



To aide in nature connection remotely, we have created self-guided activities and lessons for children and adults to enjoy the park and learn along the way. We hope this inspires you to slow down, learn about our beautiful park, and build deep connections with nature. Please bring a clipboard and pen or pencil.

Expanding Our Senses

Adapted from Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature

These motions were created to strengthen our five senses and identify how animals use them. They can be incorporated into your walk at any time, as well as at home!

Owl Eyes:

This is a way of using peripheral vision. Pick a single point somewhere straight ahead of you, glue your eyes on it, and imagine that your eyeballs can't move, just like an owl's eyes. Owl's big eyes are literally stuck in place, so they turn their heads all around when they want to focus. They spend most of their hunting time open eyed and gazing widely, waiting to notice the tiniest movement in the field for food. Imagine and become an owl perched on a tree; feel the wind ruffle your feathers, feel your sharp talons and the strength in your wings.

Still anchored on that single point, let your eyes go soft into peripheral vision and notice that without moving your eyes you can see in all directions for 180°. You naturally use this type of vision when you look at the night sky hoping to catch a shooting star, or when you want to catch the hidiers in hide and seek (it's also how moms see everything!).

Now stretch your peripheral vision: hold your hands straight out in front of you and wiggle your fingers. Notice that you can see the wiggling movement. Now move your arms slowly out towards your sides with your eyes still looking straight ahead; stretch the edges of your vision sideways as far as you can to still notice the wiggling. Bring your wiggling hands back in front of you, then stretch one up and one down to widen your vision vertically.

Relax your arms and now notice with your Owl eyes if you can see tiny movements of leaves when the breeze lifts them. Notice all the different colors you can see, the different shapes, the shades of light and dark – all without moving your eyes once.

Deer Ears:

Let your ears become the huge ears of a deer. Deer ears have bulging muscles that can turn about like satellite dishes to focus on different sounds. To put on deer ears, cup your hands behind your ears and turn your head to focus on certain sounds. Do you notice that the sounds become louder? Now cup your hands and put them in front of your ears, so you can hear behind you without turning around. Does it make a difference?

While also keeping your vision wide, pay attention to all the sounds around you. What do you hear in front of you? From your sides? Behind you? Are there constant sounds, like wind or running water, birds, or maybe your own breath? Listen for soft sudden sounds like little birds or buzzes. Where are they coming from? What is the closest sound? What is the furthest sound?

Raccoon Touch:

Now, use the touch of raccoons. Raccoons feel their way through the world because they do not have very good vision or hearing, but they have long and amazingly sensitive fingers. If you have ever seen a tiny print in the mud that looks like a humans, it is a raccoons! They can use them to break into our garbage cans and then feel for the food they want. So, while keeping your Owl Eyes stretched ahead and your hearing tuned, feel with your skin.

Feel the clothes on your body. Feel your feet touching the ground. Do you feel heavy? Light? Do some parts of your body feel cold and some warm? Feel the sun on your skin. Feel the wind on your skin; which way does the wind blow? Feel your heart breathing. Touch the soil beneath you. Is it wet? Dry? Rocky?

Dog Nose:

Think of dogs you have seen walking down the street with their noses to the ground, sniffing everything as they go. Turn into a dog (or coyote) and pay attention to your sense of smell. Take quick sniffs of the air around you like a dog. What do you smell?

Can you smell differently with a long breath than with quick sniffs? Try taking a long slow breath in through you nose. Try sucking in a tiny bit of air through just parted lips. Get down on all fours like a dog or pick up a leaf or handful of dirt and hold it close to your nose. If it's safe, taste your leaf. What do you smell? Does it smell like it tastes? How would you describe it? What smells hit your nose the strongest? Still keep your Owl Eyes wide and your Deer Ears perked and your Raccoon Touch sensitive.

Synthesis:

Now turn on all your senses together. Let your eyes be soft and stretched, listen with your ears to the little sounds around you, feel the wind on your face, smell the air with long breaths. Hold this whole, wide-open awareness for as long as you can stand it. How long can you simply pay attention like a wild animal? Some animals do this all day long, that is why we never see them. By expanding your senses, you too can have the awareness of a wild animal.

Human Taste:

If you brought a snack on your walk, pause to eat a few things out of it while blindfolded. Use your Raccoon Touch, Deer Ears, and Dog Nose to sort through what you want and how to open the container. Pay attention to how your food tastes. Does it taste different when you cannot see it? Better? Worse? Do you notice anything about it that maybe you did not notice before?