



CALM CRITTERS

Take a moment today to slow down and appreciate all your feelings! Nature is a great place to calm your body and mind.

Do it yourself!

Time: 5-10 Minutes

Materials: Nothing needed; a mat or blanket is optional.

What to do:

1. Find a spot to sit on the ground outdoors. Start by taking a deep breath in through your nose, then slowly blow it out through your mouth. Take two more breaths in and out. Do you feel your body start to relax?
2. Take a closer look at the ground—is the surface soil, stones, or grass? Imagine you are a snake stretching out. Take three snake breaths (breathe in through your nose, hiss out through your mouth) and imagine you're a snake. Where would you slither?
3. Now stand up—you've become a tree! Imagine your feet are roots and push them into the ground. Now stretch your branches up to the sun. If you were a tree, where would you want to be planted?
4. Imagine you're a butterfly settling down on a flower. Sit down on the ground, putting the soles of your feet together with your knees out to the sides. Smell the flower's scent in through your nose, then out through your mouth. Now flap your knees gently like butterfly wings! If you were a butterfly, how fast or slow would you flap your wings?

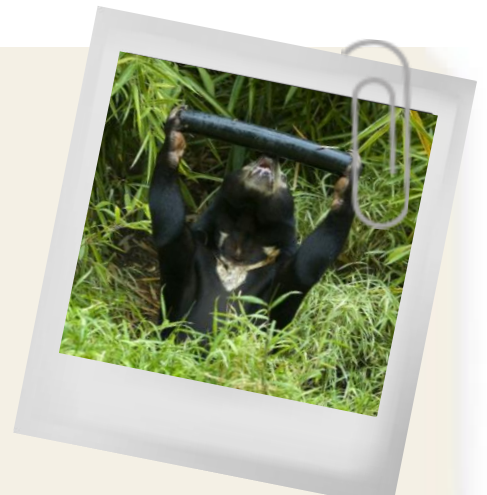
Being a young child is stressful!
Nature is a great place to learn
how to calm yourself and
control your body.



Play for all ages!

For ages Birth to 3, For each animal or plant above, find a picture, video, or the real thing and show your child what you notice about them. What do you have in common?

For ages 3 to 8, Think of other plants or animals that make you feel calm. What is it about them that makes you feel calm? How do they move? Imagine becoming one of them.



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Adult Guide

Take action! What plants or animals did you see during this activity? You can join your community in a scientific project by sharing your observations on the iNaturalist app during the **City Nature Challenge** (April 29-May 2, 2022). Visit <https://www.zoo.org/conservation/naturechallenge> to find out more!

What is my child learning?

Young children are learning about their world at incredible speed! The [Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines](#) (**Bolded** below) help us see what they're learning and how the adults in their lives can maximize their potential.

Pretending to be different animals helps young children build empathy.



When your child pretends to be different animals while outside in nature, they develop skills that support many kinds of learning. Thinking about what they would do if they were a particular animal lets your child practice self-reflection. This helps them to **learn about their world and themselves** as they compare themselves to other living things. When play-acting the behaviors of different animals, they engage their senses by **touching, seeing, hearing, and moving around**. As your child imagines themselves as an animal, they may make the decision to try movements that they may not use every day. This choice requires them to exercise self-control, supporting the development of resilience, executive function, and self-regulation while **growing up healthy**.

Additional Resources:

If you had fun doing this activity, you may also enjoy these:

Mindful as a Mountain Goat <https://blog.zoo.org/2020/05/zoomazium-to-you-mindful-as-mountain.html>

Bug Yoga <https://blog.zoo.org/2020/03/zoomazium-to-you-relax-with-springtime.html>

Breathe Like a Bear by Kira Willey

ABC Yoga by Christiane Engel