Introduction to Love & Respect

Valuing Nature

Objectives/Aims
The students will: learn to value nature.

Materials
none

Illustration
To think that a simple seed-head from a flower could be so beautiful! Imagine a world without such beauty! No flowers, animals or sunsets... So sad.

Background
Some people value nature for purely self-interested reasons while others believe it is inherently valuable. Personally, I believe nature has inherent worth; the world would be a pretty bleak place without plants or animals.

Succeeding generations often do not realize what has been lost from previous generations. We cannot imagine a prairie covered with buffalo as far as the eye can see, nor a sky blackened by the presence of so many passenger pigeons. This is not to imply that this change is inherently bad, but we do need to be aware of the effect that some of our choices have had in the past and what they bode for the future.

Group Activity
1. Have the children lay on their backs with their eyes closed or put their heads down on their folded arms while sitting at their desks. Tell them that they are going to do an activity using guided imagery, which is like dreaming while you are awake.

2. To relax them, tell them that there is a warm ball of energy that is in the soles of their feet. As this energy travels up their bodies, it relaxes the muscles. Describe how the energy is moving slowly up their bodies, and how it is relaxing them until it resides in their heads.

3. Now tell them to imagine this ball of glowing energy in their minds. This ball of energy beckons them to follow it down a flight of stairs. As you count down from ten, have the students imagine that they are going down those stairs. As they go down the stairs they are going deeper into themselves. Once they reach the bottom, tell them that they see a beautiful door that is calling to them to open it.

4. Once they enter through the door, describe a beautiful land full of plants and animals. Describe the fantastic sights, the sounds that they hear, the various good smells, and even how the soft grass feels on their bare feet.
**Group Activity (continued)**

5. Now tell them that these plants and animals are disappearing, one by one (e.g.: the musical songs of birds stop, because they are now extinct). Also describe some of the consequences of this plant and animal loss (e.g.: it is getting hotter and hotter because there are no longer trees and the associated shade. The ground is now hard on their feet because it's all stones and there’s no longer any grass). End up with a hot, dry, dusty, barren place much like the surface of the moon or Mars.

6. Have the students find the door by which they entered this place. Have them go through the door and then you count them back up the stairs. When you get to ten they can open their eyes.

**Group Discussion Questions**

1. By a show of hands, how many of you liked the land when you first entered it?

2. What happened to the plants and animals as the story went along?
   A: They begin to disappear.

3. What were some of the consequence of these disappearances?
   A: Could no longer hear the song of the birds, it was getting hotter and hotter due to the lack of trees and shade, etc.

4. How did it make you feel as these things disappeared?

5. How many of you would like to live on the Earth without any plants or animals? Why not? Could we live without plants or animals? Why not?
   A: No, because plants provide food, oxygen, shade, and various natural resources. Animals provide food and various resources.

6. Is this happening on Earth right now?

7. What can we do about it?
   A: Conserve resources, recycle, use clean energy, etc.

**Variations/Extensions**

1. Read *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss. Use the Group Discussion Questions from above.

**Conclusion**

Say, “Together, plants and animals make up much of what we call *nature*. Nature is important to us not only because it helps us meet our basic needs, but because it adds a whole dimension of beauty to our lives.”
To think that a simple seed-head from a flower could be so beautiful! Imagine a world without such beauty. No flowers, animals or sunsets... So sad!