

SIT SPOT

Age: 3.5 and up.

Aims of the Exercise:

Practical Aims:

To calm down the body and the mind, to be able to differentiate between what is going on inwardly and externally, to hone observation skills, get in touch with nature, the natural world, child's place as a being within it, to not be afraid of the outdoors, to get excited about animal and plant friends, to get a sense of time passage/ephemerality/and seasons, and to be able to tell the story of what you saw, in brief each day after you return inside (language building/narrative storytelling.)

Developmental Aims:

Introduce positive self-care habits, be in touch with internal needs, and observe the world around. Gain confidence and sense of cosmic connectedness, get to know a particular biome/that concept for development of scientific brain.

Preparation of the Child:

Walking on a Line, The Quiet Game, Observing Your Breath (a sensorial original lesson)

List of Materials:

Yourself, and a beautiful place that you feel connected to that is comfortable as well for sitting in for a while and not too far from the classroom/home.

First Presentation:

1. Take the child(ren) outside and say "Today we are going to try something new. It is called 'Sit Spot.' You're going to find a place away from other sounds and people and sit quietly for as long as you can without moving and just listen and look. Then, when you're done, you can come back and share what you experienced."
2. Let the child(ren) disperse. Walk around to make sure no one has chosen a spot outside of the range of your vision or ears, or an unsafe spot or a spot too close to someone else who might distract/disturb them. If someone is sitting someplace that is clearly uncomfortable, gently suggest that they might be more comfortable if they find another spot.
3. Start with just five minutes the first time. Call them back by gently approaching them and patting them individually on the shoulder, whispering "Come on back now."
4. Once everyone has returned, ask everyone to sit in a circle and ask if anyone saw or heard or smelled something that they would like to share.
5. Go around in a circle so everyone has a chance to share, if a child doesn't feel like sharing they can say "Pass." Set the ground rule that no one may interrupt each other. After everyone has had a turn, if someone would like to share something else, they may raise their hand or talk privately with you or the person with whom they would like to share.
6. Repeat this exercise daily or at least once/week after the initial introduction. Suggest that the children tell their families about Sit Spot and find a safe and comfortable place to visit every day or week at home, too.

Second Presentation:

7. Say "Today we're going to try a longer sit spot than usual. The longer you sit quietly in nature, the more animals and insects you might be able to see and hear. Do you think you can do it?"
8. Repeat the steps of the first presentation.
9. Call the children back after 10 minutes and discuss in the same way.

Control of Error:

Nothing to share (seen or heard or smelled) indicates too much movement and sound coming from the child, scaring away other beings in the biome.

Points of Interest:

Animal and plant life, the feeling of being a part of nature, seeing beautiful things, smelling smells, and hearing birds.

Language:

“Biome”, “Sit Spot”, “observing”, “listening”, “quiet.”

Variations:

Finding a new sit spot and seeing how it differs from the usual spot.

Extensions:

Taking out plant and animal identification cards and trying to get to know the names of some of the things seen. Recording observations in a nature journal. Going on a nature walk and engaging the broad vision achieved through repetition of the Sit Spot exercise. Going on a nature walk and checking off other beings encountered on a nature walk check list. Giving thanks for nature revealing itself to you. There is a beautiful non-denominational prayer that comes from the thanksgiving address of the Iroquois Nation:

Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Thanksgiving Address

Ohen:ton Karihwatehkwen **“Words Before All Else”**

This prayer is a gift from the Haudenosaunee People (The Iroquois Nation), words of thanksgiving with ancient roots dating back to when the Great Law of Peace was brought to the people by the Peace Maker, Dekanawidah (“Two River-Currents Flowing Together”), the Iroquois prophet, statesman, and lawgiver. Today variations of these words are still spoken at all times of the year at the opening and closing of ceremonial and governmental meetings held by the Haudenosaunee.

Greetings to the Natural World**The People**

Today we have gathered and see the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. So now, we bring our minds, hearts and bodies together as one as we give greetings and thanks to each other as People.

Now our minds are one.

The Earth

We are all thankful to our Mother, the Earth, for she gives us all that we need for life. She supports our feet as we walk about upon her. It gives us joy that she continues to

care for us as she has from the beginning of time. To our Mother, we send greetings and thanks.

Now our minds are one.

The Waters

We give thanks to all the Waters of the world for quenching our thirst and providing us with strength. Water is life. We know its power in many forms—waterfalls and rain, mists and streams, rivers and oceans. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to the spirit of Water.

Now our minds are one.

The Fish

We turn our minds to all the Fish life in the water. They were instructed to cleanse and purify the water. They also give themselves to us as food. We are grateful that we can still find pure water. So, we turn now to the Fish and send our greetings and thanks.

Now our minds are one.

The Plants

Now we turn toward the vast fields of Plant life. As far as the eye can see, the Plants grow, working wonders. They sustain many life forms. With our minds gathered together, we give thanks and look forward to seeing Plant life for many generations to come.

Now our minds are one.

The Food Plants

With one mind, we turn to honor and thank all the Food Plants we harvest from the garden. Since the beginning of time, the grains, vegetables, beans and berries have helped the people survive. Many other living things draw strength from them too. We gather all the Plant Foods together as one and send them a greeting and thanks.

Now our minds are one.

The Medicine Herbs

Now we turn to all the Medicine Herbs of the world. From the beginning, they were instructed to take away sickness and elevate human consciousness. They are always waiting and ready to heal us. We are happy there are still among us those special few who remember how to use these plants for healing. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to the Medicines and to the keepers of the Medicines.

Now our minds are one.

The Animals

We gather our minds together to send greetings and thanks to all the Animal life in the world. They have many things to teach us as people. We see them near our homes and in the deep forests. We are glad they are still here and we hope that it will always be so.

Now our minds are one.

The Trees

We now turn our thoughts to the Trees. The Earth has many families of Trees who have their own instructions and uses. Some provide us with shelter and shade, others with fruit, beauty, and other useful things. Many peoples of the world use a Tree as a symbol of peace and strength. With one mind, we greet and thank the Tree life.

Now our minds are one.

The Birds

We put our minds together as one and thank all the Birds who move and fly about over our heads. The Creator gave them beautiful songs. Each day they remind us to enjoy and appreciate life. The Eagle was chosen to be their leader. To all the Birds—from the smallest to the largest—we send our joyful greetings and thanks.

Now our minds are one.

The Four Winds

We give thanks to the powers known as the Four Winds. We hear their voices in the moving air as they refresh us and purify the air we breathe. They help to bring the change of seasons. From the four directions they come, bringing us messages and giving us strength. With one mind, we send our greetings and thanks to the Four Winds.

Now our minds are one.

The Thunderers

Now we turn to the west where our Grandfathers, the Thunder Beings, live. With lightening and thundering voices, they bring with them the water that renews life. We bring our minds together as one to send greetings and thanks to our Grandfathers, the Thunderers.

Now our minds are one.

The Sun

We now send greetings and thanks to our eldest Brother, the Sun. Each day without fail he travels the sky from east to west, bringing the light of a new day. He is the source of all the fires of life. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to our Brother, the Sun.

Now our minds are one.

Moon

We put our minds together and give thanks to our oldest Grandmother, the Moon, who lights the nighttime sky. She is the leader of women all over the world, binds all of the female cycles, and governs the movement of the ocean tides. By her changing face we measure time, and it is the Moon who watches over the arrival of children here on Earth. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to our Grandmother, the Moon.

Now our minds are one.

The Stars

We give thanks to the Stars who are spread across the sky like jewelry. We see them in the night, helping the Moon to light the darkness and bringing dew to the gardens and growing things. When we travel at night, they guide us home. With our minds gathered together as one, we send greetings and thanks to all the Stars.

Now our minds are one.

The Teachers

We gather our minds to greet and thank the enlightened Teachers who have come to help throughout the ages. When we forget how to live in harmony, they remind us of the way we were instructed to live as people. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to these caring Teachers.

Now our minds are one.

The Creative Force

Now we turn our thoughts to the Creator, or Great Spirit, and send greetings and thanks for all the gifts of Creation. Everything we need to live a good life is here on this Mother Earth. For all the love that is still around us, we gather our minds together as one and send our choicest words of greetings and thanks to the Creator.

Now our minds are one.

Closing Words

We have now arrived at the place where we end our words. Of all the things we have named, it was not our intention to leave anything out. If something was forgotten, we leave it to each individual to send such greetings and thanks in their own way.

And now our minds are one.

Size of Group: Individual, two, a small group, or the whole class.

Source of Exercise: I first learned of the Sit Spot while working at the marvelous Two Coyotes Wilderness School from the lovely Justin Pignataro http://www.twocoyotes.org/Two_Coyotes.html. However I believe its origins are quite a bit older. It was taught to Jon Young as communicated through a book he co-authored entitled *Coyote's Guide to Connecting With Nature* by the renowned Tom Brown Jr. <https://www.trackerschool.com/> who I believe learned it from his North American indigenous ancestry.

Source of Material: *Coyote's Guide to Connecting With Nature* by Jon Young, Ellen Haas, and Evan McGown <https://www.amazon.com/Coyotes-Guide-Connecting-Nature-Young/dp/1579940250>

Additional Resources: <http://wearewildness.com/5-qualities-perfect-sit-spot/>,
<http://www.michaelolaf.net/mindfulness.pdf>, <http://www.seekerswild.com/sit-spot.html>,
<http://www.shiftyourlife.com/nature-awareness-mindfulness-the-sit-spot/>,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Xp4ftk5Z-I