

Top 10 things to do support your child's learning, Forest School Style

By Leah Smith

- 1. Be a Hummingbird-** Flitting in and out of their play, being around them but still giving them space to be independent. This shows that you trust their ability to be in the world but you're still there to help if needed.
- 2. Be Positive-** Use encouraging language to support their exploration. Comment on their actions and reflect on their emotions. "Look what you found/did!" "You look so proud!"
- 3. Get Dirty-** Sit on the ground, dig in the dirt, build a fire! Show your child that you too enjoy getting totally immersed in nature!
- 4. Be Curious-** Look under rocks and logs for bugs! Start some sentences with "I wonder..." and see where your child leads the play. Will you explore a new area or scan the trees for birds!
- 5. Support Risk-** Encouraging a child to check in with their body as they begin risky play, like balancing on logs or climbing trees. "Does it feel safe to you?" Natural levels of caution are innate in children when they have the opportunity to experience for themselves what safe and dangerous feels like to them. (see #1)
- 6. Know Nothing-** Reframe your child's questions back to them, example: "What do you think it is?" This will give them a chance to explore their knowledge base and foster their sense of wonder!
- 7. Trust your Child to Trust Themselves-** If your child asks to remove their outerwear because they feel warm, support their choice. Ask them what they will do if they feel cold. Remind them to put their belongings somewhere they will remember so they can put it back on if they choose to.
- 8. Hug a tree-** Literally! Role model to your child that nature loves your love! Plus it's scientifically proven to remove stress!
- 9. Play-** Tie some knots, build a shelter, balance on a beam, run up a hill and roll down! Find the things you enjoy in nature so you are more inclined to have these experiences again and again! Show your child that play is fun at any age!
- 10. Love-** Tell your child how much fun you're having! Tell them you love this time together outside. Tell them you're so happy when they're happy! Give them a hug or a pat on the back when you flit in and connect this time in nature with positive emotional rewards from the inside out!