



Be A Tree

by Brian "Fox" Ellis

The following is a brief exercise I use frequently with adults and children. You may want to adjust the vocabulary to the child or group you are working with. Be sure to add lots of pauses... and speak in a soft voice.

Find a tree that you feel really drawn towards, one that speaks of beauty...perhaps, one that you may have climbed in your youth. Stand facing that tree. If a small group, hold hands encircling the tree. Then, begin to center down, breathing deeply and relaxing.

(At this point, I introduce the idea of "deep listening" or "hearing with your inner ear"). Ask, "Have you ever been sitting quietly, maybe thinking about a problem, and all of a sudden you hear a voice inside that tells you what you need to know? Or have you ever sort of known something and not known exactly where it came from? Well, that is deep listening. What we are going to do is to let our "inner ear" open to what this tree may want to share with us. Some of you might hear a song, a poem, or a story of what happened here long ago. For some of you it might be a feeling, pictures, or images.

Continue to breathe slowly and deeply. Keep your eyes closed and focus your attention on your feet. Wiggle your toes a little. Now imagine that you are growing roots. Feel your roots sinking down into the soil, sprouting out in all directions. And like a tree, draw energy from the earth. Feel warm, healing energy flowing into your roots, into your feet and legs, up your strong straight trunk. Feel that energy coming from the earth up into your heart, shoulders, arms, and head.

Now imagine yourself growing limbs, reaching out in all directions. Send earth energy from your body, up, out into your branches. Draw the warmth of the sun into your leaves. Feel the warm light soak down into you, filling your heart, filling your body and sinking down into the earth. Earth energy surging up through your roots; Sun energy pouring down through your branches...and mixing in your heart.

Now feel your own heart send love, warm light, into this tree. Open your heart to this tree. Allow the love to flow back and forth. Take a few moments of silence and listen with your inner ear to what this tree might have to share with you...open your heart to this tree...(pause 2-5 minutes)...and know that you can always reconnect in this way. (again, pause)

Now it is time to finish up. Remember to give the tree thanks...now draw back into your heart. feel your body becoming human. Feel how strong and healthy it feels to be a human being. Wiggle your toes and fingers, drop hands and stretch. Open your eyes and shake your arms and legs. Feel how vibrant and alive you feel! Now give the tree a hug, and a deep thank you.

At this point, I give folks a chance to share what it felt like to be a tree, or something the tree shared with them. Almost every time people have really powerful feelings of empathy and often some neat idea or bit of wisdom.

Please end with some expression of gratitude, make offerings to the spirit of the forest. Aho! All my relations! Walk in Balance.

