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Hands & Hearts Together

**Learning to care for the earth,
ourselves, & each other.**

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Dear Gro Families & Friends,

This week in Petals & Play, children are exploring what it means to care—for the earth, for others, and for themselves. Through hands-on activities, children are invited to notice their environment, practice kindness, and begin to understand how small actions can make a big difference.

The activities in this pack support early social-emotional development, responsibility, and awareness while keeping learning playful and meaningful. Below, you'll find a simple at-home activity to help bring these ideas into your everyday routines.

At The Gro Academy, we believe that care and connection grow through shared experiences. Thank you for being part of that journey.

Small actions, meaningful connections, growing awareness

with warm hearts,
the gro  academy
team

All content created by The Gro Academy is aligned with WMEELS developmental domains and NAEYC developmentally appropriate practices to support whole-child learning.

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cultivating early childhood professionals

Home Extension: Helping Hands at Home

Small acts of care, every day

Objective:

Children practice caring for their environment and others through simple, everyday helping tasks.

Materials:

- Everyday household items (toys, books, cloths)
- Small basket or bin (optional)

Instructions:

1. Invite your child to help with a simple task (putting toys away, wiping a table, sorting items).
2. Talk about how their actions help care for the space or others.
3. Encourage your child to choose a task they would like to help with.
4. Celebrate their effort and contribution.
5. Repeat daily to build routine and confidence.

Infant & Toddler Adaptation:

Offer simple opportunities to participate, such as handing items, placing objects in a bin, or wiping with assistance. Use simple language like "help," "clean," and "thank you," and focus on participation rather than completion.

Developmental Targets:

- **Approaches to Learning:** initiative in everyday tasks • engagement in routines
- **Health & Physical:** coordination when carrying, placing, or wiping
- **Social & Emotional:** participating in helping behaviors • developing sense of belonging

Hands & Hearts Together

Children explore ways to care for the earth through meaningful, hands-on experiences using natural materials and everyday actions. These activities encourage responsibility, awareness, and connection to the environment through play.

Clean-Up Crew Play

Caring for our space through simple, purposeful actions.

Objective:

Children practice caring for their environment by cleaning, sorting, and organizing materials.

Materials:

- Child-sized brooms or cloths
- Baskets or bins
- Natural or classroom materials to collect

Instructions:

1. Invite children to notice materials around the space.
2. Model how to pick up, wipe, or place items into bins.
3. Encourage children to participate in cleaning a designated area.
4. Sort collected items into appropriate places.
5. Reflect on how the space changed after cleaning.

Infant & Toddler Adaptation:

Provide pre-colored paper or lightly colored surfaces and allow children to explore water using droppers or supervised spray bottles. Focus on sensory experience and simple language such as “rain,” “wet,” and “drip.”

Developmental Targets:

- **Approaches to Learning:** Engaging in creative exploration • Trying different techniques
- **Cognitive:** Cause and effect through movement of paint and water
- **Health & Physical:** Fine motor control using brushes, droppers, or hands
- **Social & Emotional:** Cause and effect through movement of paint and water

Seed Planting & Observation

Watching something small grow with care.

Objective:

Children learn that living things need care and observe growth over time.

Materials:

- Seeds
- Soil
- Small containers or pots
- Water

Instructions:

1. Show children seeds and discuss what they are.
2. Fill containers with soil.
3. Plant seeds and cover lightly.
4. Water the soil gently.
5. Revisit daily to observe changes.

Infant & Toddler Adaptation:

Provide pre-filled containers and allow children to help pour water. Focus on touching soil and participating in care routines.

Developmental Targets:

- **Approaches to Learning:** curiosity and engagement over time
- **Cognitive:** understanding living things and growth
- **Social & Emotional:** developing care and responsibility

Water Transfer & Conservation Play

Exploring how we use and control water.

Objective:

Children explore water movement and begin to understand responsible use.

Materials:

- Cups, bowls, or containers
- Water
- Droppers, scoops, or small pitchers

Instructions:

1. Provide containers with water.
2. Invite children to transfer water between containers.
3. Encourage careful pouring and controlled movement.
4. Talk about how much water is being used.
5. Introduce simple ideas about saving water.

Infant & Toddler Adaptation:

Offer larger containers and allow scooping and pouring with support. Focus on movement and sensory experience.

Developmental Targets:

- **Approaches to Learning:** problem-solving through trial and error
- **Cognitive:** understanding volume and movement
- **Health & Physical:** fine motor control in pouring and scooping

Nature Sorting & Exploration

Looking closely at the materials the earth provides.

Objective:

Children observe, compare, and sort natural materials based on their properties.

Materials:

- Leaves, sticks, rocks, seeds
- Sorting trays or spaces

Instructions:

1. Introduce a collection of natural materials.
2. Invite children to explore textures and shapes.
3. Sort items by size, color, or type.
4. Compare similarities and differences.
5. Rearrange and re-sort in new ways.

Infant & Toddler Adaptation:

Offer fewer materials and simple sorting (big/small, same/different). Focus on touch and exploration.

Developmental Targets:

- **Approaches to Learning:** curiosity and flexible thinking
- **Cognitive:** classification and comparison
- **Literacy & Language:** descriptive vocabulary

Nature Mandala Art

Creating patterns and designs with natural materials.

Objective:

Children explore design, symmetry, and creativity using materials from nature.

Materials:

- Leaves, flowers, seeds, sticks
- Flat surface or tray

Instructions:

1. Introduce natural materials.
2. Demonstrate placing items in a simple pattern.
3. Invite children to create their own designs.
4. Encourage adding and rearranging materials.
5. Observe and describe finished creations.

Infant & Toddler Adaptation:

Provide larger materials and allow placing and moving items freely. Focus on arrangement rather than pattern rules.

Developmental Targets:

- **Approaches to Learning:** creativity and engagement
- **Cognitive:** patterning and spatial awareness
- **Health & Physical:** fine motor placement and control

Facilitator Focus

Theme *Children explore how their actions can care for the earth through simple, hands-on experiences. This theme builds awareness of the environment while encouraging responsibility and connection.*



Overview

This week's activities focus on helping children understand that caring for the earth happens through everyday actions. By engaging with natural materials, participating in clean-up, and caring for living things, children begin to see how their choices impact the world around them. These experiences support both environmental awareness and a growing sense of responsibility.



Facilitator Tips

- Model care through your own actions when handling materials and the environment
- Use simple, consistent language to connect actions to outcomes
- Encourage participation without focusing on perfection
- Offer repeated opportunities to practice care routines
- Acknowledge effort to build confidence and ownership



Vocabulary to Emphasize

care • environment • recycle • plant • grow • water • clean • earth • help • responsibility • nature • protect

Short Sentence Prompts (for modeling language):

- "What do you think this needs to stay healthy?"
- "How can we take care of this together?"
- "What changed after we helped?"

Developmental Connections (WMEELS Alignment)

Approaches to Learning:

- engagement in hands-on exploration • persistence in purposeful tasks • flexible thinking during sorting and problem-solving

Cognition & General Knowledge:

- understanding relationships between actions and outcomes • classification and comparison of natural materials • recognition of patterns and spatial organization

Health & Physical Development:

- fine motor control in pouring, placing, and manipulating materials • coordination in cleaning, carrying, and organizing

Language & Literacy Development:

- descriptive language when discussing materials and changes • participation in conversations about observations

Social & Emotional Development:

- developing responsibility through care routines • contributing to shared environments • awareness of how actions impact surroundings



Reflection for Educators

- How did children demonstrate care for materials or the environment?
- Which activities encouraged the most engagement or independence?
- How are children beginning to connect their actions to outcomes?

