

The Golden Thread of Truth Presents:

Interfaith Programs for Kids & Teens



A Twelve Month Program Volume 2

Welcome to The Golden Thread of Truth Annual Curriculum, Volume 2! The intention of this material is to teach our children that all the world's religions support a consistent message about the truth of who we are. Stories from Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Native American traditions and contemporary authors support the same underlying messages and values. Love thy neighbor. You reap what you sow. We are stewards of the earth and each other. Treat others as you would like to be treated. Parents around the world, from all religious beliefs, cultures and lifestyles, teach these values to their children through timeless stories.

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Month #5: Unexpected Wisdom

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May 2016: Unexpected Wisdom

Week #1: Power v. Patience

Main Message: Many people believe that the best way to get things done is to use force. But sometimes, the gentle, supportive approach is better than the brutal, forceful approach. Using your patience, instead of your power, can be the key to accomplishing your goals. Patience includes trusting in the result, trusting your instinct and trusting your experience. If you force the result, because of your ego, or your need for approval, many times you interfere with what could be the best result.

Readings:

“I believe that a trusting attitude and a patient attitude go hand in hand. You see, when you let go and learn to trust God, it releases joy in your life. And when you trust God, you're able to be more patient. Patience is not just about waiting for something... it's about how you wait, or your attitude while waiting.” ~ Joyce Meyer

“Have patience with all things, But, first of all with yourself.” ~ Saint Francis de Sales

In mythology, disobeying the gods is generally a Bad Idea, but in this retold Mayan tale it leads to a happy ending. Deciding that he needs a new servant, rain god Chac snatches a girl known (except to Chac, of course) for her willfulness. An ensuing series of mishaps culminates in the girl's expropriation of Chac'. But all his powers can't give him the patience to handle a mischievous mortal girl he plucks from the forest to be his servant.

Lesson: The Girl who wouldn't obey

There are three 'chacs' who live in the sky over the land of Maya. One day, the Chac who was lord of the sun decided he needed a service. Chac was used to everyone doing what he wants them to do. Then he comes across a little girl who will not do what the god wants her to do.

Chac dived down into the forest and grabbed a girl and carried her to his home in the sky. “From now on, you must do whatever I tell you to do,” he said. Unfortunately, Chac didn't know that the girl he had stolen rarely did what she was told. In fact, that very

morning, the girl's father had told her to help her brother catch some fish for dinner but instead the girl had run off into the forest to play.

Chac asks the girl to pick all the corn in the field. But instead, the girl danced amongst the corn in the field. Chac was very angry and asked the lord of the wind to blow fiercely on the girl. When the wind blew, the girl held on tight but all of the corn was released from its stock and formed in a large pile. The girl was delighted and told Chac all the corn was harvested.

Next, Chac asked the girl to wash out the stables of the horses. But the girl instead saw the beautiful ponies and decided to ride one around the stable to the delight of the horse. Chac was angry and sent the lord of the rain to drop much water on the girl and, as a result, washed out all the dirty hay from the stables while the girl and horse watched. After the rain ended the girl told Chac the stables were clean.

Finally Chac asked the girl to gather firewood to warm the animals in the barn. The girl decided to play with the animals instead and the sun god got angrier and angrier - which resulted in the sun getting hotter and hotter and warming the animals in a sunny, toasty glow.

At long last, the girl was sent home. The moral of the story is, know that force can many times back fire from its original intent. Those who live a life of peace and joy shall be rewarded.

Questions and Answers

Q1. Why did the girl not do as she was told

A1. She was following her delight and playing

Q2. How was the girl punished?

A2. She was not punished but helped by the gods who tried to punish her.

Q3. Why was she rewarded for not obeying orders?

A3. She was not rewarded, she allowed nature to take its course.

Craft/Activity

Many times, the outcome of an intended action is not as expected. Use this craft to show an 'unexpected' outcome.

Material:

Construction paper
scissors

Directions:

Fold the paper accordion style. cut ½ trees, clouds and birds - unfold to see!

Try several different shapes to create unexpected results!



Advanced Material for 4th and 5th Grade

Nerino and the Beast

When young Nerino was made chief of the tribe, everyone expected that – as was the custom on the island – he would direct his attention to fighting the great fiery-eyed beast; a horrible creature that had terrorized the tribespeople for centuries. Nerino had promised to slay the beast and, though he was a good fighter, he seemed no better than the others who had previously perished in the attempt. The tribe reckoned that, as chief, he wouldn't last much more than a year. This was about the amount of time needed to train and prepare a band of warriors, prior to ascending to the volcano's summit, where their horrendous enemy lived. And once they got there, no matter how strong or brave they were, all the warriors would be annihilated within a couple of hours.

However, nothing was done. Nerino didn't train any fighters, nothing out of the ordinary was done, no new assault tactics were devised. When summer came - the time the monster attacked most frequently, engulfing all in flames from his fiery eye - all the tribe did was move their village.

Everyone looked worryingly and insistently at Nerino. They demanded that he fight, that he do something, that he should be brave and fulfill the destiny of a chief. But Nerino simply said:

-“I shall defeat the beast, but now is not the time.”

And so the years passed by, and Nerino became an old man. And though they respected him as their chief, and his strategy of moving their village around the island had saved many lives, all the people believed he was a coward.

Yet, just when no-one expected it, Nerino finally assembled a squad of fighters. He announced this suddenly, without warning, on a cold winter night. Snow was rare on the island, but now it blanketed the ground, and the band of warriors had to march out

barefoot, with frozen feet. They hurriedly ascended the volcano and, at the summit, they approached the monster's cave. Nerino confidently entered, while his companions performed the usual death preparation rituals, ready to leave this life...

When they were all inside they cave they saw old Nerino standing over the beast. The monster was lying, curled up, on the ground, trembling and groaning, close to death. Nerino and his warriors easily took the creature prisoner.

On arriving back at the village, everyone wanted to hear about Nerino's fight with the monster. Not even the tiniest baby was absent when Nerino began telling his story:

"I never intended to fight against something so terrifying, and nor did I do so today," he said, filling all with surprise and expectation. He continued.

"Did none of you notice that the beast would never attack during the worst days of winter? Or that, after an especially cold spell, his fire was never very strong, nor his attacks very damaging? For many years I was waiting for a snow as heavy as this one. All along, we didn't need fighters; we needed the cold. When we got to the volcano, the monster was so weak he couldn't fight. Finally we have put an end to fighting and death. Now we have the beast, and his fiery eye, at our service."

Everyone congratulated the chief for his wisdom, particularly those who had most criticized him for supposed cowardice.

And so it was that even the most impatient among the tribe learned that, sometimes, patience can be much more useful than action, even if it means you require the bravery to accept people treating you like a coward.

Q. Many times we see that the unexpected action can have the biggest result. And many times, people do not understand the purpose behind the unexpected action until they see the result. Where have you seen examples of this in your own life?

1. Planting lettuce seeds (a cold crop) right before a snow storm can produce the strongest plants
2. Washing a dish that had raw eggs in it with cold water so the eggs do not set and become hard to get off (like they would with hot water wash)

If you have the capability, you can cut a glass with oil - see this YouTube video for instructions.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hJmYR-iYe0>

Tween & Teen Additional Interactive Activity: Power v. Force

Tweens and Teens will also explore the thought spectrum from the book Power vs. Force by David R. Hawkins.

Hawkins postulated that only a few (i.e., Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, etc.) ever achieved the 1,000 level. He goes on to say that human consciousness as whole is just below 200—200 is the level that separates the positive from the negative. According to Hawkins, Gandhi had a consciousness

of 700 and was able to defeat the British Army whose collective consciousness was 175. That's the power of the log scale difference between power (high consciousness) and force.

Activity: Many times, people act from Shame, the lowest level on the Power v. Force Grid.

Take each situation listed below and explore how you could react from a place of power and from a place of force.

1. **A baby is born with two fingers missing from her left hand**
2. **Someone steals \$20 from your wallet**
3. **Your favorite sports team wins a championship game**
4. **Someone is singing the national anthem and their voice cracks**

	Level	Scale (Log of)	Emotion	Process	Life-View
P O W E R	Enlightenment	700-1,000	Ineffable	Pure Consciousness	Is
	Peace	600	Bliss	Illumination	Perfect
	Joy	540	Serenity	Transfiguration	Complete
	Love	500	Reverence	Revelation	Benign
	Reason	400	Understanding	Abstraction	Meaningful
	Acceptance	350	Forgiveness	Transcendence	Harmonious
	Willingness	310	Optimism	Intention	Hopeful
	Neutrality	250	Trust	Release	Satisfactory
	Courage	200	Affirmation	Empowerment	Feasible
F O R C E	Pride	175	Dignity (Scorn)	Inflation	Demanding
	Anger	150	Hate	Aggression	Antagonistic
	Desire	125	Craving	Enslavement	Disappointing
	Fear	100	Anxiety	Withdrawal	Frightening
	Grief	75	Regret	Despondency	Tragic
	Apathy	50	Despire	Abdication	Hopeless
	Guilt	30	Blame	Destruction	Condemnation (Evil)
	Shame	20	Humiliation	Elimination	Miserable

Affirmation: “My thoughts are directed by Love”

Week #2: Creating From Joy

Main Message: The story of the creation of our world has been told many times by many cultures and religions around the world. This week, on Mother's day, we look at creation and know that just as the world is created, we are each also a divine creation. And, what we create, is OUR world. Use the lessons, stories and videos below to create an experience in class honoring all the stories of creation of the world and ourselves.

Readings:

Every act of creation is first an act of destruction. Pablo Picasso

Lesson: The Goddess Dances the World Awake: A Creation Story - retold by Starhawk

Long ago before anything was, the Goddess awoke alone in the vast dark and emptiness. She had as yet no name and no form, but she felt an urge to move. She stretched, she rocked, she began to dance. Whirling and twirling, she wheeled and spiraled through space.

Her dance set in motion a great wind that followed her, playing catch, trying to caress her. The Goddess danced with the wind, and the wind took form, becoming the God in the shape of a great serpent, Ophion. Ophion wrapped his coils around the Goddess, trying to become one with her, loving her with all his being.

Suddenly the Goddess felt something stirring inside her, as if her dance had come alive. Something wanted to be born. She reached out, and her arms became wings. As a giant dove, she flew aloft while Ophion coiled himself into a nest for her. She settled onto his back and laid a huge, huge egg. Ophion guarded the egg, sheltering it from below as the Goddess brooded it from above. At last the egg cracked open and the whole universe fell out - suns and stars and galaxies, water fell from the sky on the planets and gave birth to grasses and animals. A world was born.

Questions and Answers

Q1. Why did the Dove lay the egg?

A1. It was her instinct

Q2. What was the importance of Ophion, the snake

A2. The snake is present in many stories of creation. Here, the snake guarded the egg until it cracked open. Presumably, without Ophion protection the egg, it might not have fulfilled its purpose.

Q3. When do we see snakes like Ophion protecting our creations?

A3. When something that is unfolding for us is supported by something or someone who is bigger, older, stronger, smarter, whatever we need as support in that moment - that is our Ophion.

In honor of Prince who made his transition last week, if it appropriate for your class, play the Prince song "When Doves Cry"

<http://mp3goo.com/download/prince-when-doves-cry/>

Craft: Dove from the story

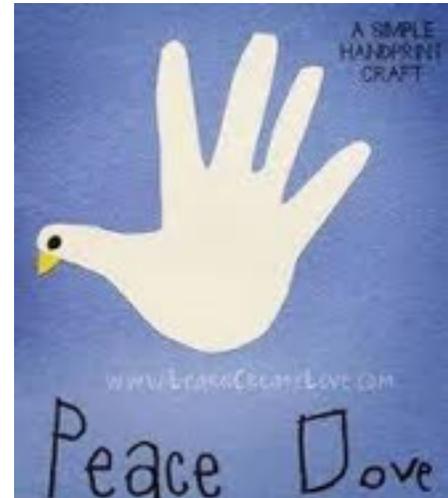
Material:

Construction paper

Markers

Directions:

Trace hand and cut out and glue on paper



For a more advanced Dove craft, find one here <http://www.catholicicing.com/holy-spirit-craft-make-a-dove-from-a-paper-plate/>

Advanced Material for 4th and 5th Grade Tween: The Unity of Creation Stories

As a human race, we have always wondered about what we don't know, like the why and how we are on this planet, why we are alive, and more. And well, every culture try to explain this in their own words through some creation myths.

Creation Myths

Some of these myths start with a birth, which represents life.

In every story there is a Supreme Being (usually a God), and its the one that starts the engines you might say for the creation of the universe. But not every myth share this, some others believe that life came from either above or below where we are standing, others that the Earth was covered in water and the land was raised up.

As time goes by, we are still trying to come up with ideas or theories in how everything was created. Even in this time, there are still new myths about our own creation, and even using scientific evidence, the old tales are still surviving though songs and tales.

Watch a few of these tales from different cultures and see what is the same and different.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMvlpEdMDHg&list=PL7C30E7CBB2AA4304>

Tween & Teen Additional Interactive Activity: Teen: Creation stories and creating in your life

The story of creation is, at its core, the story of creating life. And, the same principles apply to creating your own life. Notice the order of each story.

1. Creation happens spontaneously - it may be anticipated but when it happens, it happens spontaneously
2. Creation happens from the inside out - there is not something that comes from 'outside' somewhere. It cannot happen 'to' you - it happens 'through' you and 'as' you
3. Creation changes the form of what was present before. Once something has been created, it cannot be put back together.
4. Creation cannot be stopped. Once a change is in motion, it will fulfill to its glorious conclusion. And, the conclusion is always glorious - for God is always good.

Finally, why were we each created? Many times this is called our Divine Purpose. But, at its core, we are each a unique creation with unique gifts on our own unique path. AND, only each one of us can determine what is our reason for creation. (Tip: follow your instincts)

Week #3: Coyote Power

Main Message: In the Native American culture, the Coyote is a symbol of wisdom, strength and courage. Many feel the coyote's habit of alert awareness of the world around them is due to their instinct. Native American's shared stories and always used the world around them - animals, planets, plants, seasons - to tell their stories. Each of us has instincts and by fine tuning our awareness of our instincts, we are experiencing our spiritual truths.

Readings:

*For the earth he drew a straight line,
For the sky a bow above it;
White the space between for day-time,
Filled with little stars for night-time;
On the left a point for sunrise,
On the right a point for sunset,
On the top a point for noontide,
And for rain and cloudy weather
Waving lines descending from it.
~ Henry Longfellow*

Lesson: A Coyote Story - An Ojibwa Legend:

The religion of Native Americans was dominated by rituals and belief in a spiritual connection with nature and these beliefs were reflected in the various symbols and pictograms they used such as the Coyote symbol.

Coyote was walking along a lake and saw a flock of ducks, which put him in the mood for a good duck dinner. So he stuffed a bag full of grass and walked past the ducks, stepping lively and signing a catchy tune. "Where are you going?" asked one of the ducks.

"I am going to a circle," replied Coyote. "What's in the bag?" asked the duck.

"Songs that I am bringing to the circle," replied Coyote.'

"Oh, please sing your songs for us," the ducks all said. "I'm very busy"

"Please, please, please, please ... " "I'm running late" "Please, please, please please..." "Oh, all right. I'll sing a song for you, but I need your help. All of you

stand in three lines, the fattest ones in the front, those in the middle who are neither fat nor thin, and the thin ones in back. All of you close your eyes and dance and sing as loud as you can. Don't anyone open your eyes or stop singing, because my songs are very powerful and if you do that you may go blind! Is everyone ready?" "We are!" replied the ducks, and they fell into lines and began dancing and signing along with Coyote's tune.

Coyote moved up and down the line, thumping the ducks on the head and stuffing them into his bag. The ducks were singing and dancing so hard that no one could hear the thumps or know what was happening.

This would have gone on till none were left, if not for one scraggly duck in the back who opened his eyes and saw what was going on. "Hey, he's going to get us all!" cried the scraggly one.

At this point, the other surviving ducks opened their eyes and made their getaway. Coyote wasn't too upset, he already had a lot of ducks in his bag. He went home and ate good for a good while.

The ducks went home and mourned their dead, and gave thanks to The Great Duck that one of them had been wise enough to open his eyes, and that the rest of them had been wise enough to listen to the one who gave the warning.

Questions and Answers

Q1. Who is "The Great Duck"

A1. It was the scraggly duck's instinct.

Q2. What is instinct?

A2. It is that small, inner voice that can be heard above all other sound and all other noise.

Q3. When can we hear our instinct?

A3. When we purposely put our mind on listening to it.

Craft/Activity:

Create a story including the Coyote.

Material

Brown Paper Bags

Scissors

Charcoal/black marker/pencil



Directions

Cut a brown paper bag into a shape and size that resembles piece of leather.

Use Native American Symbols to create a 'story'. For example:

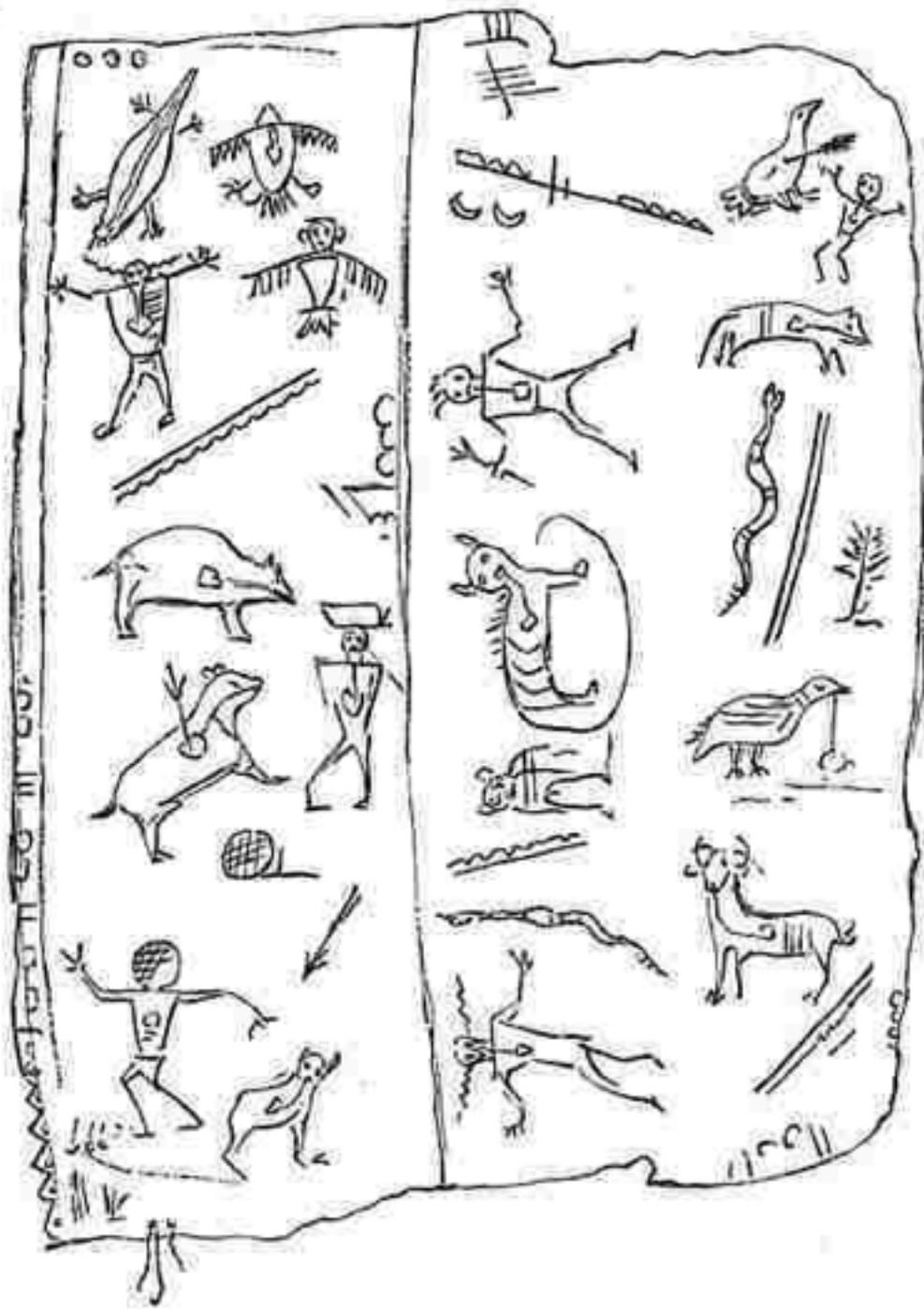
The Coyote walks through the woods

Man appears from behind a tree

A bear comes running toward them

The man jumps on the back of the coyote and they run away from the bear

The bear stops



Advanced Material for 4th and 5th Grade

When we speak of animal instinct, we are using the stories as examples for the way life works. Many times, being focused on 'man-made' creations, instead of 'nature' creations can move us away from our own instinctual center.

Back in the early days, before electronics, people needed a way to communicate with people who were far away. How did the Native Americans communicate?

Smoke signals!

Smoke signals were not a standardized code as in the sign language. Inasmuch as they aimed to transmit secret knowledge, most or many of the signs were devised privately and to suit a particular purpose. As the signals were visible to all, unless they had a secretly understood significance they would be conveying the information alike to friend and enemy. There were, however, certain more or less recognized abstract smoke signals, of which the following are a few.

One puff meant ATTENTION. Two puffs meant ALL'S WELL. Three puffs of smoke, or three fires in a row, signifies DANGER, TROUBLE, OR A CALL FOR HELP.

To create smoke signals, the people would first pre-arrange their code of signals, then some members of the party go to an adjacent high hill or mountain, where they build a fire for the purpose on a visible point. After bringing the small fire to a blaze, a smoke fire is created by adding some handfuls of grass or with some green branches which may have been carried up for the purpose. Apart from the fire the most necessary adjunct is a blanket or tarp to control the smoke, which when the fire is smoking well is liberated in a series of puffs, which convey the message.

Activity:

Have the children break into two groups and each devise their own code with their hands. (such as 1 finger up is attention, 2 fingers up is alls well, 3 fingers up is danger)

Give situations and see if the other group of children can figure out the first groups code.

Examples:

- I see evidence of a bear very near by
- It is time for dinner
- The beaver dam has broken

Tween & Teen Additional Interactive Activity:

Most of our actions in a day come from a place of reaction. Reacting to what someone said. Reacting to something we see. And, most of the time, these reactions don't need any further examination. If food is put before you, you eat it, you don't have to examine the reason behind the food. Or, do you?

As our world has gotten busier, we are more focused on communicating (seeing and hearing) through 'man-made' methods (phones, entertainment) vs. nature methods. In the story of the Coyote, many believe the ducks might have all died and been eaten if they had continued to let the song and dance be the only thing they heard. But, when one listened to their instincts and opened their eyes, they saw the world in a different way.

This story opens up a discussion about what is just a response or reaction to a situation, and what is instinct. For each of us to follow our instincts instead of just reacting, we need to rely on the impulses that come from within us.

Activity: The hand-slap game!

- *Red hands, also known as hot hands, slapsies, slap jack, red tomato (Northern Britain), slaps, or simply the hand-slap game, is a game which can be played by two players.*
- *One player (the "slappee") places their hands palm down, hovering above the other player's (the "slapper") hands. The slapper hovers their hands below the slappee's, palms up. The two players' hands should be barely touching each other, and all the hands should be around mid-torso height.*
- *The slapper is on offense, and attempts to bring his hands over to slap the backsides of his opponent's hands. This must be done with sufficient speed, because the slappee's goal is to pull their hands away, and out of the area where the hands overlap, to avoid the slap. If the slapper misses the hands of the slappee during the slap, then the roles switch. However, the slappee cannot flinch too much.*

Variations: Many times it is easier to anticipate when the slapper is going to move their hands when you study their eyes.

Variation #1: Have both people close their eyes

Variation #2: Have only the slapper close their eyes

Variation #3: Have only the slappee close their eyes

Variation #4: Have both people look into each other's eyes

Consider: When you can anticipate what the other person is going to do, is this based on your own instinct?

Week #4: The Flow of Nature

Main Message: Many times, actions can seem unrelated. The action of one person or other living being can many times be critical to the survival of an entire species. This week, we look at how nature teaches us that the unknown purpose of an activity is often exactly what is needed for the expansion of all.

Readings:

When the flower blooms, the bees come uninvited. Ramakrishna

Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better. _
Albert Einstein

Lesson: Divine Flow in Nature.

All animals make adjustments with each change of seasons. This is in alignment with the 'Allness of Good' that is present and at work throughout winter, and hiding the debit from its enemies by giving him a white fur coat to blend against the snow of winter.

What we see in nature is many times an exquisite dance of different animals and plants to create a world that is in the greatest good for all.

Bees land on flowers to collect nectar for their honey. And, in the process, pollinate the flowers.



Many birds live on large animals and eat the ticks from their fur - thus helping the large animal as well as themselves.

Ocellularis clownfish and Ritter's sea anemones is a mutual service-service symbiosis, the fish driving off butterfly fish and the anemone's tentacles protecting the fish from predators.

Questions and Answers

Q1. Do you think the relationships between these different creatures were born this way or did they evolve?

A1. They had to have been born that way or else the organism who is fed or protected would not have survived.

Q2. How can we gain more wisdom by studying nature?

A2. We cannot explain, predict or understand everything there is to know about nature. So much is left to be discovered.

Q3. Why did Albert Einstein say “Curiosity” and “Imagination” are more important than intelligence?

A3. Because when we are curious about the world around us and the world within us, we can uncover fabulous insights.

Craft: Dandelions -

Material:

Paper
Paint

Directions:

Draw a dandelion stem and have the children create they white seeds with white paper on their fingertips.



Advanced Material for 4th and 5th Grade

The more we understand about any law of nature in its universal action, the more definitely we can use it for personal purposes. Principles are universal. Principle of mind means 'how Mind works.' Mind thinks and respond to thought.

There is a term for when two species form a bond together for their mutual expansion and growth.

One example of mutualism - The Human and the Dog..

Mutualism is distinguished from the other two types of symbiosis, because in this variety both creatures benefit. Thus, there is no host, and theoretically the partners are equal, though in practice one usually holds dominance over the other. An example of this inequality is the relationship between humans and dogs. In this relationship, both human and dog clearly benefit: the dog by receiving food, shelter, and care and the human by receiving protection and loving companionship—the last two being benefits the dog also receives from the human. Additionally, some dogs perform specific tasks, such as fetching slippers, assisting blind or disabled persons, or tracking prey for hunting or crime-solving purposes.

For all this exchange of benefits, one of the two animals, the human, clearly holds the upper hand. There might be exceptions in a few unusual circumstances, such as dog lovers who are so obsessive that they would buy food for their dogs before feeding themselves. Such exceptions, however, are rare indeed, and it can be said that in almost all cases the human is dominant.

What other examples of cases in nature where two organisms are better when they combine than when they are apart.

Tween & Teen Additional Interactive Activity - The Orange

Finding the flow for the good of all. - the Orange

Material:

Oranges

Directions:

See if your group can determine the best way to split an orange two ways (one cuts the orange and the other picks) or three ways

Overview Children compete for possession of an orange and discuss how to resolve conflicts when everything is not what it seems..

Preparation • None

Materials • One orange

Instructions

1. Explain that the group is going to play 'the Orange Game'. Divide the children into two groups. Ask Group A to go outside and wait for you. Tell Group B that in this activity their goal is to get the orange because they need its juice to make orange juice.
2. Go outside and tell Group A that their goal in this activity is to get the orange because they need the peel of the orange to make an orange cake.
3. Bring both groups together inside and ask each group to sit in a line facing each other.
4. Tell the groups that they have three minutes to get what they need. Emphasise that they should not use violence to get what they want. Then place one orange between the two groups and say, "Go".

Usually someone will take the orange and one group will have it and how the groups deal with the situation will be a surprise. Sometimes groups will try to negotiate to divide the orange in half.

At other times they will not negotiate at all. Sometimes the groups will communicate further and realize that they both need different parts of the orange; someone from one of the groups will peel the orange, taking the part they need. Do not interfere.

5. After three minute say, "Stop" or "Time's up".

Questions

1. Debrief the activity by asking question such as these:
 - a. Did your group get what it wanted before the three minutes were up?
 - b. What was your group's goal?
 - c. What was the outcome of the conflict over the orange?
 - d. What did you do to achieve this outcome?
 - e. Why is it important for people to communicate in order to resolve conflicts?
 - g. Do people always want the same thing in a conflict?
 - h. Have you ever experienced similar situations? What was the outcome?

Week #5: The Courage of Nature

Main Message: Nature's constant is adaptability to change, to challenges and to the unexpected. This is the definition of courage - to adapt and change, to have faith in yourself and in your wisdom. And, just as in nature, our wisdom is led by a deep, intuitive guidance. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't but when we embrace and learn from either outcome, we exhibit courage. Have the courage to use your own understanding, It is our duty to think for ourselves.

Readings:

Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature. — Helen Keller

Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I'll try again tomorrow. — Mary Anne Radmacher

Lesson: An Octopus in Trouble

By Pedro Pablo Sacristán

Once upon a time there was a shy and quiet octopus. He nearly always went about on his own because, although he wanted to have lots of friends, he was too self-conscious.

One day, **the octopus was trying to catch a very slippery oyster**. Before he knew it, he had tied himself into one massive knot, and he couldn't move. He tried with all his strength to wriggle free, but it was no good. In the end, **despite the great embarrassment he felt at being seen in such a tangle**, he had to ask for help from the passing fish. Many fish swam past, ignoring him, **but one very kind little fish offered to help to untie all those tentacles from all those suckers**.

The octopus felt heartily relieved when he was finally set free, but he was so shy that he didn't dare talk to the fish and make friends with him. He simply thanked the fish, and quickly swam off. Later, **the octopus spent the whole night thinking that he had wasted a great opportunity to make friends with that very kind little fish**.

A couple of days later the octopus was resting between some rocks, when he noticed that everyone around was hurriedly swimming past. He looked into the distance and saw an enormous fish coming over to feed in that area. The octopus quickly hid; then, **peeping an eye out from his hiding place**, he saw that the huge fish was chasing the kind little fish who had untied him. That little fish really needed urgent help, but the big fish was so dangerous-**looking that no one dared to go near**. The octopus, remembering how the little fish had helped him, felt that he had to do whatever he could to come to his aid.

Without hesitating, **the octopus shot out from the rocks**, like a ray. He put himself right in the path of the giant fish, and before the fish could do anything about it, the

octopus had shot out the biggest jet of ink of his life. He grabbed the little fish, **and swam off back to hide in the rocks**. Everything happened so fast that the big fish had no time to react. However, he soon recovered from the surprise. Off he went to the rocks, looking for the octopus and the little fish. Now he really wanted to gobble them down!

Soon, though, he began feeling a terrible itch; first in his gills, and then in his fins, and then all over his body. **It turned out that this giant fish had a very artistic nature**, he adored colors; and the octopus's dark ink had given him a terrible allergy!! So the big fish swam away, irritated all over.

As soon as he was gone, **all the fish who had been hiding came and congratulated the octopus for being so brave**. Then the little fish told them all how he had helped the octopus a few days earlier, but he had never known anyone be so grateful that they would end up doing something so dangerous. Hearing this, **the other fish discovered how nice the shy octopus was**, and everyone around was keen to be the friend of such a brave and honorable octopus.

Questions and Answers

Q1. Why did no one help the octopus before the little fish did?

A1. Because they were only concerned about themselves.

Q2. Why was the octopus afraid to make friends with the little fish?

A2. He was afraid the little fish, so kind and helpful, would not like him.

Q3. Why did the octopus jump in front of the big fish without even thinking?

A3. Because the desire to help the little fish was the only thing on his mind - not fear of what might happen. Many times, this is what courage really is.

Craft: Octopus!

Material:

Construction paper
Markers
Scissors
Paper plates/yarn (craft #2)



Advanced Material for 4th and 5th Grade

“He had been out among the dragons, he said, and he assured himself that they were not so hideous as he had imagined them. Also,”

— Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*

The Red Badge of Courage, by Stephen Crane, is about a boy, thirsty to go to war and fight the enemy. He arrives and finds war, and courage, are much different than he imagined.

In the story, Harry changes from an immature adolescent to a war-weary adult, over the course of just a few days. He begins an idealistic and completely self-absorbed teenager who wants nothing more than a chance to show off and be thought of as a brave and daring male. He longs to wear a uniform and carry a gun – to have females “ooh” and “ah” over him. However, through the course of the book and several battles, he discovers that he starts more of a selfish coward and discovers his own bravery and loyalty. As the text says, “There was the delirium that encounters despair and death, and is heedless and blind to the odds. It is a temporary but sublime absence of selfishness” (19.10). Henry learns that all people face and feel the same emotions, and that the world does not care one iota what happens to Henry Fleming. This last revelation is both horrifying and freeing in equal measure.

His value does not come from the world but from himself.

At first, Henry has some very romantic notions about courage and war. He assumes that he will come home a hero, or not come home at all. His death at this point is a mere abstraction to him. He has no concept of what is actually involved in fighting. He has never even seen a dead body. Once he gets a bit of experience with war and death, Henry’s views of courage change. Suddenly, it appears that courage is something that other men have, but a thing that he clearly does not possess. Courage, and the lack of it, is now his main obstacle and obsession. When he gives in to his fear and runs from the battlefield, he is hideously ashamed, but he also quickly rationalizes that this is something any thinking human (or animal) would do under those same circumstances.

As time goes on, Henry becomes more daring, and by the end of the novel, he has become a more mature and seasoned man who has faced the very worst. As Henry marches victoriously from battle, his notions of courage are now more complex and realistic. He knows that all men have equal stores of courage and cowardice, and an equal choice about when and how to use them.

Henry’s chief enemy in his quest for courage is that essential ingredient of human nature: the desire for self-preservation. Henry wants to continue living more than he wants anything else. The more we think about it, the more this seems entirely appropriate. And of course, the more Henry thinks about it, the more he’s convinced

he's an Einstein stuck in a field full of Beevises and Buttheads. He proves this to himself via...a squirrel. Take a look:

He threw a pinecone at a jovial squirrel, and he ran with chattering fear. [...] The youth felt triumphant at this exhibition. There was the law, he said. Nature had given him a sign. The squirrel, immediately upon recognizing danger, had taken to his legs without ado. He did not stand stolidly baring his furry belly to the missile, and die with an upward glance at the sympathetic heavens. On the contrary, he had fled as fast as his legs could carry him. [...] Nature [...] re-enforced his argument (7.14).

Know your instincts, and using your brain to determine what you want to accomplish

These adolescent (and highly romantic) ideas about what the world defines as manliness evolve. A person of awareness is self-assured and is able to own up to his own faults and weaknesses. Henry slowly revises his opinion of what a real man looks and acts like, and he comes to the conclusion that a big part of manhood is owning up to one's own mistakes and flaws.

Our highest example of courage is when we are completely authentic

Tween & Teen Additional Interactive Activity

The coward dies a thousand deaths, the valiant, only once! — Shakespeare

What Is Enlightenment?

(condensed from Immanuel Kant - Columbia University)

Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed ego. Ego is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance. This Ego is self-imposed if its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in indecision and lack of courage to use one's own mind without another's guidance. ***Dare to know! (Sapere aude.)*** "Have the courage to use your own understanding," is therefore the motto of the enlightenment.

Consider this:

- I. Are laziness and cowardice the reasons why such a large part of mankind gladly remain 'followers' all their lives? Letting others guide them on what is right and what is wrong?
 - I. Changes underfoot: We do longer count on our physician to tell us how to be healthy.
We no longer count on a religion to be our entry to Spirit, we no longer
- II. Are you cultivating your Ego or cultivating your Spirit?
 - I. When you live out of Ego, you are cultivating 'race consciousness', using rules that are already in place. The person who casts them off would make an uncertain leap over the narrowest ditch, because he is not used to such free movement. That is why there are

only a few people who walk firmly, and who have emerged from Ego by cultivating their own minds.

III. Are you thinking for yourself?

- I. Once such person have thrown off the yoke of Ego, they will spread about them the spirit of a reasonable appreciation of man's value and of his duty to think for himself. This thinking releases any prejudice one might have about race, religion or restrictive laws.

IV. So how do we enlighten the world?

- I. Enlightenment requires nothing but freedom--and the most innocent of all that may be called "freedom": freedom to make public use of one's reason in all matters. Now I hear the cry from all sides: "Do not argue!" The officer says: "Do not argue--drill!" The tax collector: "Do not argue--pay!" The pastor: "Do not argue--believe!" Only one ruler in the world says: "Argue as much as you please, but obey!" We find restrictions on freedom everywhere. But which restriction is harmful to enlightenment? Which restriction is innocent, and which advances enlightenment? I reply: the public use of one's reason must be free at all times, and this alone can bring enlightenment to mankind.