

Wellbeing on the Seashore - A resource for Teachers

Wellbeing on the Seashore



“Research shows that fewer children play outdoors and outdoor play is increasingly centred on the home, rather than the countryside, parks and beaches” *Children and the Outdoors* , Irish Heritage Council publication.

The following activities can be done with a class group at the beach , in the outdoors or some are suitable in a classroom setting to get the mind connected to nature.

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Activity 2 : Sun salutations on the Beach

Purpose: Calm the mind and increase focus, strength and flexibility . Give thanks to the sun.

Age group: Jnr infants upwards



SUN SALUTATION FOR KIDS

Look up at the sky
Stand tall with your legs hip width apart, feet facing forward, arms alongside your body. Inhale deeply, look up and reach your arms to the sky. Say, "Hello, sun in the sky!"

Pretend to be a jellyfish
Exhale, bend your upper body, reach for your toes and pretend your arms are jellyfish tentacles. Say, "Hello, jellyfish in the sea!"

Pretend to be a sand castle
Place your palms flat on the ground, inhale and step your right foot back. Keep your back flat and your chest open, pretending to be a sand castle. Say, "Hello, sand castle on the beach!"

Pretend to be a dolphin
Exhale and step your left foot back to create an upside-down V. Straighten your legs, relax your neck and look down between your legs. Imagine being a dolphin gliding through the waves. Take 5 deep breaths. Say, "Hello, dolphin in the waves!"

Pretend to be a crab
As you inhale, shift forward, drop your knees, and come to an all-fours position. Imagine you are a crab scuttling across the sand. Say, "Hello, crab on the sand!"

Pretend to be an urchin
As you exhale, sit on your heels, keeping palms flat in front of you, rest your head on the mat. Bring your arms back alongside your body and imagine being an urchin floating. Say, "Hello, urchin resting on a rock!"

Reverse the steps back to standing. Then repeat the sequence on the left side.

This activity links the fun kids have at the beach with yoga poses, e.g. Playing in the sand, jumping in the waves and learning about ocean animals, what fun!

Tell the students you are going on an imaginary trip to the beach. Get them to tell you what kind of thing you might need for a trip to the beach , what you might see or do.

Ask them about their own experiences of going to the beach

Play some beachy music to get you all in the mood!

Familiarise yourself with the yoga sequence beforehand or read it out before you start. You can find a printable version of sun salutations in the resource section of our website.

Don't forget to encourage the students to match their movement with their breath.

Remember the students don't need to focus on perfectly aligned poses like an adult would in a yoga class.

Sun salutations explained: For thousands of years Hindus have revered the sun, which they call *Surya*, as the physical and spiritual heart of our world and the creator of all life itself. One of the ways of honouring the sun is through the dynamic asana sequence *Surya Namaskar* (better known as sun salutations) Each sun salutation begins and ends with joined hands (mudra) touched to the heart. Sun salutations are included in a regular morning ritual of prayer or worship.



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Activity 3 : Mindfulness — Buddy breathing

Did you know that every second breath you take comes from the ocean?

The Ocean covers 70% of the earth's surface. The average depth of the ocean is about 2.7 miles, in some places, it is deeper than the tallest mountains are high! The oceans play an important part in whatever happens with the environment. One big part of its role is to soak up energy (heat) and distribute it more evenly around the Earth. The oceans also soak up CO₂ just like trees do and just like trees release oxygen into the atmosphere, so do the oceans. The phytoplankton (tiny microscopic plants) in the ocean are responsible for 70% of the Earth's oxygen production! So take a deep breath, and another one.. every second breath we take comes from the ocean. Let's practice some mindful breathing and give thanks to the ocean. This activity can be done straight after the sun salutations activity to calm the students' minds and body.

Purpose: Calm, Relaxation, Mindfulness of Body

Age Group: Junior Infants upwards

1. To practice belly-breathing, ask your students to lie comfortably on the floor and place a small teddy on their belly.
2. As you count to three, ask them to inhale deeply through the nose.

Tell them to fill to fill their belly with air as they inhale. They should feel it get bigger and bigger and bigger throughout the count to three. The stuffed toy should rise as the belly "fills with air".

3. Ask them to exhale to a slow count to four. Get them to watch the teddy lower as they release their breath slowly.

Do five to ten rounds of belly-breathing to get started. When ready, ask the students how it felt?

Is there a difference in how they feel now? What did he notice about the stuffed animal as they inhaled and exhaled? Repeat the process as many times as you like.

Sounds of the ocean can be played as throughout the exercise to soothe and focus the mind.

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Activity 4 : Sound Map



Purpose: Sitting quietly listening to the sounds around will calm the mind and help deepen our appreciation of life around us.

Age group- 1st Class upwards

Give each student a piece of paper with an X marked in the centre . Tell the students that the paper is a sound map and that the X represents where the student is sitting (once they have chosen a spot). When the student hears a sound , they make a mark on the paper to represent that sound. The location of the mark should indicate the direction and distance of the sound from the students sit-spot. Tell the students not to draw a detailed picture of the sound just a mark , for example a wavy line could indicate waves crashing, a music note could be a bird singing. Making simple marks keeps their attention on listening and note drawing.

You can encourage the students to close their eyes while listening for sounds , they can even cup their ears from behind and in front to listen more intently.

Give the students one minute to find their sit-spots and then make a particular sound to indicate when they are to return to you. Give the students 5 -10 minutes After they have shared you can ask them the following questions;

- What sounds were the most familiar to you
- What sound has you never heard before? Do you know what made the sound?
- What sound did you like the best? Why?