

Springtime Wood Element activities for children – by Karin Kalbantner-Wernicke and Bettie Jo Wray-Fears

This blog is an invitation to parents, teachers, therapists and mentors of children to join us in having fun with a seasonal series of stimulating Five Element activities that can support development in all ages! These entries can be downloaded and printed off in pdf format by clicking this link so that you can enjoy making your own notebook of Five Element exercises for each month and season of the year. We hope you have as much fun being creative with these ideas and projects as we have with many children and families.



Since we are beginning this series in springtime we will start with the *Wood Element*, the perfect place to start any activity with children. *Wood Element* marks the time of new beginnings and all the bursting energy of creativity and expanding growth like the first spring flowers breaking through the ground and fresh green buds on the trees and bushes. If you have lived in a place that has long, cold winters, you know the antsy feeling of wanting to move, jump, and stretch in every direction to greet the sun and warm air of the

coming spring! This is exactly what children feel physically as they are developing gross and fine motor skills and testing them out for the first time, or emotionally and cognitively as they are learning new activities and seeing the possibilities of what they can do next from their new development!

The following exercises can be used with a family, classroom, or group of children to experience qualities of *Wood*:

A Tree in the Forest

Have the group of participants get comfortable and read the visualization below.

Imagine you are a seedling of your favorite tree or plant in the earth. You can feel other seedlings around you nestled in the soil tucked up tight with the earth and each other to keep warm from the cold of winter. But now the earth is getting warmer. You feel something growing bigger inside you day by day. You feel itchy and antsy to let it out, until finally the energy gets so strong that it bursts out in every direction! Your roots shoot down into the soil, and your trunk, branches, and leaves up and out towards the sun. You feel the roots of the other trees around you and playfully you all race each other toward the sun and sky! Feel how strong, fresh and new you feel in the freedom to grow!

When finished have everyone draw a picture of what they saw themselves as in a forest with each other. Pick a wall or board to have everyone create the forest with their pictures hanging together.

A Family/Group Springtime Walk

Talk about springtime and get ideas from the group about what they notice with the plants, animals, and colours in nature. What does their body and air feel like in the room when they talk about this? *Wood Element* brings the development of imagination, movement, planning and creativity. Allow all ideas, there are no right or wrong answers. Let them express how they experience and relate this time of year to themselves. After everyone has a chance to share, get ready for a walk outside and invite all to pick one item up from nature that reminds them of spring. When you get back from the walk, place all the items found on a table or cloth for everyone to touch and admire. This can be left on a season table somewhere in the room or house, and the children can be invited to continue to add items and be creative with the table throughout the season. Remember, that it is not about looking perfect to the adult eyes! Let the children find all the awkward and balanced expressions of *Wood Element* and have fun seeing what they create. Permission to play and express is the key to growth.

Splitting the Tree

Every Element has an emotion associated with its development. The creative energy of the *Wood Element* brings emotions of frustration and anger when this dynamic desire cannot move. This last exercise we offer is to support the healthy movement of anger. Use pillows, plastic bat, cardboard tube, anything safe to allow a child to get as physically active as she/he needs to express their emotion.

Imagine a big trunk of a tree on the floor in front of you. With an axe, you want to use all your power to split the trunk. But it is so hard to do that you get really angry! Take all your energy and power and keep striking the trunk until you feel tired and can rest, feeling calm.

For more information about the Five Elements and the way they can support child development, read [*Children at Their Best: Understanding and Using the Five Elements to Develop Children's Full Potential for Parents, Teachers, and Therapists*](#) released in April 2014 with Singing Dragon.