

Watching the Clouds: The Benefits of Learning at Nature's Pace

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Learning at the speed of nature helps encourage children to be more **patient**, more **flexible**, and more **open to change**.

Patience

“The butterfly counts not months but moments, and has time enough.” – Rabindranath Tagore

It is tempting to get swept up in outcomes, but focusing instead on the process of learning allows children greater agency in their own education

Incorporate activities that do not have immediate gratification

Gardening, bird watching, chalk/sand art, etc.

More activities, more transitions lead to missed teachable moments

Children need time experience, time to process, time to recall

Our attitudes toward time influence students' attitudes towards time

Consider yourself: Is time an asset or an obstacle?

Patience of mind leads to patience of body, vice versa

Flexibility

“Notice that the stiffest tree is most easily cracked, while the bamboo or willow survived by bending with the wind.” – Bruce Lee

Dynamic learning environments improve long-term recall, invite opportunities for adaptability

Learning outside requires planning on the part of teachers and students

There is value in teaching children to recognize the limits of their power; always change what you can, weather the things you cannot

Learn/teach seasonally

Be aware of surroundings, use what nature provides

The use of natural materials guarantees novelty in the learning environment, stretches budgets further, and frees up time for teachers and students to connect

Openness to Change

“There is a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.” – Leonard Koren

Nature is fast and slow, a fact that should be reflected in learning styles/environments

Wabi-sabi: “nurture all that is authentic by acknowledging three simple realities: nothing lasts, nothing is finished, and nothing is perfect” (Powell, 2004)

The best things in life are those you cannot keep

Transient objects can be used to help teach social-emotional intelligence

Embrace positive emotions, recognize and reconcile negative emotions

Non-anthropocentric thinking helps make sense of sad or unexpected moments, such as loss or death

Additional Reading

Carey, B. (2014). *How we learn: The surprising truth about when, where, and why it happens*. New York: Random House.

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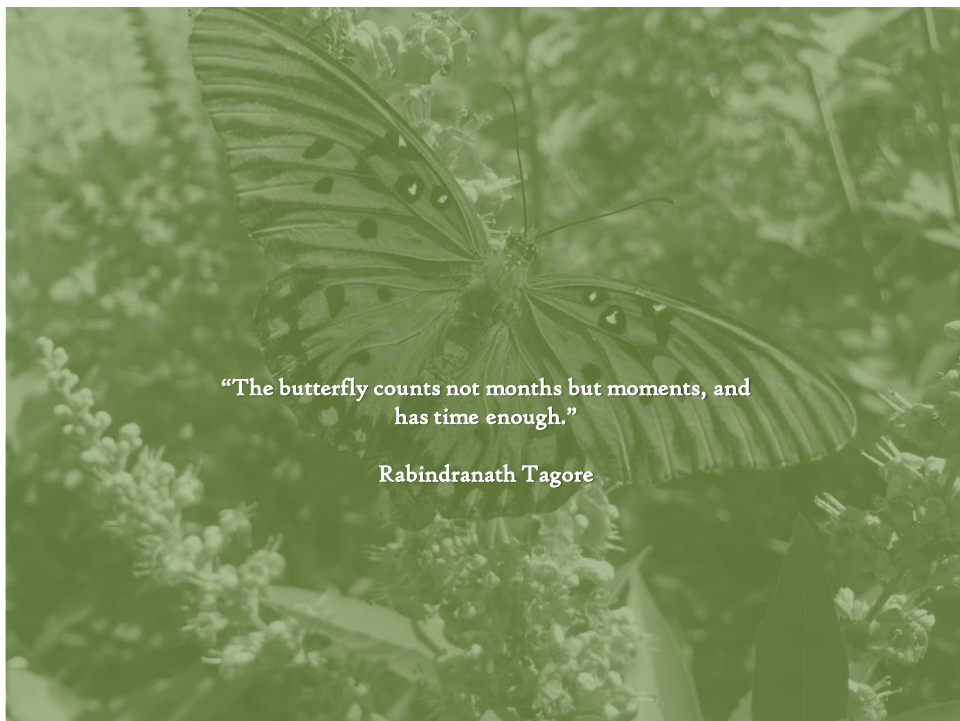
"Developmentally appropriate outdoor education for young children is one way to counteract this disconnect. Time interacting with nature supports whole child learning and the development of key foundational skills"

Veselack, Chang, & Miller, 2010

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PATIENCE

The learning journey is more important than its destination

Breaking away from immediate gratification

Gardening, bird watching are all about the action, not the reward



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PATIENCE

Hastiness leads to missed learning opportunities

Help students slow down, notice small things

Natural world moves at a slower pace, requires longer duration of focus to appreciate

The value of perseverance

Students need more time, and they have plenty

Be patient with them, encourage them to be patient with themselves



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PATIENCE

Patience of mind, patience of body

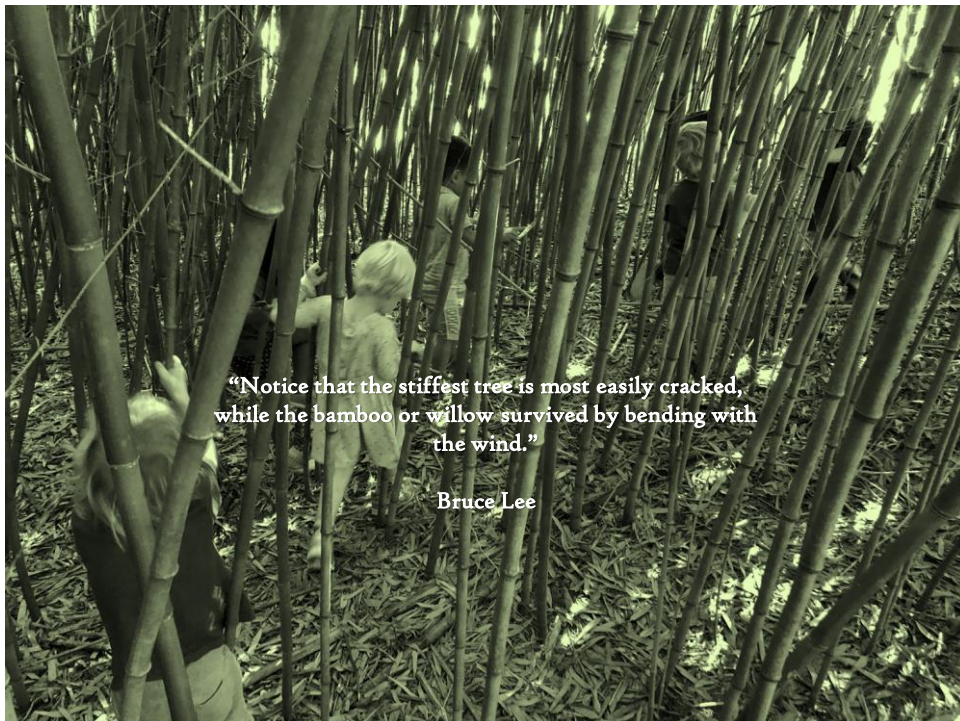
Exercises in mindfulness translate
to better muscle control

Mental calm and physical stillness
are connected

Creates more opportunities for
observation, careful study



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"Notice that the stiffest tree is most easily cracked,
while the bamboo or willow survived by bending with
the wind."

Bruce Lee

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FLEXIBILITY

Natural environments are dynamic, necessitate adaptability from students and teachers

Outdoor exploration is made possible by planning, forward thinking

Creative problem solving in the face of adversity

Adopting a healthy mindset towards circumstances out of our control

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FLEXIBILITY

Use artificial and natural materials

Some students identify the best learning materials by scarcity

Think seasonally

Natural materials allow teachers to spend more time scaffolding, interacting

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OPENNESS TO CHANGE

Understanding of cycles of
change help students
understand unfortunate events

Reconsider seemingly sad
circumstance on a different
timeframe

Death as recycling



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An Invitation

Take your time, invite
students to take theirs

Less is sometimes more; favor
depth over breadth

Treat time as a friend, not an
enemy



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References

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