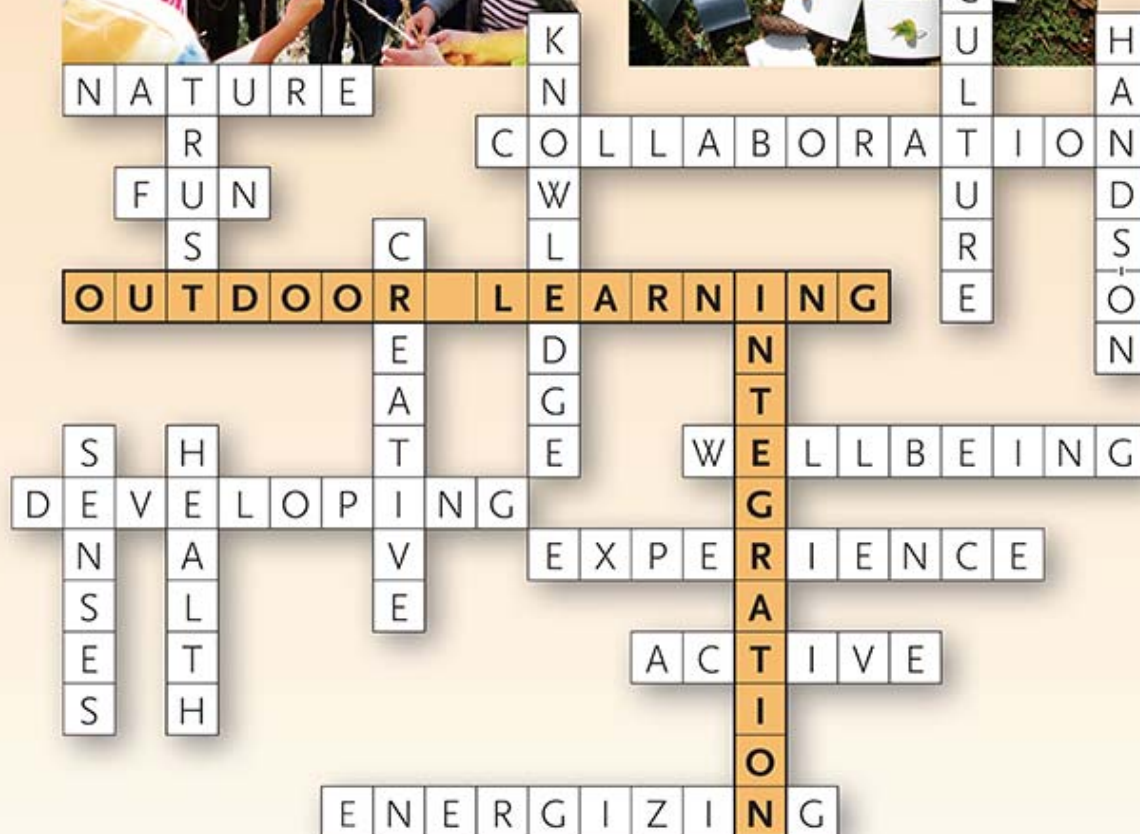


Outdoor Learning for Integration through Nature and Cultural Encounters

LINC



Lifelong
Learning
Programme

Guidelines and Didactical Material

There is a huge interest in descriptions of exercises or activities that can be developed and adapted. We will here present some exercises that have been selected. We have tried them, developed them after evaluations and made them adaptable for the target groups. Remember that all persons are individual and that all groups are different, with different needs. Implement both in- and outdoor activities slowly and continuously. It is important that you as a teacher/leader of the group listen to the group, let them talk, let them try new things and of course most importantly, let them grow into the new society – be a part of it by visiting, learning and getting information about the new society and different environments as culture, nature and history. One example can be to get information about the right of public access; out in nature and in practice, being informed and working with what you are allowed to do and what you are not allowed to do. Communication – the dialogue – is important as well as “learning by doing” in different settings.

Examples of exercises

1. Geographical map

Description

Use a long rope and work on the ground. Make a map of the new home country with the rope. Show by standing on different places what you know about the new country. What places have you visited and can tell something about and what places do you want to visit? Work with the map in a lot of areas, for example with the cardinal points, counties, provincial flowers, the capital, historical sites, etc.

Subject aims

The aims of this exercise are conversing and using the new language in interaction with others, and getting knowledge about and from each other, getting awareness about the influences places have on our personal and social identity and education, and about values places have in them. It is a good ice-breaking activity, useful to share personal information in a playful way; facilitators can participate in the activity as well. It is also a good opportunity to get to know the new home country in a more concrete way.

Preparation

You need a long rope and a flat area.

Time and group size

Half an hour, 5–20 participants

Implementation

Everyone stands in different places on the map. Discussions about where you stand, and why, are important. The teacher asks everybody to tell the group where he/she is and to briefly comment on it. Everyone has to explain and work with the new language and with the places.

After that, the participants are asked to move to a place where they have not been – a place they want to see or know more about.

Conclusion

Finally participants are encouraged to have a circle-time and comment more in depth; usually it comes up how important places are in building personal story. This is a very social task, where the participants get to know each other and can enjoy interesting personal stories.

It is an easy exercise. There are multiple learning outcomes: raised awareness and knowledge about place-based values and their educational influences; a better understanding about self and others. It is an excellent team-building activity. The opportunity to express something about ourselves through our bodies, just standing on a place. Last but not least, a common group experience is created and can be shared.



2. The rope

Description

The participants are behind a rope lying on the ground. The facilitator asks everybody to stand in a row all along the rope, e.g. from left to right, following a precise indication. For example, the facilitator can ask participants to put themselves in alphabetical order or by number of siblings, or by distance from home to workplace, and so on.

Subject aims

Facilitate communication, interpersonal knowledge, wellbeing. The activity does not require good language knowledge, so every participant can express his/her characteristic through standing. It gives the opportunity to know each other in a short time, and we can also feel how staying outside lends a nice feeling of freedom.

Preparation

It's very simple: find a private area, unfold a rope on the ground and bring the participants there.

Time and group size

20 minutes, 5–20 participants

Implementation

Can be implemented in urban or natural environments, in an accessible area where people feel safe, comfortable and free to express themselves; the facilitators can participate in the activity as well, giving their leader role to the participants who wish to catch both common and particular feature from people in the group.

Conclusion

It is a good ice-breaking activity; an easy way to get information. Participants can discover a lot about others in a short time, and if there is some curiosity they can ask the person in order to get more in-depth details. Participants can also be encouraged to enjoy the experience by taking the facilitator role, who can in his/her turn take part in the activity.

3. Cooking

Description

Make your own bread and a warm soup outdoors.

Subject aims

The aims for this exercise are, for example, collaboration with others, discussion about how to cook food and how to bake, conversing and using the new language in interaction with others, reading recipes and getting knowledge about and from each other.

Preparation

All the materials for cooking and baking as bowls, ladles and ingredients must be prepared. You need wood and matches and a nice and safe place to have a fire on and of course water to extinguish the fire with.

Time and group size

About 1,5–2 hours, 5–15 participants

Implementation

If possible, let the group make a list of what ingredients they need and let the participants buy the ingredients. Inform them about safety and rules regarding fire and fireplaces. Decide who will be the fire guard/responsible. Everyone has a task, but let the participants try both the bread baking and the soup cooking, and decide how long the preparation takes so that everything is ready at the same time.

Conclusion

This is a social task, where the participants get to know each other and can enjoy a good meal together outside in the fresh air. It involves personal, social, multi-sensory and creative learning, where the environment makes participants feel relaxed. Eating outdoors is one of the most interesting things you can do with a group, because it tells you a lot about the different people you have in the group. They talk about themselves and about their interests, they have ideas of how to bake and about cooking and how it works it in the countries they come from. It is a task that really builds a group and everyone can do something. It is about trust in one's own ability, sharing knowledge and having fun together.



4. Finding objects

Description

Pick up two objects from nature. The first one is something that reminds you of your home country/childhood and the other object is something in the new country that you know something about or want to know about.

Subject aims

To work with the present and the future. Connect things to your own life, detect new things and get a feeling of relation to the new environments that are presented. Get knowledge about the new places and get to know other people's life stories about what they for example use a herb for, in their home country.

Preparation

No preparation at all. Just being outdoors in an environment that you have decided that the group gets to know and get knowledge about.

Time and group size

1–2 hours, 15–20 participants

Implementation

You can be in a forest, in town, in a park or at a lake – anywhere. Take the time to implement this exercise. The participants are given time for telling the group their stories about the objects. There may be a doctor or someone else interested in medicinal plants for example – give the participants time to explain and share their knowledge. Everyone can say something.

Conclusion

Be prepared that it could be very emotional, many laughs, many thoughts but also wellbeing and feelings of belonging.

5. Nature Lottery

Description

With sticks or chalk, the group makes 9 spaces in a lottery plate. Participants find objects in nature for each space. Now switch with another group and find the objects on the new lottery plate. This game can be played

in many different places.

Subject aims

To get knowledge and awareness of details in the specific surroundings

Preparation

None

Time and group size

10–20 minutes. 2–20 participants, divided in small groups. Time to create the plate: 5–10 min. Time to solve the plate is the same, or you can make a competition.

Implementation

Make sure that each lottery plate is placed with a little distance to others. Show how the Lottery plate should look like with different objects. Point out the area where objects can be collected, and give a timeframe.

Conclusion

Easy to do, and gives the participants time to focus on details in nature.



6. Community walk

Description

Walking slowly through a short bit of street, you can learn a lot about history, community and individuals' influences on the street and the city. In smaller groups, max. 3 persons in each, participants find objects in the street that reflect the topic for the walk, for example history, community, individual creativity and so on. Ask questions about your find and suggest answers. Collect your finds with photos, drawings or write them down to present to the group or to work with later.

Subject aims

To see learning subjects in practice and discover details which are usually not seen

Preparation

Bring camera or paper and pencil

Time and group size

15–30 minutes per subjects and groups of 3 people

Implementation

Explain the task and present examples, like the drain cover tells about the community solving a problem for the inhabitants. How many are there? The shape and aesthetic form can also be discussed.

Conclusion

The activity can be presented in different places with a different focus for learning. It points out that details in the street can tell us a lot.

7. Time travel

Description

The group will together tell the story about a historic item, place or building. You start by telling a very short story about the place or item you are going to work with. If it is an old tree you can start by asking how old they think this tree is and you can discuss how you can estimate the age. When you agree on a reasonable age you can start.

Divide the group into smaller groups and ask each group to use drama to illustrate what can have happened here during the centuries.

For example; if we have gathered close to an old oak, maybe 600 years of age, you can ask the first group to show us what may have happened here when the oak was still an acorn. The next group can show us what happened when the tree was 100 years old and so on.

The groups work on their presentations for 10-15 minutes and then we start from the beginning and make the time travel together.

Subject aims

The aim is to get a connection to the place and what you can find there and to create an interest in the local history. It is also a group task and helps the group get together.

Preparation

It is important in this activity that the starting point is something interesting and that you know or can estimate the age of the item or the building. If you work with a building it is good if you have a story to tell about it. It has to include elements of passing time.

Time and group size

Approximately 9–30 participants. You have to be able to divide the group in at least 3 smaller groups.

Implementation

For someone not familiar with the area, it is important to create relations to the surroundings. This is one way to work with interesting places and items to create these relations. It is also a good starting point for learning more about the area.

Conclusion

In our experience, this is a very good activity for making people familiar with the surroundings and to create an interest in local history and society.

8. What is a home?

Description

Divide the participants into smaller groups, 3–5 persons in each group. During a walk and talk the groups

have to decide how to describe a home. What are the three most important words? The group has to discuss until they can agree. This part takes approximately 10–15 minutes. When the participants in the smaller groups have found the three words and have returned to the starting point, they will get the next task. They will have to find a place where they can show what is the most important in a home by using their three words. They can show it by using drama, pantomime, song or other creative ways.

Subject aims

The aim is to show that we often have common ideas of what is most important to be able to call a place a home. Most of us need shelter, love and food as similar things. This exercise can also be the starting point for interesting discussions about needs and expectations when you arrive in a new place.

Preparation

Not much preparation is needed, you have to find a nice place where the groups can take a walk and find places where they can show their ideas of a home.

Time and group size

6–30 participants. Approximately 45 minutes to one hour. It is also possible to do it with bigger groups but it will take quite a long time.

Implementation

This kind of activity can be the starting point for discussions about needs and expectations in different situations as well as creating a feeling of common understanding in a group.

Conclusion:

After trying this activity in different groups, we found that talking about a home and what is necessary to call a place a home gives the participants a possibility to talk about important things such as feelings and safety in a new country. It also opened for creativity and group development.

9. Making your own nature CD

Description

Many people are so busy in their everyday lives that they seldom sit and do nothing, listen and really absorb their surroundings. This activity encourages noticing details in the environment and, depending on the type of group you have, can be a mindful or more fun exercise. It is always surprising how many participants find it difficult or impossible to be alone and silent for 5 minutes.

Subject aims

The activity focuses on being in the now, to be mindful. It makes us aware of the sounds that surround us, making us sit and listen and contemplate.

Preparation

The activity can be implemented in both natural and urban surroundings. Minimal and portable materials are used, pens and small papers. Using the device of a paper CD helps participants focus upon the task. Sit mats can make the group more comfortable in natural areas if they are unused to sitting on logs or the ground.

Time and group size

The entire activity takes around 20 minutes and can be implemented with any size of group.

Implementation

Can be implemented in urban or natural environments and if possible, in diverse, varied soundscapes. It is important to make the group feel comfortable with the activity; facilitators should participate in the activity as well.

The participants walk silently behind the facilitator and are silently shown an area where to sit (or stand). If possible the participants should be placed so that they barely see the others or if they need more confidence; seen but well-spaced out. Participants are encouraged to relax and enjoy the experience and listen closely to the dimensions of the soundscape surrounding them.

The participants record on their paper CD the sounds they hear around them, not by writing names but by onomatopoeic letters, words and pictures in a circular fashion.

The group is left for approximately 5 minutes and then silently collected by the facilitator. It is good to remain silent until the end point is reached.

A concert in a public or more private area where the group collectively sing (play) their CDs. This can be recorded and played back to the group or sent to them later.

Conclusion

The strongest memories we have are connected to our senses: smells, tastes and sounds. These are often the senses we consciously use the least in our daily lives. The activity does not require a common language and all participants can express themselves through sound. We are made mindful of our surroundings – are we always aware of our surroundings – what do they sound like – did we hear something surprising? We explore where we are through sound. Is it familiar to us? We can connect to the place. It gives the opportunity to stop and be silent, mindful and inactive. Although five minutes is a short time, many participants can find it challenging. A common experience is created and can be shared. We can implement

the sharing in a public arena, thereby becoming '*seen*' in a public space. What are we doing – is it theater, a performance or something else?

10. NETworking your group – exploring your new home environment

Description

This activity can be adapted for a variety of purposes. In this example, it is possible for participants to express themselves through a visual medium. Participants are free to reveal how much or how little of themselves according to how comfortable they feel in the group. Deeper meaning is gained when the group feels comfortable and can share issues with each other.

Subject aims

To work collaboratively in a tactile way exploring the local surroundings and appropriate themes given by the facilitator. Here we can also give a narrative to the group if we wish to develop the activity around storytelling.

Preparation

A long length of thin rope/strong string. Prepare the exercise so that a thicker string is at the top tied between two trees. Hang 3m long strands doubled-up (therefore hanging 1.5m downwards) at 10-15 cm intervals along the top. A suitable net length is around 2 meters.

Time and group size

If the group is large, many nets can be made in smaller groups and then sewn together to create a large colourful display. For good active participation, a suitable good group size is 8 people per net. Depending on the amount of reflection you wish to involve in this exercise you can use 25–45 minutes on the exercise.

Implementation

Ask the group to knot the rope so that each nearest string is knotted with a simple knot (such as a figure of 8 knot) forming triangles along the top and sides and diamonds in the centre. It is important to progress together in horizontal levels, taking care to make uniform sized holes for aesthetic reasons.

At the same time as the group is working kinaesthetically tying the knots, they can discuss 2–4 appropriate questions/problems/issues given by the facilitator. The discussion should then be caught in the net either by:

- a) writing key words and hanging them in the net or
- b) using natural materials from the surroundings make an aesthetically pleasing display woven into the net

representing the discussion and conclusions made.

Examples of issues discussed in the project are: the meaning of “home”, “safety”, “new home country” or other topics deemed relevant and meaningful.

When all groups have completed the task, they can introduce the individual nets to each other.

Conclusion

The result is a visually pleasing artistic representation of issues and concerns of the participants. The net can be left for a short time whilst other activities are taking place in the park area as an exhibition of the group’s work and then taken back to their place of work as a reminder of the workshop and discussion.

If relevant questions are given, many of our groups have made quite powerful statements and reflections. Similarities in experience and backgrounds are made apparent whilst still keeping the choice of openness firmly on the individual participants without pressure.

The beautiful visual creations when displayed in a public natural setting attract attention from passers-by turning the participants into displaying artists developing pride and societal participation.

We have also used this activity to display photographs taken by participants on previous workshops or at home.





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