



What We Can Continue to Learn from Fred Rogers



Up Close and Personal with Nature



It's summertime, and that usually means more outdoor time. But I keep thinking about *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv, and I wonder if "outdoor time" today has come to mean "playground time" with swings, monkey bars and slides. I've been thinking about how much different that is from outdoor time with nature.

In his book, Louv reminds us of the great benefits of outdoor play, and then he focuses on the harmful effects when children don't have that kind of free time to explore, discover and just "hang out" in natural surroundings. He coined the term "nature-deficit," and he's convinced that it's responsible for obesity, attention disorders and depression. His perspective has given many of us in early childhood a real concern that we have to find a way to offer nature-based outdoor time.

Fred Rogers took his viewers outdoors on a number of *Neighborhood* episodes, like when he visited the Edible Garden in Oakland, California where school children eat the food they've grown and harvested, took a dog on a walk commenting on things he noticed, showed a video of children playing in the dirt, and gave us a close look at trees, leaves and plants -- helping us appreciate the natural world around us.

When we created a workshop called "Let's Explore" based on Fred's messages about curiosity, we showed how children can get more involved with nature, by just giving them a simple tool -- a magnifying glass. Watch this video and see how much children can get from some time outdoors, exploring and discovering on their own. What a great way to include science in the curriculum!



Here are some ways teachers are enriching outdoor play:

Using a tool – Even a simple tool like a magnifying glass takes some practice. Start indoors with one or two children and give them a chance to use the magnifying glass to look at something familiar, like a favorite picture book. Help them practice adjusting how close or far to hold the glass so that it will magnify what they're looking at. Then let them go outdoors and look closely at all kinds of things -- stones, tree bark, leaves, grass, bugs. You could also offer some other simple tools, like a spade or spoon for digging and a bucket for collecting things.

Describing what they see – Encourage children to talk about what they’re seeing. Let them know you’re interested in their questions. What are they wondering about? Even if you don’t have answers, you can let them know their questions are important. You can even give them some crayons and paper outdoors to draw what they’re seeing.

Making sure there’s quiet time –While it’s wonderful to share your enthusiasm, keep in mind that children also need quiet time to explore. We may even interfere with their own discoveries if we’re constantly talking and pointing out things we want them to notice.

Respecting nature - One of the girls on the video cautioned the other one, “Don’t touch it – it’s going to grow into a bell pepper.” It’s a great reminder that while we do want children to be curious, we also want them to be respectful and not do things that might damage the natural environment.

It often takes just a simple tool or a focused activity to help children use the outdoors in a different way – a way that connects them with nature. You’ll be helping them think of the “outdoors” as a place they can connect with -- and a place they’ll want to keep on exploring as they grow.

Thank you for being our neighbor,



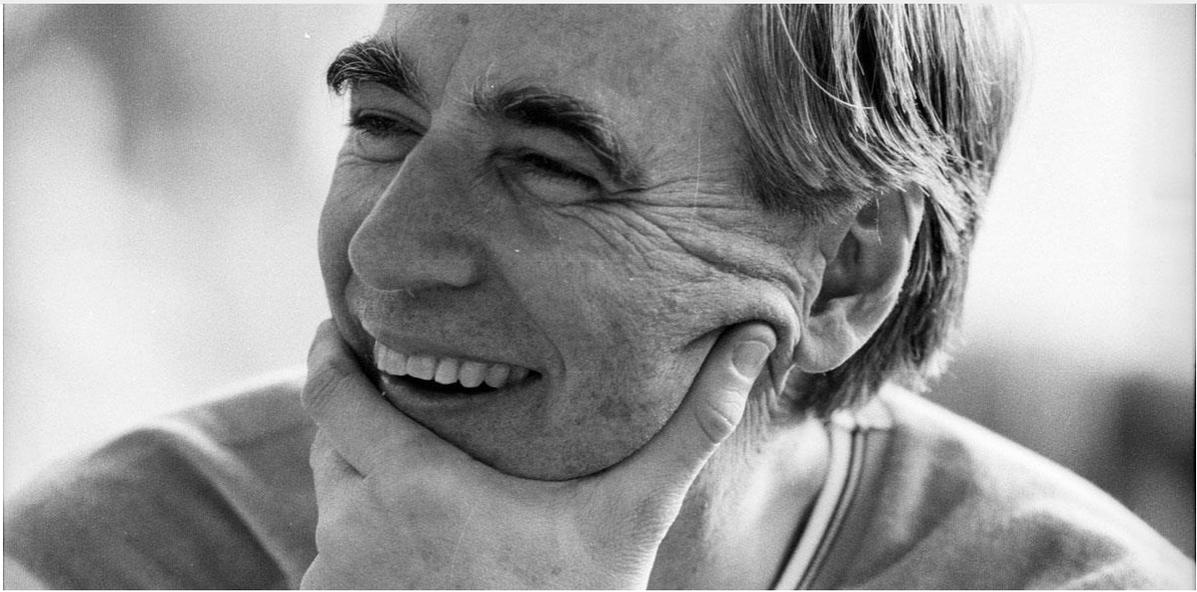
Hedda Sharapan

M.S. Child Development

PNC Grow Up Great Senior Fellow

hedda.sharapan@stvincent.edu

Timeless Wisdom from Fred Rogers



"Haven't you found that one of the best ways children learn is from the example of the grownups they love? When children see that you wonder about the world around you...that you ask questions...that you notice things and look carefully, then they'll want to be curious about the world around them, too."

[MORE QUOTES](#)



[Subscribe](#) | [Forward](#) | [View past issues](#)

[Update your profile](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)

[Make a gift](#)

© 2018 Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning & Children's Media

You are receiving this email because you opted into receiving information from Hedda Sharapan about child development.

Photos courtesy of the Lynn Johnson Collection:
Ohio University Libraries.

Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning & Children's Media

Saint Vincent College

300 Fraser Purchase Road

Latrobe, Pennsylvania 15650-2690