

Busy Hands

A 15-minute outdoor nature session anyone can lead.

FOR	TIME	YOU NEED	WHERE
Children ages 2–5	About 15 minutes	Nothing at all	A yard, a fence line, one tree — even a weed in a sidewalk crack

Read me first — you can do this.

You do **not** need to be a nature expert to lead this. You only need to slow down and notice the outside world along with the children. Young children today spend most of their day indoors and on screens; simply stepping outside helps their bodies settle and their minds wake up. If you can sit down, breathe, and be a little quiet, you already have everything this takes. **One safety rule:** hands touch leaves, bark, grass, stones, and the ground — never bugs, sharp things, or anything they might put in their mouths — and everyone washes hands going back in.

STEP 1 · Find our spots (2 min)

Say: *“Let’s each find a spot and sit down like a little seed. Feet still, hands in our laps. Now three big balloon breaths together — breathe in... and let it gooo.”*

Calm cue: Three balloon breaths

Little ones (2–3): Hold them on your lap or sit knee-to-knee beside you.

Bigger ones (4–5): Let them spread out about an arm’s length apart.

STEP 2 · Gentle hands (4 min)

Say: *“Let’s touch the outside world with gentle hands. Find something safe to touch — a leaf, the bark of a tree, the cool grass, a smooth stone, the ground. Touch it softly. Is it rough or smooth? Warm or cool?”*

Calm cue: Gentle, slow hands

Little ones (2–3): Guide their hand and name it: “Soft grass! Cool ground!”

Bigger ones (4–5): Ask them to find two things that feel different from each other.

STEP 3 · Wiggle it out (3 min)

Say: *“Our hands have big wiggles too! Press your palms together hard, like you’re squishing playdough — squeeze... and let go. Now push your hands flat on the ground — push, push, push — then shake them all out.”*

Calm cue: Big squeeze, then let go

Little ones (2–3): Do the squeezes together, slow and strong.

Bigger ones (4–5): Try ten slow presses and count them out loud.

STEP 4 · One thing in our hands (3 min)

Say: *“Now hold just ONE thing — a leaf, a little stick, a smooth stone. Feel its edges with one slow finger. Is it light or heavy? Tell me one thing your hands notice.”*

Calm cue: Slow hands

Little ones (2–3): Trace its edges together with one finger.

Bigger ones (4–5): Have them close their eyes, feel it, then describe it.

STEP 5 · Say thank you (3 min)

Say: *“Let’s gently put our things back where they live, and take one more balloon breath. Say, ‘Thank you, outside.’ Now it’s time to wash our hands and go in.”*

Calm cue: One breath to finish

If it goes sideways

If everyone gets the wiggles, don’t fight it — stand up and do **Step 3** again, then try the quiet step once more. If one child won’t settle, that’s okay; let them sit close to you and just watch. Nothing is ruined. Coming back to calm *together* is the whole lesson.

Do it again tomorrow. This works every day. Next time, trade this one for *Quiet Ears (listen)* or *Quiet Eyes (look)*. Same five steps. The more children practice settling outside, the easier every day gets.