

BLINDFOLD WALK

Activity 5

AGE LEVEL = 9-11 (8-12)
DURATION = 20-40 min.
LEARNING STATION = Outdoors
RELATED ACTIVITY = \longleftrightarrow Blindfold
Surprise

WHEN =



UNDERSTANDING: Sight is our primary sense, but when sight is removed, other senses often strengthen. Most wildlife species rely primarily on senses other than sight for survival.

SPECIAL NOTE: There should be at least one adult for every 12 children, preferably two.

MATERIALS:

- A blindfold for each child ([see Activity A](#))
- Rope, knotted at 2 to 2.5 foot intervals (optional)

PREPARATION: Look over the activity area for potential hazards. These include plants with thorns, fallen logs, rocks, low branches or holes in the ground.

LESSON:

Warm-up: Review the five senses with the group. Ask the children which sense they think they use most. Keep track of the votes. For most people, sight is the primary sense. (Statistics indicate the average person uses sight for 60 to 70 percent of their sensory input.) Ask if anyone knows a blind person and discuss how that person uses their other senses instead.

Activity: Tell the group they are going on a blindfold walk. (Note: Give all instructions before handing out blindfolds.) Let the students know that you will stop occasionally to have them feel or smell various objects. Review the following safety rules:

1. When the leader says stop, the group is to stop immediately.
2. Only the leader is allowed to talk, except when there is a hazard in the path.
3. When the group comes to a hazard, the leader will caution the first child, who in turn will caution the next child in line.
4. The caution should be specific, such as, "There is a branch to the right" or "There is a stump to the left." General cautions, such as "There is a rock," aren't as effective. Have the group line up single file and give each child her/his blindfold. Have the children place both hands on the shoulders of the person ahead of them, or hold on to knotted sections of rope with their right or left hand. If two adults are present, have one walk at the front and one at the end of the line.

Lead the group slowly, stopping to have the children feel or smell things like tree bark, flowers, grasses, bushes or bird feathers. Have them feel with their cheeks and wrists, as well as their fingers. Encourage them to feel the ground as they walk and note if there are any differences in slope, texture or sound. Ask them to feel for the sun and wind as they walk.

Wrap-up: Discuss how the children felt during the walk. Were they nervous or uncomfortable? How long do they think the activity lasted? What types of objects do they remember? Challenge them to retrace their steps. If they are able to do this, ask them what clues they used to find their way. If they can't, discuss how they could use the sun, sounds and changes in the landscape to help retrace their steps.

Conclude with a discussion on how different animals rely on different senses to survive. For instance: deer, moles and wild dogs on smell; bats, whales and robins on sound; raccoons, snakes and sand egrets on feel.

OPTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATIONS:

1. Have the students lead each other in pairs, making sure they know the safety rules.
2. Try a walk without benefit of hearing.
3. Lead a blind or deaf walk on a specific theme, such as bark or leaf textures, wildflower or tree smells, or differences in the ground in and out of a forest, etc.
4. Research how animals use their senses and their sensory abilities.