help you walk through life.
- Be the Light Meditation - Happiness Pebble - Mindful exercises designed to tap into the creative energy of nature.
- The Creative Pulse – Discovering the creativity within. Nature Journal.
- Expanding the creative mind



Section 2

Let us take a walk barefoot on this sacred journey

Walking barefoot allows us to really connect with our Mother Earth.



Walk and touch peace every moment.

Walk and touch happiness every moment.

Each step brings a fresh breeze. Each step makes a flower bloom.

Kiss the Earth with your feet.

Bring the Earth your love and happiness.

The Earth will be safe when we feel safe in ourselves. - Thich Nhat Hanh



A photograph of children playing in a sandy field. In the foreground, a young girl with blonde hair, wearing a blue and white long-sleeved shirt and a blue knit hat, is crawling on the sand. Behind her, another child in a light blue knit hat is also crawling. In the background, two other children in orange shirts are visible. The text "Barefoot is Best" is overlaid in white on the right side of the image.

Barefoot
is Best

Section 3

Walking

“To walk through the world, with a sense of peace in the heart, feeling simple happiness beneath the worries of the day, touching the earth and being touched by the earth, seeing and encountering without constricting the awareness, secure enough to know ourselves, where we are, what we are part of... we are doing walking meditation..”



This passage on “walking meditation” is from Thich Nhat Hanh’s wonderful book “Love Letters to Earth” - Parallax Press



Our daily walk at the beginning of class



The sense of freedom we feel when out walking quenches our soul.



Your Steps Are Most Important

The most important thing in life is to find peace of mind and happiness, and then to share it with other people and with all beings. In order to have peace and joy, you must succeed in having peace within each of your steps. Your steps are the most important thing. They decide everything.

You Can Do It

Walking meditation is practicing meditation while walking. It can bring you joy and peace while you practice it. Take short steps in complete relaxation; go slowly with a smile on your lips, with your heart open to an experience of peace. You can feel truly at ease with yourself. Your steps can be those of the healthiest, most secure person on earth. All sorrows and worries can drop away while you are walking. To have peace of mind, to attain self-liberation, learn to walk in this way. It is not difficult. You can do it. Anyone can do it who has some degree of mindfulness and a true intention to be happy.

Going Without Arriving

In our daily lives, we usually feel pressured to move ahead. We have to hurry. We seldom ask ourselves where it is that we must hurry to. When you practice walking meditation, you go for a stroll. You have no purpose or direction in space or time. The purpose of walking meditation is walking meditation itself. Going is important, not arriving. Walking meditation is not a means to an end; it is an end. Each step is life; each step is peace and joy. That is why we don't have to hurry. That is why we slow down. We seem to move forward, but we don't go anywhere; we are not drawn by a goal. Thus we smile while we are walking.

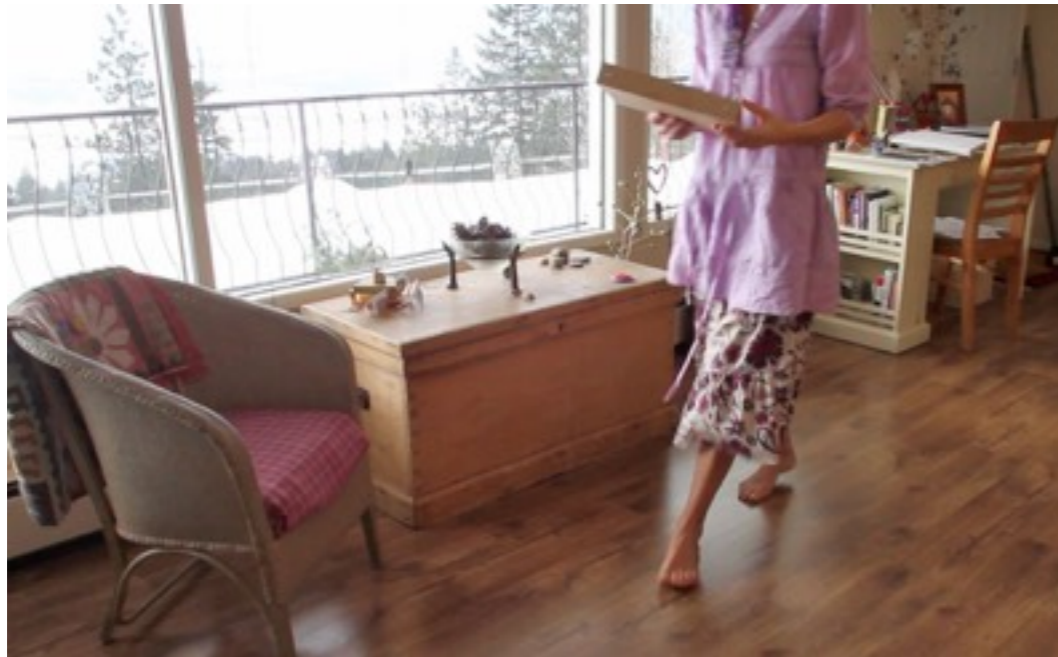
Trouble-Free Steps

In our daily life, our steps are burdened with anxieties and fears. Life itself seems to be a continuous chain of insecure feelings, and so our steps lose their natural easiness.

Our earth is truly beautiful.

There is so much graceful, natural scenery along paths and roads around the earth! Do you know how many dirt lanes there are, lined with bamboo, or winding around scented rice fields? Do you know how many forest paths there are, paved with colorful leaves, offering cool and shade? They are all available to us, yet we cannot enjoy them because our hearts are not trouble-free, and our steps are not at ease.

Walking meditation is a way of waking up to the wonderful moment we are living in.



Try to walk barefoot as often as you can both indoors and outdoors.



Walking meditation is learning to walk again with ease.

When you were about a year old, you began to walk with tottering steps. Now, in practicing walking meditation you are learning to walk again. However, after a few weeks of practice, you will be able to step solidly, in peace and comfort.

Maintain your practice, aware that your steps are creating miracles. The earth appears before your eyes as something miraculous. With that correct understanding, with that meditative thought, you will achieve blissful steps on this planet earth.

Stand on one foot, and be aware that it is resting upon the earth; see the great sphere upon which it rests.

See it clearly – how wonderfully round it is.

While walking, look down and anticipate the ground where you are about to place your foot, and when you do, mindfully experience your foot, the ground, and the connection between your foot and the ground.

This passage on “walking meditation” is from Thich Nhat Hanh’s wonderful book “Love Letters to Earth” - Parallax Press



Walk barefoot on different surfaces.

Walk barefoot along a plank of dry wood. Now wet the plank of wood. How does it feel?

Walk on the earth on a hot dry day. Walk barefoot in the rain and snow.

Walk through a puddle. Walk barefoot anywhere and everywhere.



Walk barefoot through wild flowers.

Taking care of yourself is one of the first steps on the journey of discovering your truth and **accessing your creativity**. When you honour and nurture yourself you can hear your inner voice much more clearly.

I invite you to take the time to walk barefoot amongst the dandelions.



As I **walk barefoot** in the little Forest where I run my nature classes, I feel an incredible connection with my surroundings. My senses come alive. The scattered pine needles on the dry earth tickle my feet. My step is slow, covering the ground gently, wanting to feel every texture and life force. Ants and spiders scurry across my path. The earth is dusty and warm and I feel the gentle pulse of mother earth beneath me. **I feel so alive.**





Barefoot among the lavender
www.educatingheartnatureart.com

Our journey reawakens us to who and what we are...beautiful, soulful, creative beings



Journey Stick

Journey Stick

Stories can transform the ordinary events and objects in our lives into lessons.



I invite you to dance barefoot with me and we shall feel Mother Earth's heartbeat. Let the abundant love envelope us in a warm blanket, melting us into **oneness**.



Rediscovering
Who We Are

www.marghanita.com

Journey of Love Walking Stick



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WATCH THE HOW TO MAKE A JOURNEY STICK VIDEO

Section 8

Children have a natural inclination to collect things. Each season we are gifted new and wonderful treasures to discover and collect. These pieces of treasure from Mother Nature are cherished, and gift magical memories of precious times immersed in nature.

A white feather from a mystical encounter with a swan. The mists lay low on Arthur's Seat. (Edinburgh, Scotland). Through the eerie mists an elegant swan appeared, a vision so pure and mystical. The Swan represents GRACE.



A pinecone from an enchanted forest walk with my family this autumn where we were graced with the presence of several deer. (BC, Canada). The deer represents GENTLENESS.

A Tree Disc Necklace I made along with the children in one of my nature classes this summer. The disc reminds me of their smiles and laughter as they painted their tree discs and shared their love and happiness to be outdoors.

An Earthy Beaded Love Heart we made in Spring. Spring time: a reminder of new growth, new beginnings, new love...how exciting.

A seedpod from a local Acacia tree. We gathered the seedpods to paint into rattle snakes. These natural rattlesnakes allow the stick to create music as we walk and dance through our journey.

Just like the seasons, your walking/story stick can be a transitional piece. A forever changing piece of art and forever changing story. The stick evolves with the child and her ever-changing life.

These little pieces of treasure gifted from our Mother Earth bring us back to the time and place the treasure was discovered... how magical. These beautiful, meaningful pieces of nature help to emotionally ground and connect children with that memory.

How to make your Journey Stick

A journey stick is used to retell the story of a journey in nature



What you will need:

1. A stick strong enough to take your weight
2. Paint and varnish
3. Penknife
4. Saw or secateurs and sandpaper
5. Sharpie for the children
6. Twine to attach your items found in nature
7. Tape if needed to secure the children's nature items
8. Coloured wool can also be used to represent items we see on our journey but cannot attach to our stick, such as a blue bird. We would wrap blue wool around our stick to remind us of the encounter with the bird.

SAFETY : Please note: when I am working with adult learners I use my open knife, however, when in class with students I always use a penknife. Please make sure when you are working with your students you use a penknife that has a safety catch.

Section 10

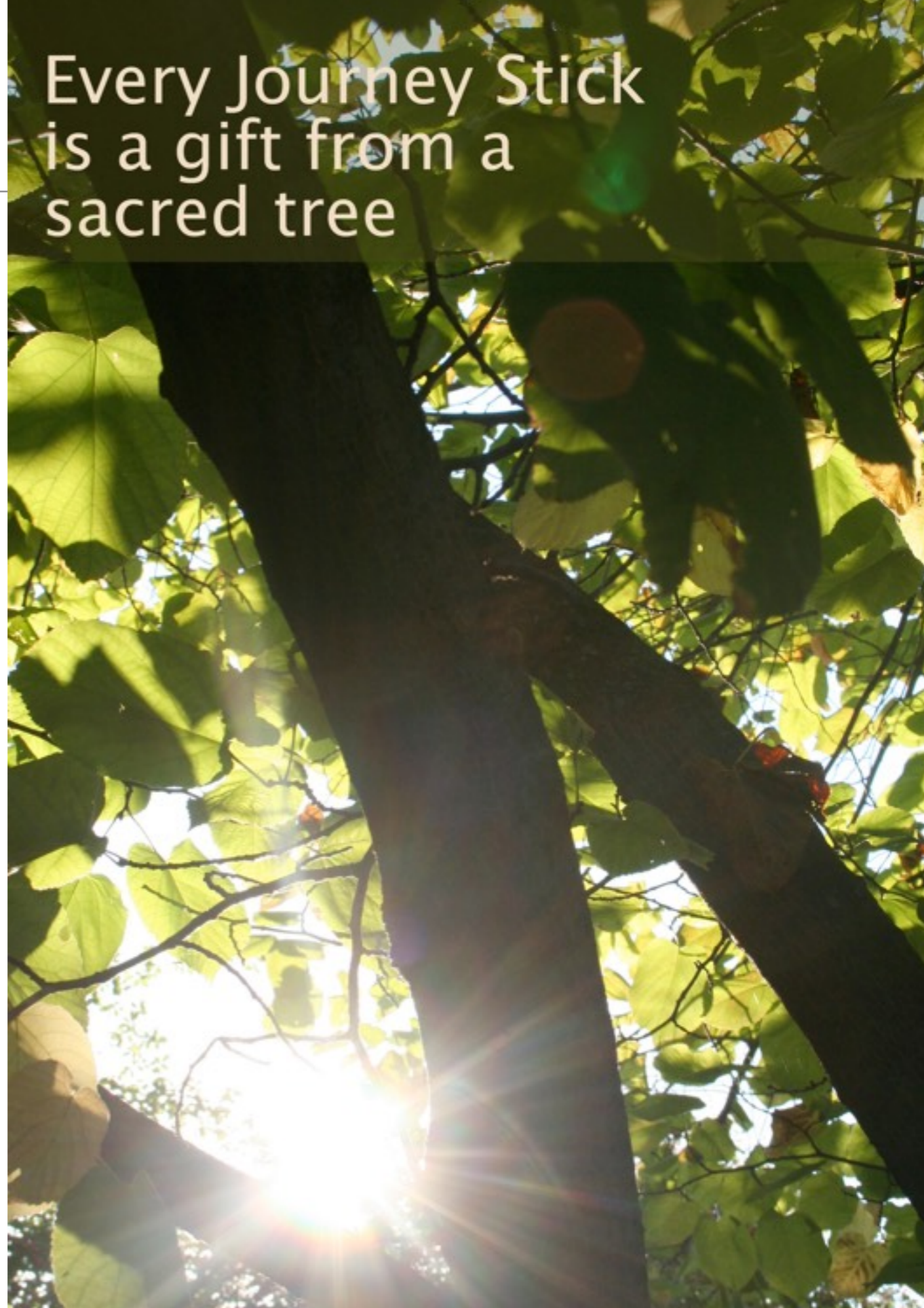
Let the stick find you

Searching for the perfect stick is all part of the magical journey

1. Let the stick find you.

There is one just waiting for you to find it and share this beautiful journey. This stick was once a branch of a tree. It's journey began long ago and is now beginning a new chapter on your journey. I love how our journey is never ending.

2. Cut the stick to fit your height. Make sure it can take your weight when you lean on it.
3. Remove any spiky ends.
4. Sand paper both ends for a smooth finish.
5. Carve a slice at the top of your stick to create a flat surface to add your name or inscription (watch video).
6. You can create small grooves on your journey stick to help keep your attached natural items to the stick.
7. Now begin to paint your stick.
8. Adding detail : view next page for adding details
9. After adding details allow to dry then varnish with a mat varnish (optional).



Every Journey Stick
is a gift from a
sacred tree

Section 11

Adding Detail

In Beauty May You Walk

Adding an inscription, or personalizing it with your name makes the journey stick even more special.

For this stick I chose one of my favourite blessings “In Beauty May You Walk”.



One of the older children in the class added his thumb print, creating a personalized band around his stick.



In Beauty May You Walk - The Navajo call this path “Hozho” the way of beauty. To walk in harmony and balance. That is the essence of your being, your truth.



In Beauty May You Walk





Nature, the stick, becomes a walking and talking stick, imbued with the story of our lives, and with it nature enters our soul through touching, and through the eyes, and our story becomes its story and its story becomes us.



Your stick is now ready for its new chapter on its journey with ...



Along the way, you will be drawn to certain natural items, such as feathers, cones, a shell, a piece of bark...you will gather bits and pieces from your walks in nature and tie them to your journey stick. These items represent your connection with that particular nature walk helping you to recall the feelings and thoughts you had during your walk. When you discover an item such as a feather or cone, bless it with a thank you for gifting you this treasure from Mother Earth.

We are always respectful of the treasure we are gifted and only take what we need.

Gifting a Journey Stick

When my beautiful friend Marghanita visited me in New Zealand it was a special time for both of us. We embraced the time we had together, to connect with each other and the earth. We watched beautiful sunsets and shared many stories.

Our daily visits to the beach would start with looking for a stick to draw our story in the sand.

Before Marghanita left she handpicked and handcrafted a beautiful stick for me. The naturalness of the wood, represents a 'being' or connectedness found in all things nature.

I carry the stick with me on my regular walks down the beach. The love present in the stick provides the anchor I need to ground me at times in my journey on this earth. I call it my wisdom stick, as it connects me with my heart when I walk along the beach.

It's in the heart where I find my wisdom!

Anja Geelen - Montessori Little Earth





‘I hear and I forget;
I see and I remember;
I do, I touch
and I understand.’

Learning by Experience: A hands-on approach requires students to become active participants instead of passive learners.

Section 14

Loving Gratitude

To share time together in nature on this sacred journey is a gift, a blessing.

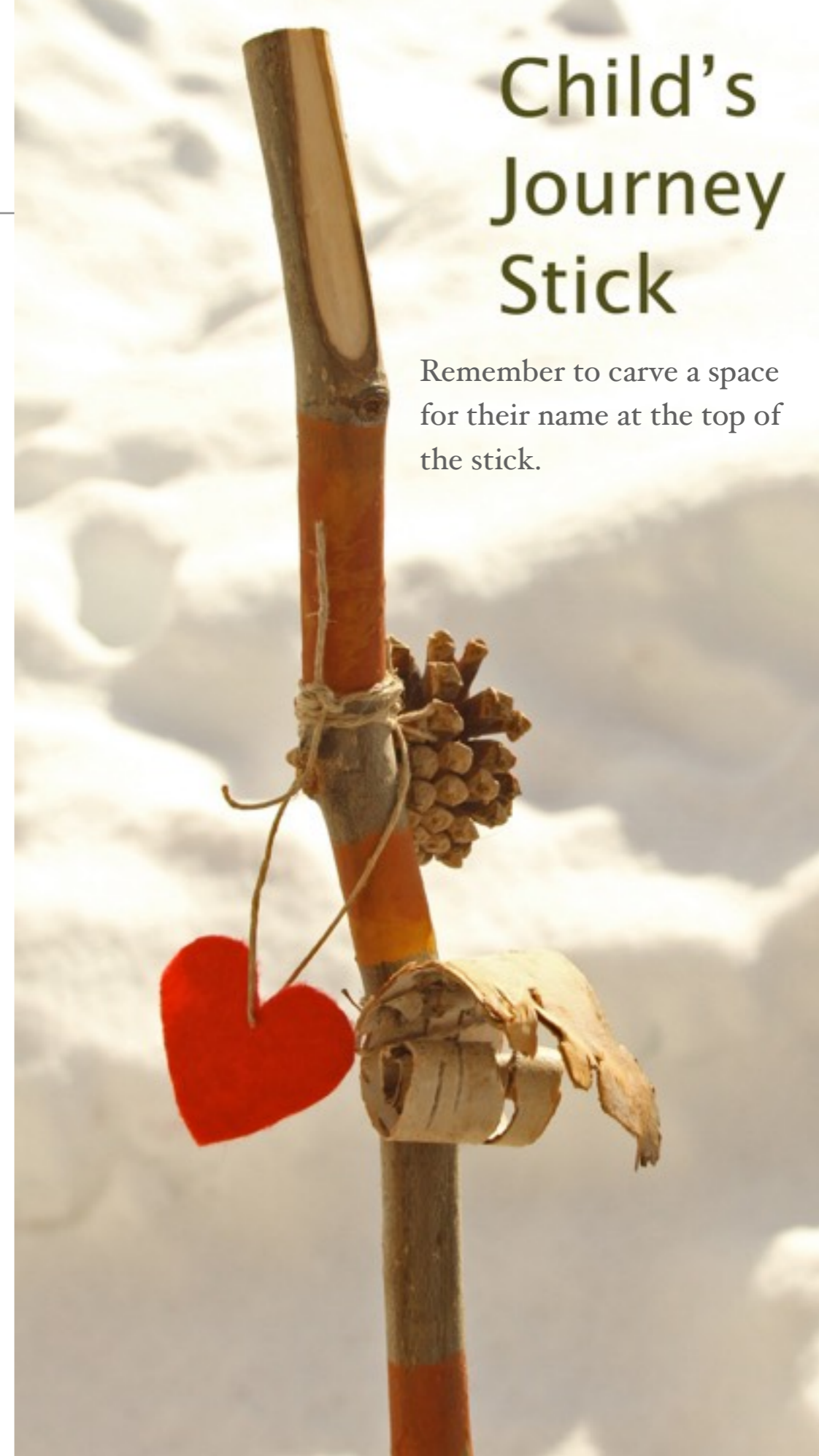
LOVING GRATITUDE: I always create a FELT HEART for each child. This small felt shaped heart represents my love and gratitude for sharing this beautiful journey together.



Cut out a small heart from felt. Pierce a hole using a small pair of scissors or large darning needle. Thread twine through and gift to each child to attach to their very own journey stick.

Child's Journey Stick

Remember to carve a space for their name at the top of the stick.



Section 15

Making the students Journey Sticks

Create the children's journey sticks in exactly the same way you created your own.

Hunting for the perfect stick is all part of the fun.

All children will want to find their very own stick. If you cannot get out into the woods or forest or near by park to hunt for fallen branches, you can scatter the sticks you have collected in the kindergarten/school grounds allowing the children to hunt for their stick.



Most children generally love to paint the whole stick.



If the children are too young to create grooves in their stick, you can always add tape to make sure their collected pieces of nature are securely attached. For really young ones, make a masking tape 'armband', sticky side out around their stick allowing for them to stick their found items instantly.



Each stick is unique and beautiful just like the children who created them. Each on a separate journey creating their very own individual story, yet journeying as a collective, as one.

Let each child tell their story in their own time when they feel ready to do so. Some may need prompting. You can have the children sit in a circle and take turns to share or split your class into smaller groups seated in a circle to share their little stories. The sticks help the child recall their adventure exploring and discovering, collecting and remembering.

It is very important to listen to each child. They may only share a word and others may have many several items or moments they wish to share with the class. Some maybe too shy and just want to listen, this is okay too.





Let the journey
begin...

Each Day Is a Journey

We can create a story every time we step outdoors into nature.



Further Learning:

- Discuss the variety of things found and how they might support life.
- Tell an imaginative story with the items found.
- Create a short poem with items, individually or collectively.
- Discuss some of the places outdoors that were special.
- We revisit our nature walk to see what has changed.
- Take the journey sticks home to share with parents and carers.
- Use your journey stick to walk to kindergarten; playgroup; school; a friend's house.

A photograph of three hikers walking on a dirt trail in a scenic autumn landscape. The hikers are in the foreground, moving from left to right. The person on the left is wearing a grey hooded jacket and dark pants. The person in the middle is wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt, dark pants, and a tan hat. The person on the right is wearing a dark jacket, light blue jeans, and a hat. The trail is surrounded by tall, dry grass and fallen yellow leaves. In the background, there is a calm lake reflecting the sky, and a forested hillside with some trees showing yellow autumn foliage. A single tree with bright yellow leaves stands prominently on the right side of the frame.

A Journey of Discovery..

Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Here is an entry from one of our signed up educators:
Journey Sticks and Earthing

The peeps are creating a journey stick. A journey stick is like a walking stick, something that you use while walking or going on journeys. We plan on using these sticks on our Forest Fridays to practice our walking meditations and while at school when going for a walk. The peeps have been attaching found nature with twine to their sticks to help recall their journeys. Eventually we will paint, carve, and decorate our sticks.



The first step to creating a journey stick is finding the perfect walking stick, or letting the stick find you. We went over what a good walking stick might look like. Then we went on a journey to find our journey sticks.

They all did an excellent job finding their sticks. We wrote our initials on them right away to make these sticks officially ours. I too am creating a journey stick alongside the peeps! We all took our first journey behind the school to the hill to find some nature to attach to our sticks. We went over how to properly walk and use our journey sticks. We are very excited to continue adding to our journey sticks and to use them with everyone



Another activity we did this week was **earthing**. Earthing is the act of standing on grass and soil while being barefoot. It is supposed to have excellent health benefits! The peeps got so excited, and found it a bit funny, when I told them to take off their socks and shoes. Some friends didn't want to participate, which was totally fine. Although the weather has been very Spring like this week, it was quite cold earthing in the mornings! A;; the snow had melted so the ground has been very wet. After we earthed I asked them how they liked it:



It was way too cold! Maybe we can do it in warmer weather. It woke me up” - L, age 4
“It made my belly ache go away” - E, age 6
“I liked it because it was so cold but now my feet feel funny and warm” - W, age 4



On our Forest Friday, the peeps earthed as a class. One peep recommended we have **an earthing party**. And what an earthing party it was! The grass was dry and it was much warmer than the other days this week. They all went crazy running around barefoot and enjoying the warm February weather. They all agreed that this earthing experience was better than the ones earlier this week. **We will continue earthing in different weathers.**

A group of children are participating in an 'earthing' activity. They are wearing bright yellow rain suits and are barefoot on a grassy field. Some children have their rain boots placed on the ground nearby. The scene is outdoors on a sunny day, with shadows cast on the grass. The text 'EARTHING PARTY' is overlaid in the center of the image.

EARTHING PARTY

Here is a beautiful entry from one of my students from India - Sathya Reets

Dear Marghanita,

I don't have words to express the joy peace and silence which I felt when I started this journey stick!

I live in a city and don't get opportunity to head out in woods quiet often. Was wondering how to find and where to look for a branch. An old branch that I had picked up from road side had been waiting in my patio for 2 years now. As you said the branch had picked me and had been patiently waiting for this lovely transformation. The smell when I sanded, the texture, it's nature when at places it didn't want to become smooth how much ever I tried sanding... and the experience when I started to paint and the movement of the marker guided me the way it wanted with its twists and turns. Will start the journal today.. just couldn't wait to share these with you .

