

Social and Emotional Benefits

In an outdoor learning environment

Mental health and social-emotional wellbeing are inextricably tied to healthy growth, development and learning. Experiences in natural environments foster children's emotional intelligence, self discovery, confidence, esteem and regulation.

Self Discovery

- Discovering unique sensations like a cold snowflake on your tongue and sticky honeycomb
- Participating in the planting, growth and harvesting of a garden
- Gaining awareness of and appreciation of senses through first hand experiences



Confidence and Esteem

- Learning personal limitations and capabilities through calculated risks like tree climbing and balancing on stumps.
- Increasing self confidence through hard work aimed at accomplishing set tasks (raking leaves, using tools)
- Developing a sense of agency through learning self help skills (getting dressed independently)

Self Regulation

- Increasing self regulation through large motor movement
- Learning to follow safety rules and focus on immediate task (using tools)
- Identifying own needs and learning to communicate them appropriately
- Developing responsibility for belongings



Social Emotional Benefits

In an outdoor learning environment

The outdoors provides unique opportunities for social engagement and practicing pro-social behaviors. Nature based learning helps children explore and understand relationships, interdependence, and diversity, as well as care, empathy and social responsibility. Exposure and contact with natural spaces is emotionally restorative and a wellspring for inner strength, reduction of stress, and mental fatigue. Spending time in nature cultivates a sense of belonging and an emotional connection to the earth shown to impact children's future environmental stewardship.

Social Engagement

- Working together to accomplish goals (building a snowman)
- Sharing fun with peers
- Encouraging creativity and critical thinking through dramatic play with loose parts



Emotional Well Being

- Enjoying the restorative effects of being in nature
- Developing appreciation for beauty and natural life cycles
- Noticing natural changes by adopting a slower pace
- Feeling the joy of simple pleasures like jumping in puddles
- Building resilience by doing hard work and managing minor physical discomforts

Environmental Stewards

- Building empathy by observing plants and animals
- Developing responsibility by caring for plants and animals and learning to leave no trace and pick up litter
- Building relationships by watching and engaging with plants and animals daily
- Developing a sense of place through emotional connection with the land

