



MODULE #1



From Awareness to Practice – An Outdoor Learning Journey.

This module invites you to reflect on:

- The biases and barriers that can limit outdoor learning—and strategies to overcome them.
- The importance and benefits of outdoor learning for both you and the children in your program.
- Your personal connection to nature and the values you hold about outdoor learning

***Module Length: Approx. 1 – 1.5 hrs to complete.**

Reflection

Take some time to reflect on the following quote. We encourage you to write down your responses and come back to it from time to time as you complete the modules!



Think back to your favorite childhood memories outdoors;

- Why were these experiences important to you?
- How did these experiences influence you?

DISCOVER YOUR WHY

Before we begin, pause and consider these questions as you embark on your journey to enrich outdoor and nature play experiences.

Why is connecting children with nature important to you?

What values guide my approach to outdoor play?

How does this align with my vision for children's growth and well-being?

Common Misconceptions about Outdoor Learning

Reflect on the following statements and identify whether you think they are True or False.

"Children are more likely to get sick playing outside in the winter (cold or rain ect)"

"Risky play supports children's development"

"You need a high-quality green space to offer outdoor learning experiences"

"It's normal to feel apprehensive when taking groups outside"

"Children are more likely to get hurt outside "



Check your understanding of Common Miscuncceptions about Outdoor Learning on the next page!



“Children are more likely to get sick playing outside in the winter (cold or rain ect)”

FALSE:

The reason why we see more illness in the colder seasons is because we are indoors more often. Ensuring children have access to appropriate clothing is essential, consider creating a lending library so everyone is equipped to play outdoors no matter the weather!



“Risky play supports children’s development”

True:

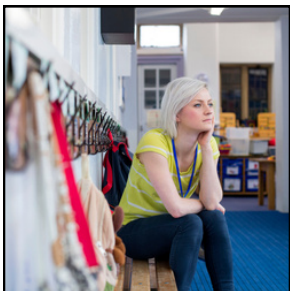
Allowing a child to be self-aware of risks and then letting them choose whether to face a challenge empowers them to learn and make decisions based on experience. They learn their limits for risks, deciding whether they are comfortable or not with the activity.



“You need a high-quality green space to offer outdoor learning experiences”

False:

Think about all of the experiences you can offer just by utilizing your existing playground space, visiting nearby parks or taking a walk around your neighborhood. You will be amazed at the wide range of resources these spaces offer when you think outside of the box.



“Its normal to feel apprehensive when taking groups outside”

True:

Start with one small step you can take to help you gain the confidence to start embracing outdoor learning. There are many avenues to build your confidence including: online resources, professional learning opportunities, mentoring and having conversations with coworkers!



“Children are more likely to get hurt outside “

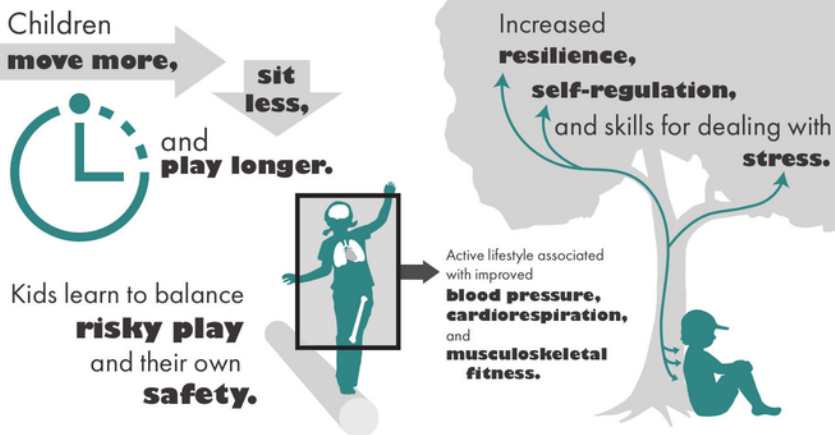
False:

Many experts say that outdoor play, in fact, risky play, is a necessary element of childhood. It helps children learn, build resilience and confidence!

Building Bonds with Nature



The Benefits of Outdoor Play



Canadian experts from 14 organizations reviewed the best available evidence and released a Position Statement that access to active play in nature and outdoors—with its risks—is essential for healthy child development. They recommend increasing children's opportunities for self-directed outdoor play at home, at school, in the community and in nature. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/position-on-play>

Children move more, sit less and play longer.

A deepened connection with the natural world.

Reduces stress and increases energy!

Opportunities for teamwork, communication, negotiation.

Encourages exploration, experimentation and imaginative thinking.

Children learn to balance risky play with their own safety.

https://www.outdoorplaycanada.ca/portfolio_page/benefits-of-outdoor-play-infographic/

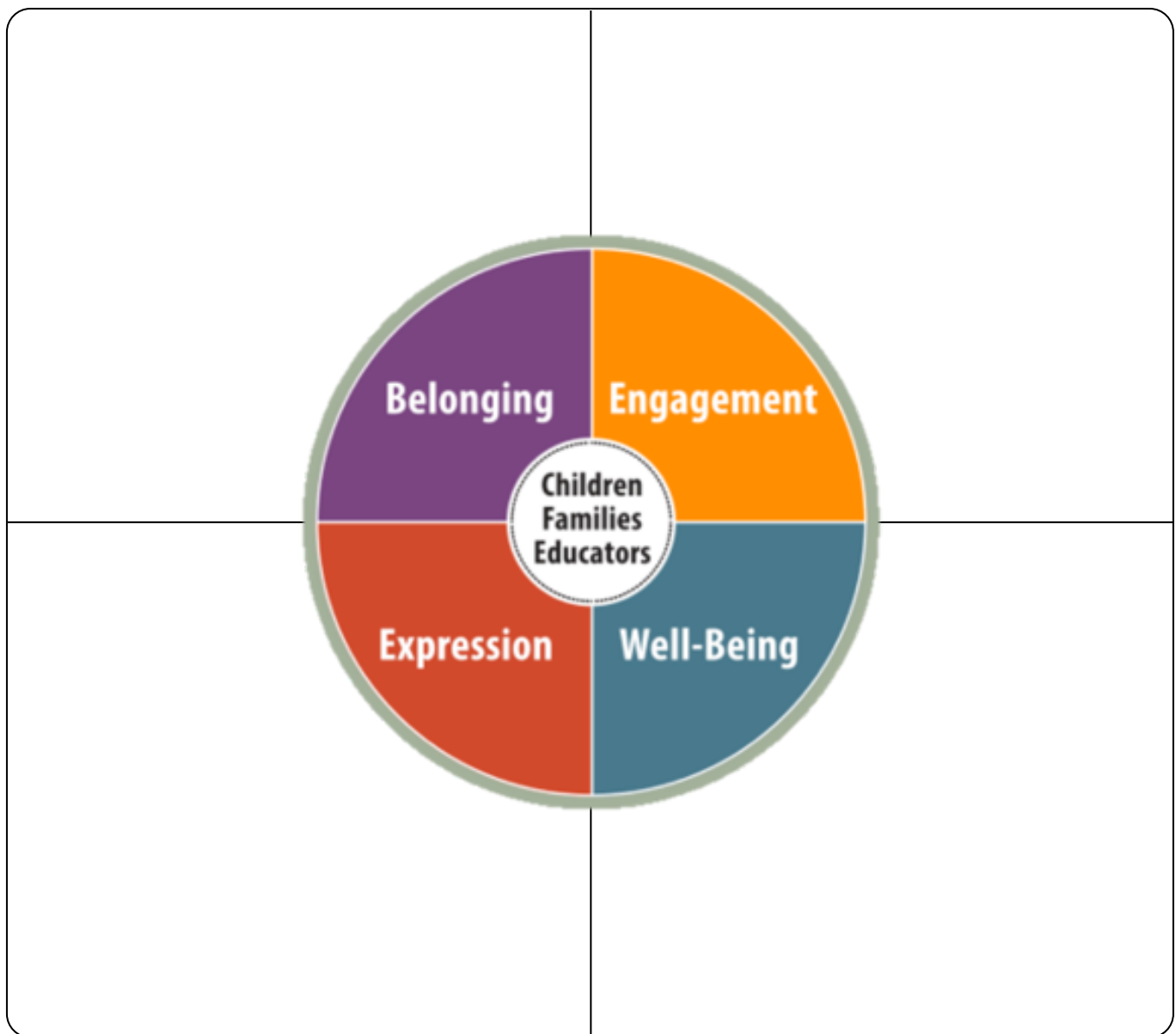
What other benefits can you think of?

Linking Outdoor Learning to Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years

A foundational principle of *How Does Learning Happen?* is that through active play and physical exploration, children gain increasing levels of independence, learn to persevere and practice self-control, and develop a sense of physical, emotional and intellectual mastery and competence.

How Does Learning Happen? Pg. 29-30

Below, consider how outdoor play supports each of the four foundations.



*Not quite sure about How Does Learning Happens 4 Foundations for Learning?
Click here to explore thrc.ca for self-directed learning opportunities or
connect with a [THRC Pedagogical Mentor!](#)*





WORD ASSOSICATION ACTIVITY

A word association activity is a quick exercise where you say the first word that comes to mind in response to a given word or concept. The intention of this activity is to identify that no matter what elements of nature exists everyone is going to have different perspectives and feelings.

Notice your reactions to each word—what feels challenging and what feels easy? Reflect on why you experience these responses.

Puddles	Ice
Rain	Wind
Humidity	Sunshine
Snow	Mud

How can you shift our mindsets to start to embrace and engage in outdoor play in all types of weather?

Video Reflection

This video highlights a program in Ireland where participants stepped outside their comfort zones, committing to spending every day immersed in the natural world!



Early Learning Schools in Donegal

Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YqzUSPyt_N8

What reflections do you have after watching the video?

Want to Think More About the Video's Main Takeaways?

After viewing examples like tree climbing, downhill biking, and woodworking, how do you feel about these risky play experiences?

The video mentions that one of the benefits of being outdoors is that "the outdoor classroom changes everyday". What are your thoughts about this?

What were some barriers they had to overcome?

Identified Any Barriers?

As we deepen our understanding of the value of outdoor play, it becomes clear that it should be a central part of children's everyday experiences.

Reflecting on barriers is the first step toward creating a clear path to overcome them.



What obstacles make it difficult to increase children's engagement with outdoor and nature-based experiences?



Consider ways to overcome these obstacles. What has worked for you in the past?



Module #1: Take Away Reflection

What new information did you learn?

What questions do you still have?

What next steps might you take?





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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



THRC Resource Library

Books to Borrow:

- #13030- How Does Learning Happen?
Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years
- #1302- Balanced and Barefoot
- #11377- Outdoor and Nature Play in
Early Childhood Education
- #11455 - Cultivating Outdoor
Classrooms

THRC Resource Library
has a variety of resources
to support your journey.



Self-Directed Learning Opportunities:

- How Does Learning Happen? Online Learning Resource
(Accessible until Dec. 2026)
- **Blog Post:** Imagine a Classroom Without Walls
- **Webinar Recording:** Inclusive Sensory-Rich Nature Play for Children's 7 Senses



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