

1 **Lead by example.** Want your kids to value nature? Want them to discover for themselves how amazing the natural world can be, and how much fun it is to play in the dirt, roll down a grassy bank, and find slimy slugs after the rain? Nothing sends a stronger message than if they see you out there enjoying yourself, so step outside. Build a sandcastle! Make a snowperson! Rub your toes in the grass. Remember: Enthusiasm is contagious.

When you see the words "your kids," think of the group, small or large, with whom you're sharing these activities.

2 **Follow by example, too.** Most grown-ups can learn something from kids. They are receptive to new things. They're curious. Be receptive and curious, too! Ask questions. Encourage questions. If you don't know the answer, admit it. Look it up together. Or make up a story. *This seaweed is a monster's hair. These rocks are from the walls of an ancient castle.* Here's a fun game: Find a creek, pond, park, or any place with lots of life, appoint a leader among the kids, and follow him. If he stops to turn over a log to see what's beneath it, everyone else looks,

too. If he throws stones in the lake, so do the rest of you. If he digs in the mud and gets his pants dirty—don't hold back.

3 *Turn a walk into a safari.* You can do this with babies, teenagers, and anyone else who likes a good stroll. Head to a park or path, or simply take the sidewalk by your home. Even in big cities you'll see birds, bugs, shrubs, and trees—take a closer look when you pass. Better yet: stop and examine them. Bring a magnifying glass to really zoom in. You can also chat with kids about things you never seem to talk about during the busy days—or just be quiet and listen to the squirrels chirp and the leaves rattle in the trees.

4 *Let kids set the pace.* If your four-year-old resists the idea of a long walk, keep it short and make it fun. Play “I Spy” or another game. Take a healthy snack and stop in the grass to enjoy it together—especially if your child gets tired. And if it's hard tearing older children away from video games or texting, go easy. Let them know that time in nature is like health food for the brain, and you'd like to make a schedule everyone agrees to so time indoors is balanced with time outside.