



Moving to Learn

EXPERIENCING PATHWAYS

Why do this activity?

Children gain knowledge about the world and strengthen thinking skills through physical movement. In this activity, children physically experience the concept of “pathway.”

Experiencing the world through physical movement is like building the foundation of a house. If we cut corners on a house’s foundation, there will always be something faulty. Likewise with children’s development, if we cut corners on movement activities and move to passive memorization too quickly, we rob children of the ability to understand concepts in a deep way.

Ways to do this activity:

The activity described is designed for elementary aged students, but can be adapted for younger children:

Ask children to work in groups. You might explain the activity by saying: You’ll see that there is a pile of fabric for each group. Your challenge is to see if you can combine your fabric in a way that lets you create a pathway for people to follow and travel through. You need to include these things:

- A pathway to follow, including something for people to crawl under and something for people to crawl over.
- At least one shape (like a triangle or arch)
- A plan for how people will move through the path (Will they bend, twist, jump, or leap?)
- Your entire group needs to demonstrate moving through the pathway

Note: Have these directions listed on a chart.

Possible skills and understandings children can develop through this activity:

- Knowledge about what a pathway is
- Knowledge of the meaning of the words “under” and “over”
- Knowledge of shapes
- Knowledge of movement concepts (bend, twist, leap...etc.)
- Estimation skills (Will people be able to fit in the pathway?)
- Problem-solving skills (How to combine materials to solve the problem)

“An aspect of kinesthetic learning worth noting is the role that movement plays in some individuals’ thinking. For some people it is extremely difficult to think while sitting still. They need to pace or move in some other way. As adults we often have this freedom; yet it is rarely extended to children.”

– Linda Verlee Williams from her book,
Teaching for the Two-Sided Mind



This child uses fabric to “twist” as she walks along a pathway.



It’s a good idea for teachers to “try out” pathways that children create.

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ADAPTATIONS FOR VARIOUS AGES

For infants and toddlers:

Simply stretch fabric out into a long path and walk along the pathway with the children. (Use the word “path” as you walk.)



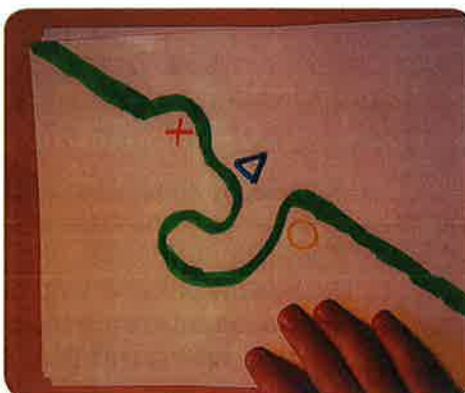
For preschool and kindergarten ages:

Simplify the activity by asking children to create their own pathway and figure out a way to move along it (by jumping, leaping, or twisting, etc.). For younger preschoolers, give them their own fabric so they can work alone. For older preschoolers and kindergarteners, you could ask children to work in pairs. For some children, scarves help them focus on the motions their bodies make as they move along the pathways.



For elementary ages:

Ask children to draw a map of their pathway when it is completed, using visual symbols to represent the places that require people to move over and under, and the places where shapes can be found. To take the activity further, ask children to write or dictate a story about where the pathway leads.



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“Part of kinesthetic awareness is learning to operate without undue stress. The ability to tense only the muscles needed to perform an action while relaxing those not in use enables individuals to move more effectively. It both reduces fatigue and eliminates blocks to necessary movement.”

– Linda Verlee Williams

MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES TO HELP REDUCE STRESS

BALLOONS

You might explain the activity by saying: Stand up with me please and take a deep cleansing breath. Now squeeze your fists very tightly. We’re going to pretend that your fingers are balloons and that we are filling them up with air. Slowly, slowly fill them up with air (as your fingers uncurl and straighten out) and let your balloons float up into the air (arms go up into the air.) Now, slowly, slowly let the air come out of your balloons and float back down to your side. (Arms slowly go back down.)

FINGER HOUSE

You might explain the activity by saying: A finger house can help you feel your breath and know that you are helping your body relax. First, make a house with your fingers (have children make a cup shape with hands together). Hold your finger house closely in front of your mouth. (NOTE: There still needs to be a little space in between the mouth the hands.) Now take a deep breath and slowly blow your good warm air into your finger house. If you blow very slowly, your breath will feel warm on your hands and you will feel it return as a gentle breeze to your face. Do you feel how warm it is? This is such a good way to help your body relax.

MUSIC AND RELAXATION

You might explain the activity by saying: Now I am going to ask you to lie down and close your eyes. I am going to put on some music inspired by nature. As you listen to the music take deep breaths in and blow your good warm air out slowly.

(A good choice would be to use the *Breath of Invocation* CD by Sean Murphy. Be sure to model the slow intentional, full breath in for a count of 4 and out for a count of 6. The children will need to hear you breathe because they have their eyes closed. After a few minutes, ask children to slowly open their eyes, slowly stand up and take one more deep cleansing breath.)

Note: *These kinds of relaxation exercises can be used with children throughout the day – as they transition from one activity to the next, or as they move from an active to a quieter activity.*



PATHS CAN BE FOUND IN MANY PLACES... OUTDOORS AND INDOORS!



Children walk pathways outdoors made with simple stepping stones.



Teachers follow paths children have created with blankets.



Here children have made a long pathway with multiple natural elements outdoors.



Here infants and toddlers make visible paths indoors by putting paint on barefeet and walking on paper!



A group of children create a path in sand, then fill it with water.



Elementary children make paths indoors using recyclable materials.



Children find paths in their neighborhoods and in their environment. A sidewalk with leaf prints, a wood chip trail in the woods or even a stream of water all make unique pathways.

