

CURIOSITY IN NATURE

A curious and explorative attitude helps participants connect more deeply with nature, notice the small details of their surroundings, and become more open to experiences. This active presence supports sensory perception, stimulates creativity, and develops observation

skills and systems thinking. Curiosity also brings playfulness, a sense of freedom, reduces inhibitions and anxiety, and can ease connection between participants.

EXPERIENCE: TAKE A PHOTO!

This activity links the benefits of being present in nature with the use of a digital device, such as a phone or tablet. The aim is not to portray the use of these devices as negative, but rather to integrate them as a complement to awareness and experience, and to find a balanced approach. The activity description is included in the appendix.

METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION

- What did the time-limited and structured use of mobile phones add to the impact of the activity?
- How did the experience of “sensory photography” differ from actual photography?
- What pedagogical or group-dynamic goals did this activity serve – and how could similar tools be used in other contexts?



APPENDIX

During forest walks, we usually ask participants to switch their mobile phones to airplane mode and refrain from using them throughout the walk. In this exercise, however, we make an exception. Ask participants to use their devices only during the second part of the activity. It is important to dedicate a separate section to device use, and ensure that devices are not used during the rest of the walk. You may also ask participants in advance to bring a camera, if they have one, and use it instead of a phone.

“In the second part of the upcoming activity, we will exceptionally use mobile phones. But don’t take them out just yet — first we’ll take pictures with our eyes, then with our hands.

Form pairs, where one person is the guide and the other closes their eyes. The guide slowly and carefully leads their partner around the area, ensuring safety, and when they see something in nature that they find particularly beautiful or worth capturing, they gently direct their partner’s head and eyes toward it and say ‘photo’ (or give another agreed signal). The person being led then opens their eyes for one second, then closes them again — taking a mental photograph of what they see. The guided partner should take several such ‘photos’.

(Give the pairs 5–10 minutes, then remind them to switch roles.)

Now we continue the activity individually. Take out your own ‘camera’ (at this point, demonstrate how they can form a photo frame using their thumbs and index fingers). Take a few photos that show something beautiful or interesting from a perspective that might not be visible from other angles. Be creative — explore, search, experiment, zoom in! Think of the biggest, the tiniest, and the most unusual things.

(Again, allow 5–10 minutes for this part.)

Now take out your real camera or phone. Revisit the earlier locations, and slowly, mindfully take photos of them.”

After the activity, invite participants to share their photos with a partner. Then gather in a large circle and reflect together:

- What was this experience like?
- How did the first, second, and third “photographing” differ?
- What did each add to the experience? How were they similar or different?

