

Sit Spot/Hauora

Whakanoho / Hauora

Background:

This activity involves a number of simple practices to improve students' observation of and connection to nature and increase mindfulness and focus. This can form part of your health curriculum.

These activities can be repeated regularly. Once the practices become a habit, they could be used as a break between lessons, to calm students down after an exuberant activity, or just to reset whenever needed.

How to facilitate:

Start in the classroom:

1. Introduce the topic of hauora/wellbeing

Some suggested questions to explore with your class before you start the activity are:

- What does being healthy and well mean?
- What do you already do to stay healthy?
- What are some ways to keep your brain healthy?
- How might being outside in nature keep your brain and bodies healthy?
- How do you build healthy relationships?
- Spiritual health is about feeling connected to nature, the world, the universe. How do you feel connected?

See the extension activities at the end of the facilitation guide for further ideas and concepts that could be introduced here.

Take students outside for the activity

2. Start with a mihi & karakia

Acknowledge the health and sustenance provided to us by Earth Mother (Papatūānuku) and Sky Father (Ranginui). An appropriate karakia to open the activity is given below. ([View this video to assist with pronunciation](#)). Otherwise, you could use a school karakia if you have one.



Nature Connection Activity #3,15:

Time:

15-45 minutes to set-up each practice, then 5+ minutes each time

Year Levels:

All

Activity Links:

Download the activities that correspond to this guide -

#3 [Sit spot](#)

#15 [Hauora](#)

Curriculum Areas:

HEALTH & PE





Whakarongo ake au
 ki te tangi a te manu
 E rere runga rawa e
 Tui tui tuia
 Tuia i runga
 Tuia i raro
 Tuia i waho
 Tuia i roto
 Tui tui tui tuia
 Tihei mauri ora!

*I listen, where up high
 a bird flies
 Its cry rings out
 Bind, stitch, weave
 From above us
 Below us
 Outside of us
 Within us
 bind, stitch, weave
 Behold the breath of life!*

What is a sit spot?

A sit spot is simply a favourite place in nature that is visited regularly to cultivate awareness, expand senses and study patterns of local plants, birds, trees, and animals. It helps to increase students' power of observation and is an excellent way to calm busy minds and reset. Practicing close observation has a huge number of crossover benefits - in the Sciences, Arts, English to name a few. The potential benefits to students' health, particularly their mental health, is also great.

See this link for tips about sit spots - <https://educatedbynature.com/health/sit-spot-quick-tips/>

3. Explain the sit spot activity

Talk the students through the activity including the sort of spot they might look for. Explain what to do once they're there – the idea being to open up their senses:

- Focus on their vision. What's the farthest thing they can see? The closest, smallest things? Take note of the entire visible area and observe as much as possible.
- Next time, focus on hearing. What are the furthest away sounds that can be heard? The quietest? What sounds are natural versus man-made?
- Now, focus on smell. What can you smell? How many different things can you smell from your spot?
- Finally, focus on touch. Can you feel the wind (Tāwhirimātea), the sun (Te rā), the ground beneath you (Papatūānuku)? Maybe you're sitting up against a tree – what does the bark feel like?

4. Ask students to choose a sit spot

Give the students 5 minutes to find their wāhi motuhake – their special place. It should be comfortable, not too close to other students, and easy to get to from the classroom. It should be in a natural area if possible. Once they've found their spot, they can simply sit and observe for the rest of the time until called back.





5. Sharing time

Sit in a sharing circle under the shade of a tree and ask students to share what they noticed during their sit spot – what sounds, sights, touch, smells? How do they feel now compared to before the activity – less or more calm, happy, thoughtful?

6. Hauora – Breathing exercise

Spend some time as a whole class practising this exercise together. Doing this outside has the greatest benefits, but it also works well when done inside a classroom. It is an excellent way to start and end lessons.

- Follow the guide on the activity sheet – the most important part to explain is that the students should narrow their eyes and focus on feeling, without forcing anything.
- Do around 15-20 breaths – this should take 1-2 minutes. Practising regularly is much more important than doing a lot at once.
- Practice the activity. Do it regularly and often, especially at first to get students used to it.
- Recommend that ākonga (*students*) find a place at their homes to continue the practice.

Once this exercise has become comfortable for students to practice by themselves, add this to the sit spot practice. Every time you do a sit spot, start with your 20 breaths. This will increase the effectiveness of both activities.

Links to curriculum:

Level 1- 8 Health and Physical Education

Extension activities:

These simple activities make an excellent introduction to a number of health-related topics.

- Add a journaling practice into your sit spots and breathing. After the activity is performed, the students note what they have observed in a special nature journal. This can help with practicing observation and writing skills. It will help to show how the environment changes over time. Sketching also works well as part of this activity.
- An effective te ao māori approach to breathing can be found here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIvltQ03Ynk&t=8s>
- Learn about [Te Whare Tapa Whā](#) – the four pillars of health by Mason Durie. These are spiritual, mental, community and physical well-being. Which pillars can this activity help?
- Explore rongoā – how to use native plants to help enhance health. Try infusions with the class. Create a research project around the uses and effects of a number of common plants.
- Tie personal wellbeing into environmental wellbeing – how do these relate? Do how we treat our bodies and how we treat our environment show similarities?





Related resources:

Resource Area	Integration with Activity	Link
MoH Holistic Health Models	Can be looked at as part of a wider unit. Has a good overview of the models mentioned in extension activities	https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/populations/maori-health/maori-health-models
SciLearningHub – Rongoā Māori	Looks at traditional medicines and their uses	https://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/185-rongoa-maori
5 Ways to Wellbeing	Ways to help people stay mentally well	https://mentalhealth.org.nz/five-ways-to-wellbeing
Health Navigator NZ	A huge number of videos and other resources about different aspects of health	https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/

Ngā kupu

Hauora – holistic health
 Wāhi Motuhake – special place
 Rongoā – medicine
 Papatūānuku – Earth Mother
 Ranginui- Sky Father
 Tāwhirimātea – God of the wind
 Te rā – the sun

