

## Children, Nature and You: The Art of Questioning

**The Art of Questioning** is a traditional style of asking open-ended and encouraging questions that help and encourage the child to develop a deeper relationship to and with their world.

This kind of questioning does not focus on imparting and eliciting information, but rather it focuses on sharing and inspiring an enthusiastic, curious and interested state of being.

By providing space for the child to develop curiosity about whatever is in their world this captures their attention. In this way the adult is actually enhancing the child's self esteem, self-reliance, and joy of discovery and learning. The child has the security of knowing that the adult trusts them to seek their own answers, which in turn helps them to develop confidence in their own ability to discover and learn.

Example:

*Child: (Looking at a plant that has caught his eye.) What's this plant called?*

*Adult: Mmmm, well, let's see. What shape are these leaves?*

*Child: They're like little hearts.*

*Adult: Well, indeed they are! What kind of ground is it growing in?*

*Child: The ground is really hard.*

*Adult: (Touching the ground.) Oh, I do see that. You are right! The ground IS hard? Well, how many of these plants are growing here?" Are there any trees or brush near this little plant? . . .*

Asking these and other questions - about where the plant is growing, what kind of soil, what is above the plant, when do you think it sprouted out of the Earth, how do you think it got here, how many leaves does it have, what color is it, what color are its flowers, etc - all are ways of creating enthusiasm, interest, curiosity, awe and wonder. Then you can ask, "I wonder what would be a good name for this. What shall we call it?" For the young child, being allowed to choose their own name for the plant stimulates creativity and enhances a sense of autonomy. There is no right or wrong, good or bad with sharing the official name. The suggestion here is to utilize a technique that will develop a deeper more abiding relationship with the natural world by utilizing the child's inherent state of awe, wonder and curiosity. If the child has no real interest in the questions the adult is asking then allowing them to move on to whatever does interest them will be of great support to their inherent truth in the moment. Continuing to use this process of

questioning with all new discoveries will enable the adult to determine where the child's real interests lie. This not only honors and encourages the child's own passions and interests but also expands the child's awareness - of spatial relationships (up, down, sideways, all around) shapes, colors, numbers, dimensions, the weather, the seasons and all the many aspects of their world.

**The Art of Questioning** is not about teaching facts, providing information or expecting the right answers. Instead it has everything to do with encouragement, support and belief in the child's inherent ability to learn and to discover what is true and real for them. This is only a brief description of this fine Art and by no means is the depth of delivery expressed.