Learning to Love Nature (Narrative)

Where do you begin to explain to someone who is not comfortable with going outside and communing with nature, how truly wonderful it can be? Some can only think of bugs, crawling things, flying things, pollen and more! And if a troop leader has a negative attitude about the out of doors, how are the girls in the troop going to get an outside experience themselves?

We ran across an article on news-leader.com written by a college student Lauren Simms from Springfield, Missouri. It has been printed for all to take as a handout to read and ponder or … laugh and nod your head in agreement.

It is based on an adult’s experience of learning to love nature. Learning being the key word! She has taken and made an acronym of the word **L.E.A.R.N.**

**Listen:** Turn your phone on silent. If you go out for a walk or sit on a bench for a minute —listen to the birds singing to each other. Listen to the way the branches whistle when they sway in the breeze. Listen to a locust’s soft chirp, and a squirrel’s pitter-patter up the tree.

**Ease into it:** Spend 20 minutes a day outside, even if it’s just walking the dog to and from the mailbox.

**Arrive prepared:** Bring a backpack with supplies —snacks, water, a GPS, a camera, a flashlight, etc. —according to the outdoor activity.

**Renew:** Take deep breaths and rejuvenate your mind. Pay attention to the small details of the scenery; take the time to pray or to process a situation.

**Never say never:** Never say that you’ll never go fishing. Never say that you’ll never hike a mountain, or that you’ll never run just for the sake of running. Never say that you’ll never go in the woods to find silence or that you’ll never see a snake in the grass —because when the word “never” is said, it usually happens!

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “Do one thing every day that scares you.” Sometimes nature is scary because it can be fear of the unknown. That holds true for girls and adults.

Once a leader is on board, the same acronym of LEARN can apply to the girls. Our program materials of Journey books and badges have this approach. Think of the Daisy journey *Between Earth & Sky*. Every session has the girls going outside and listening or seeing something they never thought was there. In every Girl’s Guide are Legacy badges on the out of doors, plus there are skill builder badges that have an outdoor theme that send the girls on outdoor adventures….Brownies go outside to experience “Senses”, Juniors have a badge on being a “Gardener”, Cadettes learn about “Trees” and hiking, Seniors learn about the “Sky” and Ambassadors about “Water”…which in turn they can come back to the Brownies and work with them on WOW!

So if you are one of those that think outdoors is not for you, a Holiday Inn is your idea of camping….take it slow, and LEARN to love nature, step by step. And maybe the Journeys and badges can help expose you in the same way it exposes the girls to Learning to Love Nature.

Learning to Love Nature (Handout)

Excerpts from news-leader.com

By Lauren Simms, Springfield, MO

Some people come out of the womb with hiking boots, a compass, the knowledge of effective tent-building and the love of mossy oak trees. They like camping, sweating and eating fish they’ve just caught in the stream; some of them even hug trees.

Nature is all around, so why not **L.E.A.R.N**. to enjoy it?

First off, nature is not watching the Discovery Channel or Shark Week in HD with a bowl of popcorn in your lap. It’s not a place where Dora will come out from behind a tree and ask which building is shaped like a triangle, and it’s not an arena for the annual Hunger Games. Nature is God’s creation: It is the plants, the animals and the landscapes of the earth. Although before you can learn to love the outdoors, you have to spend time outside.

**Listen:** Turn your phone on silent. Yes —it’s a bizarre request, but shockingly you can survive without Angry Birds, emails and Facebook for a little while.

Listen to the subtle noises of the stream flowing into the rocks. Listen to your heartbeat.

Listening leads to focusing. When you focus on the hum of the trees and the melodic tunes of the birds, the stress of the workday dwindles and the tension tends to slowly subside. Both in life and in nature, when you listen, you gain understanding.

If you hardly spend any time in nature, it’s probably not a good idea to immediately go on a 15-mile hike —just like it’s not a good idea to compete in a triathlon if you don’t know how to swim. Spend 20 minutes a day outside, even if it’s just walking the dog to and from the mailbox.

**Arrive prepared:** Girls, here is a helpful tip —fishing is not the time to break in your new Gianni Bini stilettos; pull out your tennis shoes. Also, trade the perfume and cologne for bug spray and use it like it’s going out of style, especially in the summer months. Bugs, like ticks and mosquitoes, are “worming” their way out of hibernation and get into a frenzy over the smells of Abercrombie’s Fierce and Victoria’s Secret’s Amber Romance.

Bring a backpack with supplies —snacks, water, a GPS, a camera, a flashlight, etc. —according to the outdoor activity. When you go camping, fishing, canoeing or hiking, bring someone along who knows what they’re doing. Most girls are shocked when they find out that a tent doesn’t come with a shower, a sink and a roll of Charmin Ultra Soft. Having someone to explore nature trips with is a great bonding experience and a great way to have an “old-fashioned” conversation, and by that, it’s face-to-face instead of phone-to-phone. Like a Girl Scout leader always says, “two heads are better than one.”

**Renew:** Take deep breaths and rejuvenate your mind. Pay attention to the small details of the scenery; take the time to pray or to process a situation. Remember, you love what you invest in. The more you’re involved in something, the more you enjoy it. Train your mind to positive thinking and your heart will be in sync.

Earthing has had measurable research on how it affects health. When you’re exposed to the soil, that’s often found in flowerbeds, the bacteria comes up and releases a feel-good hormones in your brain. Being exposed to the soil and to nature can make you feel good and increase your learning ability.

**Never say never:** Never say that you’ll never go fishing, or that you’ll never put a live worm on a fishing hook. Never say that you’ll never hike a mountain, or that you’ll never run just for the sake of running. Never say that you’ll never go in the woods to find silence or that you’ll never see a snake in the grass —because when the word “never” is said, it usually happens.

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “Do one thing every day that scares you.” Sometimes nature is scary because it can be fear of the unknown.

Sometimes to face nature is to face hardship, confusion or an angry snapping turtle —but nature is empowering and is the art of the most talented Creator.

To love nature is to love life because that is what nature is —nature is the prime evidence of life and living it to the fullest.