

Earth Day Fact Sheet (Early Childhood)

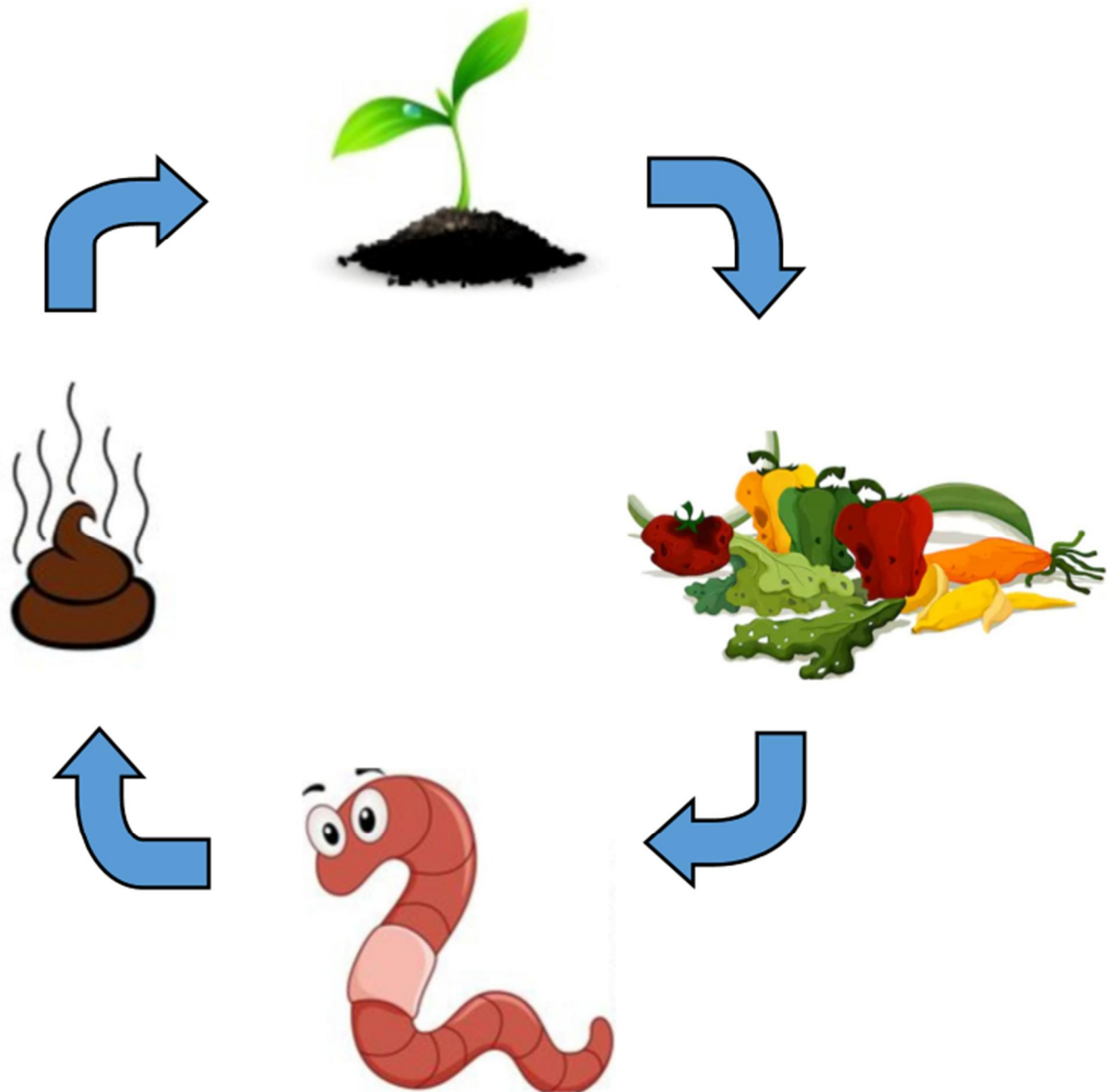
1. Mindfulness is a technique used to relax, connect with yourself, and to connect with nature. During stressful times, doing mindful activities can help reset your brain. For children that are being homeschooled, mindfulness breaks are good to do after (or in the middle of) a particularly hard or stressful lesson. Mindfulness and spending time in nature gives your brain a rest and actually restores your ability to pay attention and stay focused. Mindfulness is also good for improving self-control, emotional regulation, stress and anxiety, patience, and memory/cognitive function. The activities listed in the worksheet are just a couple of options, but there are many mindful activities you can try – including guided meditation, body scans, and mindful walks. Doing yoga gives the added bonus of strengthening your muscles and balance.
2. A nature journal is a great tool for anyone of any age to have. You can put drawings and observations of plants, animals, and weather, poems, stories, or anything you want in there. Every person's nature journal will be different because it depends on what you are interested in. If you aren't sure how to begin, start by finding something outside and drawing it or writing about it. What do you notice? Include color, size, shape, texture, etc.
3. Even if you have seen your backyard or local park every day for 3 years, there is still something new and exciting to see. You may explore a plant up close, dig in the dirt, or look closely for signs that an animal has been around. The fun thing about nature is that it's always changing. Birds are building nests, trees are growing new branches, new plants are sprouting up in the grass, and insects might be creating new homes.
4. Composting is the process of turning organic material (like plants) into healthy soil. Through composting, bacteria, microorganisms, and bugs will break down your plant-based food scraps and create soil full of great nutrients for your plants. When composting, you'll want a good mix of twice as many "browns" as "greens". "Browns" include lawn trimmings, pulled weeds, leaves, and sticks, while "greens" include kitchen scraps. To compost outdoors, you want to choose a shady space in your yard. You can either make a pile, or you can keep it organized and use wood or chicken fencing to create a space that is 3ft by 3ft. Fill it with "browns" and bury the "greens". To do vermicomposting, or composting with worms indoors, you will just need a larger tote (with a lid), a shorter tote that the larger tote can fit inside of (to collect water) a drill, a bit of soil, newspaper, and red wiggler worms. Red wiggler worms can be bought online. Don't use worms from your yard! They have an important job to do outdoors. Drill some small holes in the lid of your larger tote and along the bottom of your larger tote. Put the larger tote inside of the shorter tote. Inside of your larger tote, you will want to layer an inch or two of soil, worms, and then shredded newspaper. When you put kitchen scraps in the bin, you will want to bury them in the soil. Make sure to keep the soil moist to create a healthy environment for your worms.

There are many benefits to composting:

- a. Prevent organic waste from going to the landfill where it will not break down
- b. Create nutrient rich fertilizer for your plants

- c. It's a constant at-home science experiment
- d. Reduces the need for chemical fertilizers
- e. Reduces your carbon footprint

The composting cycle:



Kitchen scraps are eaten by worms, microorganisms, bacteria, and fungi. These organisms then produce healthy soil through their poop. This healthy soil gives plants the nutrients they need to grow. Did you know that dirt is full of bug poop!?

5. Germination is the development of a plant from a seed. When germinating seeds, you should make sure their environment remains moist. This moisture is how you feed your seed.

It's important to plant trees and flowers to help mother nature. Plants help by cleaning our air and water. They also provide homes and food for many local wildlife like bees, butterflies, robins, deer, foxes, garter snakes, and tree frogs. Planting native plants is especially important because they are favored by local wildlife over introduced species. You can learn more about plants that are native to your area by going to sites run by Audubon or Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper. If you do not have outdoor space, you can also grow plants indoors. In fact, peppers, tomatoes, blueberries, and strawberries all grow well indoors in pots. Even if you don't have the space or resources for a garden, you can still design a dream garden and talk about which plants you would use and how they would benefit your goals (attracting wildlife, growing food for yourself).