

green education for the Children

We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors...we borrow it from our children



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Green Lifestyles Collection
learn . understand . advocate



FORWARD

Lifestyles represent the values by which we conduct our lives - 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Green lifestyles should also represent the values by which we conduct our lives - 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It is a belief that neither stops when we back out of our driveway, nor begins again when we return home.

Children are blessed with the innocence of youth to appreciate in a caring way about nature - the animals and plants they are connected with. As children develop, they can then begin to *learn* how their lifestyles impact the animals and plants they care about.

As adults, we *understand* how our lifestyles affect not only the natural environment, but our health and comfort as well. Importantly, we understand that it is not only the material possessions we pass on to our children, and that simply not being wasteful can go a long way in ensuring the environmental future we pass forward.

Green professionals *advocate* responsible environmental stewardship. With their developed green knowledge and experience, sustainable professionals provide the interpretation, design and delivery of high performance green building projects.

the children

Why Parents Should Care

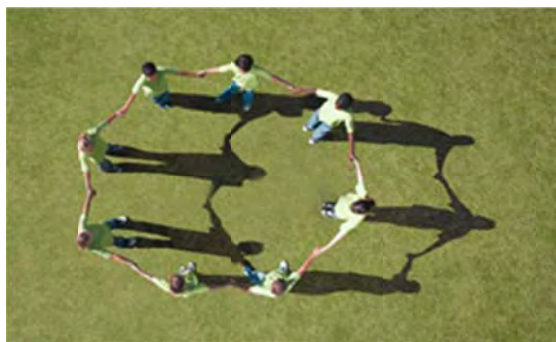
We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children... Native American proverb



As parents, we care about the environment, in large part, out of concern for our children. And when we begin to realize the environment as our children will know it depends on the lifestyle policies we adopt in order to protect their health and well-being, there will then be an instinctive understanding that the environment as our children's children will know it depends on the lifestyle policies they adopt in order to protect the health and well-being of their children.



Each generation stands in mid-stream receiving that which flows to them, having obligations to those upstream and downstream. In other words, consider current generations having obligations to past as well as future generations. So, as we develop and advance our own efforts in helping protect the environment, we would be remiss not to foster the environmental education of our children.



Obligated, we direct a major portion of our personal resources ensuring our children are as well prepared as possible to develop into successful adults and socially responsible citizens. Instilling green values in our children should be a core

part of their educational process. Parents can contribute a great deal in nurturing children's awareness to the needs of the environment.



In order to comprehend the positive and negative effects of our lifestyles on the environment, children need to develop a knowledge of, and respect for, the environment with regard to animals, plants, soil, air, water and energy. According to Deborah Mitchell, in a [Charity Guide](#) article, it's been shown that fostering environmental education in children is critical because it:

- helps them develop into adults who understand and care about environmental stewardship
- nurtures their sense of wonder, imagination, creativity provide sides them with a sense of beauty, calm, and refuge in a sometimes frightening world
- expands their intellectual development; it's been proven to improve test scores, grade-point averages, and problem solving skills
- enhances physical development
- helps them understand the interrelationship of all life

Children's Connection with Nature

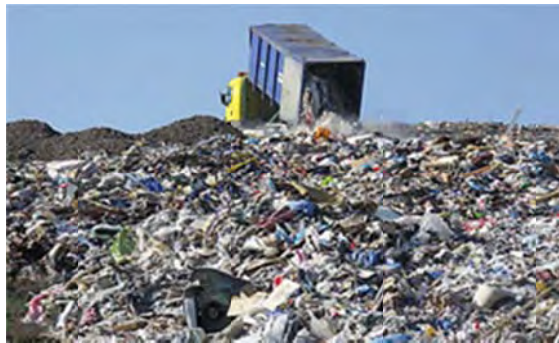
The whole art of teaching is only the art of awakening the natural curiosity of young minds for the purpose of satisfying it afterwards... Anatole France



But why Mommy? How's come Daddy? How many parents have heard this, and often? Teaching children effectively entails more responsibility than merely telling a story or making statements or issuing commands. Although children are eager learners, they are inquisitive learners and want to know why. With young children, lessons are easier for them to learn if there is a personal reference for them to relate to. So with regard to the environment, it is important for children to experience nature. There are many ways to help children connect with nature, regardless of the opportunities for direct access:



Take children on hikes in the woods, or walks in a local park or nature center; help children create their own personal ecosystem project by installing a birdbath, birdhouse, flower bed, herb and vegetable garden or a log pile so they can observe the animals, insects and natural growth that develops around their creation; if access is not available, help them build a small terrarium for their room; provide children access to books about birds and insects and let them see how many types of birds and insects they can find in the natural environment where they live; go for a drive to the country at night and gaze at the stars.



When children are provided the opportunity to connect with the natural environment around them, they can begin to learn how lifestyles impact the environment. One of the more important and simple lessons to teach them is recycling. The positive effects of recycling, as well as the negative effects of not recycling. Why recycling bottles and cans and paper helps to keep those little animals in their homes.



Understanding How Children Develop

Childhood has its own way of seeing, thinking and feeling and nothing is more foolish than to try to substitute ours for theirs... Jean Jacques Rousseau

The [White Hutchinson Leisure and Learning Group](#) published a recommended article titled **Nurturing Children's Biophilia: Developmentally Appropriate Environmental Education for Young Children** that discusses the 3 basic stages of children's environmental education and development:



Early Childhood (ages 3-7) *Empathy*



Early/Middle Grade School (ages 7-11) *Exploration*



Adolescence (ages 12-17) *Social Action*

Listed here are a few of the articles salient talking points:

The way children learn is completely different than adults. Young children are active learners. Their best learning occurs with hands-on, interactive play and self-discovery rather than on trying to impart knowledge to them. Young children have a natural curiosity that requires direct sensory experience rather than conceptual generalization.

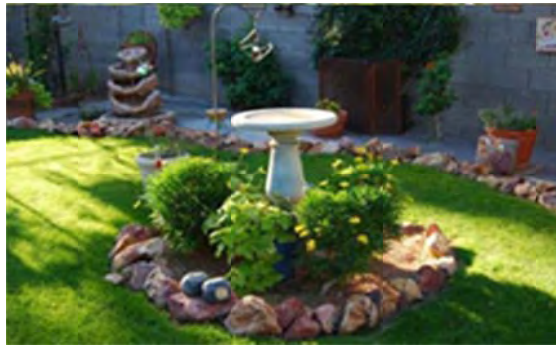
- Children experience the natural environment differently than adults. Children judge nature not by its aesthetics, but rather by the manner of their interactions and sensory experiences with it.
- Children have an innate, genetically predisposed tendency to explore and bond with the natural world known as biophilia, i.e. love of nature. Evidence of biophilia has been observed in children even younger than two.
- If children's natural attraction to nature is not given opportunities to flourish during their early years, biophobia, an aversion to nature may develop. Biophobia ranges from discomfort and fear in natural places to contempt for whatever is not man-made, managed or air-conditioned. Biophobia is also manifest in regarding nature as nothing more than a disposable resource.
- "Knowledge without love will not stick. But if love comes first, knowledge is sure to follow." The problem with most environmental education programs is that they try to impart knowledge and responsibility before children have been allowed to develop a loving relationship with the natural world.
- A problem with most young children's environmental education programs is that they approach education from an adult's, rather than a child's perspective. Teaching nature abstractly in the classroom does not lead to pro-environmental behaviors in later life.
- Children's experiences during early childhood should nurture the conception of the child as a part of nature. It is during early childhood when children's experiences give form to the values, attitudes, and basic orientation toward the world that they will carry with them throughout their lives. Regular positive interactions within nature allow children to feel comfortable in it, develop empathy with it and grow to love it. No one can love what he or she doesn't know through intimate association.

How Parents Can Help

There seems to be an ongoing debate with regard to the best way to teach children about the environment. Does environmental education require the child to have access to outdoor opportunities? Or must this education be taught in the classroom? Is the environmental education provided in the classroom or on TV biased? Does it really matter and if so, to what extent? Well, considering the fact that until our children leave home and set out on their own, it remains our responsibility as their parents to sit as sentinels to safeguard and provide what we believe are appropriate core values.



It would be difficult for parents to teach their children without being a role model for them to follow. Young children are impressionable. Teach your children in a simple way how to interact with the natural environment around them. At an early age it is important for them to become aware of what exists in their world, not what they may see on TV, a thousand miles from their environment.



Encourage your children to engage. Recycle your food waste into compost and put them in charge of managing the operation. Work as a team and create a mini ecosystem in the back yard so they can monitor activity that will soon make use as a new home or feeding place. Let them begin to learn about recycling by assigning duties for accurately placing recycled materials in their proper disposal bin. Or, help them build a simple terrarium.



Take time out for a stroll in the park or nature center where an ecosystem is available with trees and plants, animals and insects. Stop and let them observe for themselves how these different species of plants and animals exist. Take along paper and pencil to log what they see on each trip and, perhaps, this will excite them to search for more on their next excursion. When children explore their natural habitat, they develop a personal connection with nature.



As children get older and begin to refine their foundation of core values, integrate more complex areas into your discussions. When a faucet leaks and is being replaced, tell your children this single drip can waste 3,000 gallons of water a year. When you get in the car to run a series of errands, explain to them that doing these on one run conserves fuel, which in turn reduces our need for fossil fuels and also reduces carbon emissions.

A Final Word for the Children



The promising news for parents who accept that their responsibility to environmental stewardship should include green education for their children is the fact that children are just that – children. Children are born with the innate ability to be inquisitive and caring. Take a child to the zoo or stroll along a path in the park or nature center and this becomes immediately obvious – their caring for the birds and flowers and most things in nature. Trees seem to be a natural habitat for children as well as animals. Providing the opportunity for children to nurture their connection with nature almost certainly guarantees success for the first step in their environmental education – awareness.



When children are taught from an early age the environment has an impact on their lifestyle and quality of life, they will begin to learn that their lifestyle has an impact on the environment. It is important for them to learn that how they and their parents live today will determine if their friends in nature will be around when they grow up. Teach them early why you recycle or turn off the lights when they aren't needed. In time, when they become young adults and leave home, the values their parents encouraged will be instilled in their very character, and will almost certainly be passed on to their children. It doesn't cost much – just a little love, caring and patience. Your children and your grandchildren will thank you.

Websites and Blogs



Please visit **the children** category at www.studio4llc.com for direct links to these websites.

[Natural Resources Defense Council \(NRDC\)](#): NRDC is an environmental action group, and this webpage aggregates a large and comprehensive listing of resources for kids of all ages; categorized links to sites that cover the environment, animals, plants, habitats, oceans, air pollution, global warming, recycling, parks, forests and global activism

[Care2](#): although Care2 is a great site for all ages, this section also presents a very nice collection of websites dedicated to kids

[Environmental Kids Club](#): who better to present the environmental story to kids than the EPA

[National Geographic Kids](#): exactly what we expect from National Geographic

[KidsRgreen](#): Center for Environment Education, this webpage offers effective techniques for teaching the very young group the most basic green fundamentals

[Recycle City](#): a great EPA site for kids to learn the basics of recycling by creating their own Recycle City

[Charity Guide](#): a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to inspire and facilitate flexible volunteerism with a Volunteering on Demand approach; how you can make a difference in 15 minutes, in a few hours or while on vacation, for a variety of concerns including children's issues, animal welfare, health and safety, community development, poverty and environmental protection; however, the relevancy here is the information offered in the sections addressing the environmental education of children and consumers; many common sense tips on how consumers can be environmentally responsible and save money; this page is specific to the environmental education of children

[Family Education](#): has Your Child sections for age groups 0-6 yrs, 7-11 yrs, 12-18 yrs

[Ollie's World](#): child-friendly, comprehensive, fun and stimulating website presenting information on all sorts of issues relating to sustainability principles; an interactive sustainability resource site for youngsters covering topics such as recycling, water conservation, biodiversity, green projects and includes a family of characters for the children to relate to on their level

[Kids Geo – Geography for Kids](#): comprehensive educational Kids Know It Network that must be visited; topics covering the earth, astronomy, biology, geology, history, spelling, math and so much more. Includes Miamiopia, a free educational virtual world

[DITC Environmental Education Foundation, Inc](#): resource for education to all, particularly eight to twelve year old children learning about animals, trees, air, water and oceans, recycling and pollution

[Biodiversity – Everything Counts](#): from the American Museum of Natural History, find out how biodiversity affects your everyday life – even if you live in a city

[EEK!](#): an online magazine for grades four to eight created by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, is packed with short articles and activities about animals, plants and environmental issues

[eartheasy](#): eartheasy is a good website for general green living information but also has a nice collection of children's green websites

[Meet the Greens](#): this site has created an array of high-traffic, compelling, award-winning content for getting kids to think about the world and their place in it; highly interactive, using animation and other visual techniques to keep its readers attention, Meet the Greens is a website for all ages

[Energy Kids](#): U.S. Energy Information Administration site that explains what energy is, what sources provide energy, how we use and can save energy, also has games for the kids

[EekoWorld](#): PBS website teaches kids ages 6 to 9 how they can help take care of the earth; animated characters use games and activities to present facts about ecosystems and pollution; children can build their own "EekoCreature" and help it overcome

[Children of the Earth United](#): geared towards youth and their families and teachers

[Rainforest Heroes](#): The Rainforest Action Network is a site for teachers and families to help explain to the very young the importance of forest stewardship with regards to their ecosystems

[Healthy Kids Go Green](#): good site for parents as well as children, with an interactive blog for interesting topics; also aggregates a collection of green websites for kids

[Scholastic Act Green](#): interesting website for teachers, families and kids

[Green \(Environmental\) Websites for Kids](#): neat collection sites, including links to the U.S. government and EPA

[EPA Student Center](#): well-conceived EPA site for mid to upper level school age children that begins with environmental basics and includes topics such as ecosystems, air, water, conservation, waste and recycling, human health and climate change. Includes sections for games, videos and quizzes

[EPA WaterSense Kids](#): Great site teaching kids about water, why save water, simple ways to save water, includes game

Cyberspace Safety

Every parent is concerned about the perils their children may be subjected to whenever they interact in cyberspace, whether it involves social networking, chat rooms, blogging or just surfing the web. We encourage parents to supervise their children so that they do not disclose any personal information about themselves in any of our public discussion areas.

[Microsoft Online Safety](#)

[ConnectSafely](#)

[GuardingKids](#)

[Cyberbullying](#)

[Net Nanny](#)