

"Equate! Relate!": A Game of Connections

The purpose of this game is to:

- recognize connections among plants, and animals of an ecosystem.
 - describe human impacts on ecosystems.
1. Read and explain the "Equate! Relate!" game directions to the group.
 2. Play the game.
 3. Do the Human Impact scenario cards (see game directions).

Directions

Everyone assumes the role of the plant or animal listed on their card.

1. *Making Connections - Ball of String*

The person holding the ball of string looks around the circle and finds one other plant or animal that connects with the card they are holding. They describe the connection out loud, hang on to the string and throw the ball to that plant or animal.

For example, the woodpecker has the ball of string, hangs onto the string and throws it to the aspen saying, "I need the aspen to provide insects to eat." The aspen catches the ball, hangs onto a section of the string with one hand and throws the ball of string with the other hand to the ant saying, "The ant needs me to find food." The ant catches the ball of string, hangs on to a section of the string and throws the ball to the downed log saying, "I need the downed log for a home."

Play goes around the circle until everyone is holding onto a section of the string. At no point should anyone let go of the string. In some cases animals and plants will have received the ball of string more than once and therefore are hanging on to more than one section of string.

Time Out For Discussion

Familiarity with the Background Information will help the leader lead the discussion. Have the group observe the web of connections they have made. Discuss what the web demonstrates about connections in an ecosystem, including the human connection.

Plants, insects, animals, and humans owe their existence to each other. Insects pollinate plants and provide food for small animals; plants provide food and shelter for both animals and humans. Plants also help filter water that is then stored in mountains, streams, lakes, and aquifers. When one member of the web of life is eliminated, other living things are invariably affected. See the Background Information for more about the web of life.

Have each group member think about one item from the middle of the room-sun, water, soil, air-and then describe one connection they have to this resource. For example, the frog might say, "I need the water in which to lay my eggs."

2. Scenario Cards – Human Impacts on Ecosystems

Have the leader, one other person, or four individuals read one Equate! Relate! Scenario Card at a time to the group. Have the group discuss the question at the end of each scenario. As you discuss each scenario have participants drop their string to show how an impact to one part of the web affects another part. For example, if campers pick all the wildflowers in an area, what else will disappear (mice, coyote)? The persons holding the mice or coyote card would drop their section of string.

Note: This game can be played with plants and animals from other ecosystems such as a warm desert, a cold desert or a river corridor. Cards and scenarios should be created accordingly.

Wrapping Up the Activity – 15 Minutes

Your campers are great problem solvers! Your group knows how to have fun in the outdoors while respecting the importance of all living things. How well has each person learned to protect natural resources?

- While still in their circle, have participants summarize what they have learned from this game.
- Have participants tell one new behavior they will practice the next time they go camping or hiking.
- Have participants explain how this behavior will support the natural resources (plants, animals, soil, water...)

Congratulations on conducting a well-prepared meeting for your group!

Scenario Cards

Equate! Relate! Scenario Card

Scenario: Campsites A group of people camp on the edge of an untouched meadow because it is easy to watch wildlife. They stay for many days and leave behind a new rock fire ring, large log benches, and newly worn trails in and around their camp.

- a) How might the scene of their abandoned campsite attract more campers to this area?
- b) If more campers come, how might their presence affect the meadow's community of life?

Answers

- a) People are often attracted to established campsites. The remains of the fire ring, benches, and trails will encourage more people to camp here.
- b) If camping use becomes too heavy, some animals will be driven from the meadow.

Note: A large scale example of animal displacement can be seen in cities. How many wild animals like to live near people? The deer might want to drop the string.

Equate! Relate! Scenario Card

Scenario: Wildflowers

Three campers go out for an afternoon hike. They each return to camp with a handful of wildflowers to give to their leader.

- a) Why should wildflowers be left in their natural setting?
- b) How else might the campers share their love for wildflowers or their desire to present their leader with a gift?

Answers

a) Wildflowers should be kept in their natural setting as food for animals, so the flowers can reseed themselves for the next growing season and to allow other visitors the opportunity to view their beauty.

Note: If wildflowers disappear, animals in the web that depended upon them are in trouble. They should drop their string.

b) The campers could take their leader to see the flowers or they could make a drawing to give to their leader.

Equate! Relate! Scenario Card

Scenario: Firewood

A leader has asked four young campers to collect wood. The campers use axes to hack at live trees and they also peel tree bark to help start their fire.

- a) How might these actions harm the trees?
- b) What are alternatives to cooking with fire?
- c) What might be some nighttime activities that could replace an evening around the campfire?

Answers

a) When bark is hacked or peeled from a live tree, the tree is wounded. Wounds expose trees to disease and insects which harm or kill the tree.

Note: The web is affected if the tree dies. For example, the woodpecker should drop the string.

b) Campers can cook with lightweight stoves rather than campfires, or bring prepared foods.

c) Learn about the stars; use dark shapes surrounding the campsite to stimulate story telling; go for a moonlight hike if the moon is bright.

Equate! Relate! Scenario Card

Scenario: Water

You have been hiking all day and stop in a campsite for the night. As you are setting up your tent you notice two tents next to the stream.

- a) What could the campers in the two tents do to reduce their intrusion into your primitive outdoor experience?
- b) How will these campers affect the animals that use this location at night to get their water?
- c) What, if anything, might you say to these campers?

Answers

a) Hiding tents from view allows a sense of solitude.

b) The animals might be too afraid to come down to the river to drink. Camping so close to a stream could cause pollution from wash water and human waste entering the river. *Note: Those animals that depend upon the stream for drinking water should drop their string.*