

# THE CURIOUS MIND

## TALK NOTES

BY DR CLAIRE WARDEN

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### SUPPORTING ADVENTURES WITH NATURE

Curiosity is developed as we are invited to explore the world around us. The unpredictability and dynamic way that opportunities occur outside makes it the perfect environment for a growth mind set. Nature invites us to see opportunities, face challenges and overtake them as we problem solve and develop our sense of adventure.

The advantages of being outside overtake the challenges it offers. Research has provided enough evidence for the benefits of being outside, what lies ahead is the creation and use of a nature based pedagogy that celebrates the uniqueness of being outside, rather than repeating the way we offer opportunities inside. This pedagogy is based on what we know about the brain.

- The human brain will triple in size in the first two years of life
- The human brain contains approximately one hundred billion neurons. This is the same as the number of stars in the Milky Way galaxy
- These neurons are connected by trillions of connections, or synapses. Experts call this a “neuron forest”. Information runs between these neurons in your brain for everything we see, think, or do
- Experiencing adventures and talking about them aids memory
- Neural growth and pruning happens throughout life to help us think and learn effectively

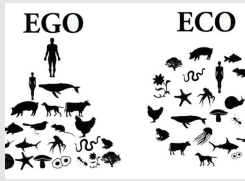
### FOCUS OF THIS TALK

THE CURIOUS MIND

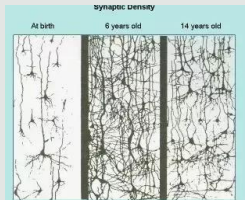
WHY DO WE NEED NATURE  
BASED TIME INSIDE,  
OUTSIDE AND BEYOND?

INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING  
THROUGH FLOORBOOKS

# 5 Things to Consider



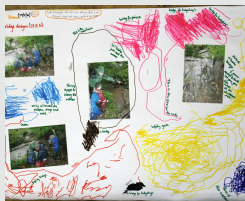
EGO-logical and ECO-logical practices are different in the way that we view the natural world. In eco-logical practice we show our **care for the planet** through the way we behave. Care can be demonstrated through strategic decisions such as recycling or sustainable purchasing but also through our daily behaviours of growing and tending plants, looking after each other and spending time outside.



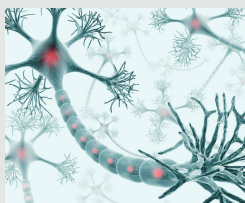
Our curious mind can prune away the unused synapses. Experiencing the world around us regularly, but in slightly different ways each time supports myelination which creates stronger, more permanent **memories**. These memories are even more effectively stored when the child has been involved and motivated to engage in the adventure/ experience.



**Outdoor play** is full of opportunities to explore the four elements of fire, earth, air and water. Rather than looking at single activities, **nature pedagogy** looks at the large lines of inquiry in these elements such as growth, change, movement and then explore how that can be explored inside and outside. To do this the adults benefit from learning more about the natural world so that they feel relaxed and confident to engage children in shared sustained thinking.



**Floorbooks** allow us to record children's voices, ideas and actions in the moment. These large books can then become holders of collective memories and an easy way to demonstrate the amount of the curriculum being covered through child-led play inside, outside and beyond. Nature pedagogy aims to balance power and one way to do start to achieve this is to consult children. **Talking Tubs** can be used to frame the conversation and support all children to engage as they provoke thinking.



The **Virtual Nature School** was created to blend the benefits of social interaction through online communities and the natural world. It is inclusive, accessible and play-based. The films offer provocations for staff, families and of course children to use the natural world as a context and a location for play. They were broadcast from Auchlone Nature Kindergarten in Scotland in 2020/21. The more our brain hears about nature the greater the neural forest. **Free films** can be found on YouTube - search for Virtual Nature School.

***'We are all interconnected. The sooner we realise that the better for us and the planet.'***





# ONLINE TRAINING

**WITH DR CLAIRE WARDEN &  
MINDSTRETCHERS ACADEMY**

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Become a member of the Mindstretchers Academy and get unlimited access to over 40 courses and talks.

## NATURE-BASED LEARNING ONLINE TRAINING

Get inspired to create nature-based learning experiences that engage children and connect them to the natural world, whether they live in the city or the country.

During this course you'll consider the benefits of learning with nature and investigate topics for effective nature-based learning based around the four elements of Fire, Earth, Water and Air.

Watch videos that bring learning to life. Claire will share some great practical ideas that you can start implementing immediately with the children you work with.

## INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING WITH FLOORBOOKS ONLINE TRAINING

Transform the way you feel about planning and documentation!

Support inquiry-based learning experiences that tap into children's natural curiosity and truly engage them.

Join Dr Claire Warden, the creator of the Floorbook Approach, as she explains how Floorbooks can make the cycle of observation, assessment, planning and documentation more responsive, engaging and effective.

# Claire's Library

Get yourself a drink, draw up a chair and enjoy a good book.  
A simple pleasure. Here are a few of mine that you might enjoy.

