

Full Circle

What a strange few weeks it has been! I truly hope each of you are remembering to be gentle with yourselves. With so much information out in the world and the high influence of social media, it can be easy to feel as though we are falling short--perhaps on caring for ourselves, perhaps on being present enough for those closest to us right now. Whatever it may be, you are doing the best you can.

The teachers at Full Circle have been working tirelessly to remain connected with our children and families during this time through distance learning. Each teacher offers online Zoom sessions during the week as a way to see one another regularly and continue to foster strong relationships within our learning community. In addition to class Zoom gatherings, we offer weekly online music class with our assistant teacher, Alison Mott, and Friday morning Shabbat gatherings with Cantor Steve. Naomi has also started to record weekly videos for the children to assist us in implementing Jewish curriculum from afar. Still, we know as educators that this electronic environment does not honor learning experiences through all of the five senses. What is most important to us is that families get outside and catch their breath and linger in those happy moments with their children. As Richard Louv emphasizes, "No child can truly know or value the outdoors if the natural world remains under glass, seen only through lenses, screens, or computer monitors." While many places around us are closed, nature remains open and ready for exploration.

While working on my teaching license portfolio, I revisited one of my favorite books, Richard Louv's *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. It brought me back to my graduate research study on children's outdoor play and risk taking, and I found this passage I had underlined a few years back:

"Simply put, many of us must overcome the belief that something isn't worth doing with our kids unless we do it right. If getting our kids out into nature is a search for perfection, or is one more chore, then the belief in perfection and the chore defeats the joy. It's a good thing to learn more about nature in order to share this knowledge with children; it's even better if the adult and child learn about nature together. And it's a lot more fun."

We encourage everyone to keep taking each day as it comes, to get outside, to ask for more support when needed, and to know that you are not alone. Honor and sit with your worries, but also don't forget to invite joy to the table!

~ Erika Geremia