

MY NEIGHBOUR, THE TREE

Get to know your tree with your hands.
Find it with your eyes.

Goal: The children will try two roles. They will be guided blindfolded to a tree and try to get to know the tree without using sight (by touch, spatial orientation, etc.) and, in the role of the guide, they will lead a friend safely and gently to a tree. The last activity is to each find a favourite spot among the trees or shrubs and, if the children wish, to explain their choice.

They will develop an attention to the needs of others (in the role of guide) and a sensitivity to trees and space using senses other than their most obvious one.

How long: 15–30 minutes

Who: 8 to 99

Where: A place with more trees or shrubs

When: All year round (warmer parts of the year)

You need: Scarves to cover eyes, seat cushions



1. FIND YOUR TREE

This game requires finding a good spot in a woodland, garden or park. The ideal place should offer a variety of species, diameters and heights of trees and the game's boundaries should be agreed upon and understood from the start. Players are divided into pairs and the game begins with one from each pair being blindfolded while the other one will act as their guide who safely leads their charge to a suitable tree. The children should try to choose their pairs so that they can trust each other.

2. RECOGNISING THE TREE

The blindfolded children touch the tree in front of them and try to remember as much information about it as possible which will later help in their search. They can concentrate on such things as what the bark feels like, how thick the trunk is, where the branches begin. After a thorough examination of the tree, the guides lead the blindfolded back to the starting place, untie their eye covers and send them to find "their" tree.

3. SEARCH

The searchers can now use their eyesight but at the same time they need to use other senses like touch to find the right tree. That is checked by the teammate who selected the tree. The children exchange roles with their pairs and play again when the first round is complete. The guides are now blindfolded, the others become guides and the game is repeated.

TIP: Players should be warned to move safely when blindfolded. The guides must lead their partners safely and, ideally, not by the hand but by the whole forearm while verbally navigating and warning them around obstacles on the way (i.e. "Duck for some branches"). Guides should remember they have become their partner's eyes and are responsible for their safety. (You can find a more detailed description of this activity in Cornell, 2012).

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4. MY PLACE

After the children have tried both roles and have led and been led to their trees, they can now be given the space and time to find a favourite place among trees or shrubs. It can be in the shade, at the roots or in the branches of trees / shrubs. It's entirely up to them. When they find a spot, all they need to do is sit or lie down for a while and observe everything they can from their place.

TIP: In this game, it is important to agree with the children on the boundaries of where they can look for their favourite spot. They should be able to see you and vice versa, or a pile of backpacks should be visible etc.

5. LOOKING BACK

The activity ends with the children gathering and sharing their thoughts. What was it like to find the tree while "blind"? What was confusing? What helped me? What have I discovered? What place did I choose? Why? What makes it special, beautiful, exceptional? Do I want to come back here? What do I want to do and experience here?

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

The children performed two tasks. The task is to discover, and later recognise, a tree by touch while blindfolded and the task of guiding a blindfolded child to their own tree to discover.

The children found a favourite place among some trees or shrubs.

The children interested in doing so explained why they chose this place as their favourite.

