

Tree activity

A reflective outdoor activity
re-connecting with your local treescape
lasting around 30 minutes



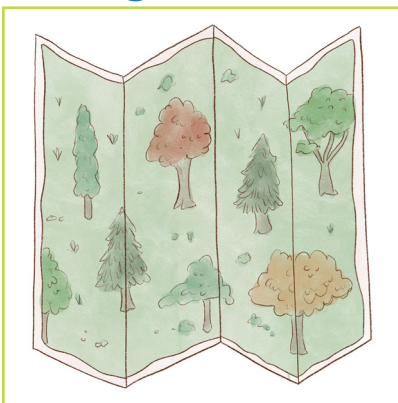
What you will need:

A waterproof bag or something to sit on in case you want to sit down, a watch or phone to keep an eye on time, a notebook and pen or pencil, some water in case you get thirsty. Please silence or mute your phone so you are not distracted.

I come here to listen, to nestle in the curve of the roots in a soft hollow of pine needles, to lean my bones against the column of white pine to turn off the voice in my head until I can hear the voices outside it: the shhh of wind in needles, water trickling over rock, nuthatch tapping, chipmunks digging, beechnuts falling, mosquito in my ear, and something more – something that is not me, for which we have no language, the wordless being of others in which we are never alone. After the drumbeat of my mother's heart, this was my first language.

Quote from the book *Braiding the Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Finding the tree



Walk out into the street, a small park, your garden, the grounds at work and choose a tree (or let a tree choose you!). It could even be a small tree in a pot on a patio if it's difficult for you to get outdoors.

Find a place to stand or sit a little bit away from the tree so you can see it clearly as a whole (anywhere from 1m to 20m). It's important you feel comfortable in the space. If it's too busy you might want to move to another tree or find somewhere quieter.

Stand still and use all your senses to take in the tree – the size and colours, any movement, however small, any smell or sounds. Notice the reach of the tree canopy, the shapes of the branches, the textures of the bark. Think about what is also hidden – the roots beneath the ground, under the bark of the tree, activity in the leaves (if there are any on your tree). Close your eyes whenever you need to. Sometimes it helps to listen or smell better when eyes are closed.

Do this for around 3 minutes.

Do you feel 'welcomed' by this tree – this living being? If you get a strong feeling of 'no' (this is unusual but it can happen!) you can wait a bit longer and see if anything changes or you can look for another tree.

Meeting the tree



Approach the tree slowly. Explore it in any way you choose. Pick up sticks, feel the texture of bark or leaves or seeds with your fingers.

Notice how your relationship with the tree changes as you slowly move closer or further away. Move around the tree. Try to remember to use other senses, not just your eyes.

Do this for around 4 minutes.

Listening to the tree



After a while, find a position that feels right, close to or away from the tree. You could be sitting, lying or standing, you could be in contact with the tree with a part of your body or a short distance away from. Try to 'listen' and be still. Think of yourself with the tree as another living being in that place with you.

You may need to take a moment to really slow down your breath and clear your mind of any thoughts. To help you do this take a few breaths and become aware of your body in contact with the ground (you could take off your shoes). Relax your shoulders, breathe fully and deeply, close your eyes and settle. You breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide, the tree breathes in carbon

dioxide and breathes out oxygen. Become aware of the invisible atmospheric gasses flowing through you and the tree.

Just be there with the tree.

Do this for a minimum of 10 minutes.

When you feel like you have finished

Get out your notebook or paper and write a few reflections, questions or observations or do a quick drawing. If you've never done anything like this before, don't worry - there is no right or wrong thing to do. You can try writing just one word or a question, then draw or scribble something with your eyes closed, then write a question or another word. No one will see this, unless you want to share it. It really can be anything, it might feel completely unrelated to what you have just done or it might be entirely about your experience. You can work with your eyes closed or open. Try and have the courage to try something new here particularly drawing as working without words can be surprising!

3 minutes +

Giving thanks to the tree



Finally, take a moment to give thanks to the tree in any way you would like for example saying something in your head, out-loud or offering something. You might want to take a minute to re-read the quote by Robin Wall-Kimmerer

1 minute

Thank you for taking part.

This activity is designed by Anne-Marie Culhane. It is adapted from a Tree Task devised with members of the creative project Walking Forest - Ruth Ben-Tovim, Lucy Neal, Anne-Marie Culhane and Shelley Castle.