

# Little Acts with Nature:

Feeling healthier & happier through daily connections with nature



## Children Need Nature

Nature is one of children's most valuable assets. Daily experiences within naturally rich environments can transform the way children learn, grow and live. By choosing learning and play environments that weave in opportunities to **experience** nature and the great outdoors, children will develop **connections** with nature that support a wonderful array of health, social and environmental benefits.

Increasing urbanisation, busy lifestyles, our obsession with screen-based technologies, reduced access to green space, and increasing phobias about outdoor environments are all contributing to the decline in opportunities to connect with the natural world.

*Three out of four adults played outdoors more often than indoors when they were young, compared to only one in ten children today<sup>1</sup>*

This decline in connection to the great outdoors has been linked to a number of mental and physical health concerns in children including obesity, anxiety, attention deficit disorder, poor cognitive development, low self-esteem, stress and even depression. Correlated with this, we are also seeing a reduction in the understanding, concern and support for the natural environment particularly amongst younger age groups.



<sup>1</sup> <http://treeday.planetark.org/documents/doc-1292-needing-trees-key-findings-2015.pdf>

## Nature's Benefits

Nature provides children with enriching experiences to help build healthy, happy childhoods, by teaching children to:

- **Manage risks** - tree climbing, balancing on logs and crossing a creek all improve motor and cognitive skills whilst learning to distinguish the difference between perceived and real dangers.
- **Engage with their senses** - seeing a flower change from bud to full bloom; hearing cicadas call on a hot day; smelling nectar laden eucalypt flowers; feeling the cool freshness of water flowing in a creek or the warmth of sun on the face or wind in the hair - all offer the ultimate sensory experiences to a growing child.
- **Develop emotional intelligence** - during nature play, children learn to manage their emotions. Whether addressing fear, developing confidence or developing a sense of place and belonging - nature is the perfect teacher.
- **Improve social skills** - children learn how to negotiate, compromise and navigate problem solving with others. Nature play involves constant communication where children learn how to become flexible and stand up for their own needs and the needs of others.



*Creating opportunities for children to experience nature through sensory interaction – enabling children to be engaged and delighted whilst also sharing their stories and experiences on the sounds, scents, patterns and textures of nature.*

## Who we are

The Connective is a group of professionals from the health, environment and evidence specialist sectors that research, understand and tailor make nature-based programs so you and your community can connect better with nature. We invite you to participate in our programs, view the stories on our website, contribute to conversations and use the shared resources.

