

City of Louisville Nature Explorers

First Adventure: Forest Bathing

Introduction

Forest Bathing comes from the Japanese concept of **shirin-yoku** (literally “forest bath”). Forest bathing is a way to connect with the natural world when you’re in the outdoors. The basic idea is to engage all five of your senses with different activities and exercises. Doctors and scientists have found that forest bathing can lower stress and improve your health. Why? Because it is soothing for the mind and soul to enjoy the outdoors – and fun, too!

In this challenge, you will visit your Louisville Open Spaces and engage four of your five senses (please don’t taste or eat anything!) and discover the refreshing, fun, and relaxing activity of forest bathing.

This relaxed activity can be done at your own time, and you don’t need to go to a forest to enjoy the concept of forest bathing – any natural place will do! We highly recommend parents participate and help guide their child or children through the activity.

PARENTS: Remember Safety!

Don’t forget to stay safe while on your Louisville Open Space:

- Supervise children at all times.
- Be mindful of other trail users and treat them with courtesy.
- Limit your visits to the daytime.
- Keep pets on leash.
- Please pick up and dispose of any trash you create, including pet waste.
- Please do not damage, destroy, or deface any natural or man-made object. That means don’t pick the flowers, among other things!

Let’s Get Started!

Make sure you have printed out your Adventure Booklet. You will need the following materials:

- Crayons
- Anything else your child prefers to use for drawing, such as markers and colored pencils.
- Magnifying glass (optional).

FIRST ACTIVITY: SENSE OF HEARING

- With your Adventure Book, go to an Open Space, park, or other natural area near you. It's best to find a spot without too many other people around.
- Write the word "SOUND" at the top of a blank page in your Adventure Book.
- Sit down, close your eyes, and listen.
- Write down what you hear in your Adventure Book. If you don't know what it is, use words to describe it, such as CHIRP, WHIRR, SWOOSH, and others! Be creative!
- Of then sounds you just wrote down which of them can you not hear at home? Circle these words in your Adventure book.
- Which sound is your favorite? A bird? The rustle of wind in the leaves? Draw the thing making this sound in your Adventure Book. If you don't know what it is, use your imagination to draw what you *think* it looks like? Go ahead – be creative!



SECOND ACTIVITY: SENSE OF SMELL

- With your Adventure Book, go to an Open Space, park, or other natural area near you. It's best to find a spot without too many other people around.
- Write the word "SMELL" at the top of a blank page in your Adventure Book.
- Close your eyes and focus on things you smell. Can you smell anything special in the air? Maybe you can smell a rainstorm coming, or maybe you can smell flowers... Write down what you smell in your adventure book!
- Look around for an evergreen tree, like a pine or a spruce. Take one of the needles and roll it between your fingers. Now smell your fingers. Do you like that smell? Or do you not like it? If you can't find an evergreen tree, consider doing this activity with a leaf, blade of grass, or other small piece of foliage!
- In a safe place, lie down on your stomach, and WITHOUT sticking your nose in the ground, try to smell the dirt, grass, or whatever you're lying on. Write down words that come to mind when you do this, words like sweet, sour, musty, or any others that come to mind! Repeat this a few times in different spots.
- What was your favorite Open Space smell? What was your least favorite? Draw these things in your Adventure book!



THIRD ACTIVITY: SENSE OF TOUCH

- With your Adventure Book, go to an Open Space, park, or other natural area near you. Make sure you have a crayon you are willing to unwrap from the paper.
- Write the word “TOUCH” at the top of a blank page in your Adventure Book.
- Look around you and find three things that look like they might be interesting to touch. For this activity, try to pick things that are relatively flat, like leaves, a relatively large blade of grass, or a strip of bark. **REMEMBER: Do not touch animals or anything else that might sting, bite, or hurt you!**
- Now make a rubbing of each of the items you chose. To do this, unwrap a crayon from its wrapper. Place the item under your piece of paper. Now press the FLAT part of the crayon on top of the paper and rub it back and forth over the object. The crayon should make a colorful, shaded image of the object you chose!
- Now write words to describe the objects you found around the rubbings you made of them. Are these objects hard or soft? Smooth or rough? Slick or fuzzy?
- Circle your favorite rubbing.
- Make sure to put your objects back in the general area where you found them!



FOURTH ACTIVITY: SENSE OF SIGHT

- With your Adventure Book, go to an Open Space, park, or other natural area near you.
- Write the word “SIGHT” at the top of a blank page in your Adventure Book.
- Hike the trails in the area, and look at your surroundings as you as you go. What do you see? Pay close attention to plants and animals that call this area home.
- What plants do you see? Draw your favorite plant in your Adventure Book, and write down words to describe it. Is it tall, like a tree, or short like a flower? Is it spiky like a yucca, or soft like the tips of grass?
- Keep hiking and look around for any birds, mammals, or insects. Which animals do you see? Draw your favorite animal in your Adventure Book and write down words to describe it. Is it soft and furry? Does it have feathers and Claws?
- Now find a good spot with an overlook, or an area where you can see very far. What do you see? Draw the view, and write what you like about it.



REFLECTION

We hope you have enjoyed forest bathing with us in your Louisville Open Space! Take some time to think about your activities. Which sense was your favorite? Why?

Your Open Space gives animals and plants a place to be, so you can see, hear, smell, and touch all the elements of our Colorado prairie ecosystem. Please feel free to repeat these activities whenever you visit Louisville Open Spaces!