

Forest Bath Right Down This Path

STORYTIME KIT



FIVE ACTIVITIES TO CELEBRATE THE NATURAL WORLD

Dear Friends,

Every summer I visit coastal Maine with my family. My favorite part of the vacation is a hike through Barred Island Preserve on Deer Isle. After a mile of mossy green forest, we end up on a rocky beach where we swim and explore tide pools. When we leave, we feel peaceful and immediately begin to dream about next year's visit. I was excited to learn that there is a name for the calming effects of this experience, and that scientists had studied its benefits. I am delighted to share more about how to forest bathe with you.

In the story, *Forest Bath Right Down this Path*, Kayla and her father enjoy a walk through the cool forest on a hot summer's day. Kayla's father has trouble putting down his cell phone and paying close attention to the plants and animals around him. With some coaxing from Kayla, he takes in the sights, sounds, smells, and textures of the forest. The illustrator, Khoa Le, brought this experience to life so beautifully.

This story kit includes methods of learning more about forest bathing—from heading out on a sensory expedition to gathering sensations to making art in nature to coloring at home (or outside!)

I hope along with the book it inspires you to spend time with your loved ones outdoors and soak in all its beauty and mental health benefits.



Happy Forest Bathing!

Lisa Robinson



FOREST BATHING: USE ALL YOUR SENSES

Find an outdoor setting near your home (or far from home) with trees and grass. Use all your senses to experience this environment. After you make your lists, ask yourself: Which sense did I enjoy using the most? What are my favorite items on the list?

SIGHT: Write down all the different things you see, large and small, from a tree to an ant.

TOUCH: Find different textures to touch, like the rough bark of a tree, soft moss, tickly grass stalks.

SMELL: Sniff for different smells, like pine needles, a dandelion, soil.

SOUND: What do you hear? Birds? The wind? Tree branches creaking?

TASTE: Do not taste anything unless an adult tells you they know it is safe to try (for example, a blueberry or some herbs in a garden). You can always bring along fruit or berries on your excursion. If you go to the grocery store, see if you can find fruits or vegetables that are in season and locally grown.



EXPLORE NEW SENSES

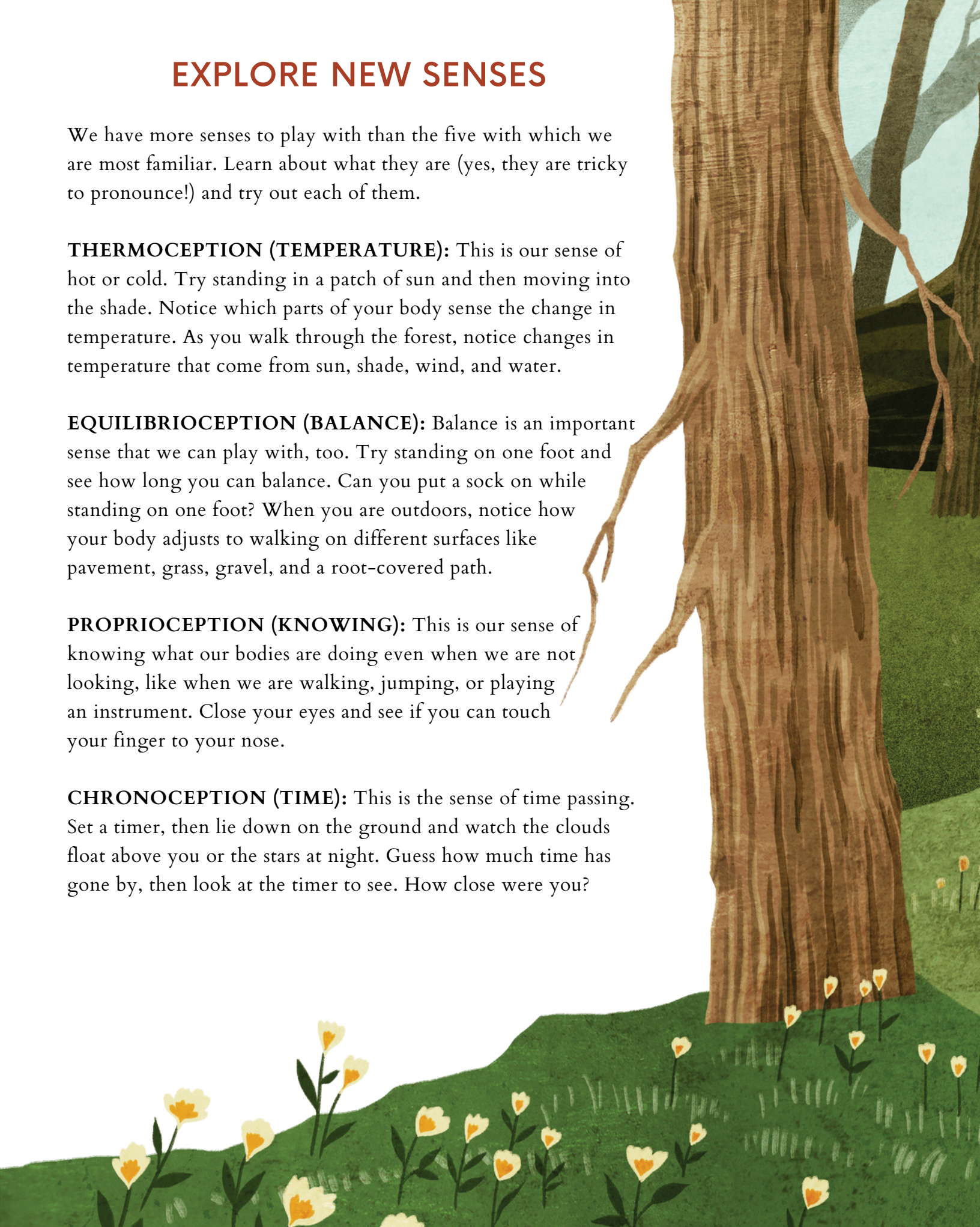
We have more senses to play with than the five with which we are most familiar. Learn about what they are (yes, they are tricky to pronounce!) and try out each of them.

THERMOCEPTION (TEMPERATURE): This is our sense of hot or cold. Try standing in a patch of sun and then moving into the shade. Notice which parts of your body sense the change in temperature. As you walk through the forest, notice changes in temperature that come from sun, shade, wind, and water.

EQUILIBRIOCEPTION (BALANCE): Balance is an important sense that we can play with, too. Try standing on one foot and see how long you can balance. Can you put a sock on while standing on one foot? When you are outdoors, notice how your body adjusts to walking on different surfaces like pavement, grass, gravel, and a root-covered path.

PROPRIOCEPTION (KNOWING): This is our sense of knowing what our bodies are doing even when we are not looking, like when we are walking, jumping, or playing an instrument. Close your eyes and see if you can touch your finger to your nose.

CHRONOCEPTION (TIME): This is the sense of time passing. Set a timer, then lie down on the ground and watch the clouds float above you or the stars at night. Guess how much time has gone by, then look at the timer to see. How close were you?



EXTRA CREDIT FOR ANIMAL SENSES!



Did you know animals have some senses that humans do not? Here are examples.

ELECTROCEPTION: The ability to feel electric fields around them; sharks use this sense to find prey.

MAGNETORECEPTION: Birds can sense the earth's magnetic field and use it to navigate—like geese who seek warmer homes in the winter.

INFRARED RADIATION DETECTION: Some animals—for example, snakes, can sense infrared radiation (heat) which helps them locate prey.

Can you think of more senses? And if so, can you dream up your own ways to play with those senses? You can also go to the library and find books about your favorite animals to learn more.

EPHEMERAL ART: MAKE ART WITH NATURE

What is ephemeral art? The word *ephemeral* refers to something that lasts only a short while—like a sandcastle, snowman, ice sculpture, or rock tower. It changes and becomes something different before it disappears. As a result of how it changes, it encourages us to pay attention to small and beautiful moments.

There are many kinds of ephemeral art:

- **Performance art**, like a play or a concert, happens in a theater or on the street.
- **Land art**, usually a large installation, might be located in a mountain, desert, or lake.
- **Nature art** interacts with earth, snow, ice, rocks, sunlight, shadows, and more.

Below is an example of ephemeral art that I made with my family: a sandcastle at Barred Island Preserve where *Forest Bath Right Down This Path* takes place.



EPHEMERAL ART: YOUR TURN!

Anyone can make ephemeral art. You probably already have! Maybe you built a sandcastle or a snowman. Or tossed a leaf into the wind to whirl and dance. Or stacked pebbles into a tower. Here are suggestions for how to create art with nature.

- **Look at photographs of ephemeral art for ideas.** Look up the artist Andy Goldsworthy to see his nature sculptures.
- **Next, spend some time outdoors**—a backyard, a park, a forest, a pond. Explore the area and look for sticks, rocks, ice, mud, sand, seaweed, leaves, nuts, seeds, and leaves. Use what has fallen on the ground rather than picking leaves and twigs. A sharp stone can make marks and a feather or twig works as a brush. Paint with mud!
- **You can use time as a tool.** A breeze will ruffle leaves or grasses; a rising tide will carve your sand castle; a warming temperature will melt ice; moving clouds will cast shadows.
- **Once you've chosen your materials, create your work of art.** Perhaps start with a pattern or a shape. Let your mind wander as you work, and your fingers make whatever feels good. Most of all, have fun!



IDENTIFY PLANTS AND ANIMALS

In *Forest Bath Right Down This Path*, I referenced plants and animals specific to Barred Island Preserve. We learned the names of these plants and animals from a pamphlet provided by the Island Heritage Trust that maintains and protects the preserve. We also used a phone app called *iNaturalist* that identifies the names of plants and animals from photos.

See if you can find the names of the plants and animals in an outdoor location near you—a front yard or a park or a community garden. Sometimes the adults you're with will know their names, but if they don't, you can go to the library and check out a book about local plants and animals. Maybe the adult you're with has a nature app that can identify them. Remember to put the phone away once the identification has been made!

Go for a walk and write down what you find. You can also take a break on your walk to draw what you find the most interesting or beautiful.

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COLORING PAGE

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