



Helping teachers work with children when they first return to education following major traumatic or life-changing events

## Re-Membering The Branch

<b>Designed for Ages</b>	3 - 5 year olds
<b>Adaptable for Ages</b>	2 - 10 year olds
<b>Learning Experience Description:</b>	This learning experience explores themes of losing something precious to you. It uses the teacher in role convention where the teacher pretends to be a tree who has lost its branch. This learning experience also engages visual arts through crayon rubbings of the branch and leaves.
<b>Te Whāriki (Aotearoa New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum) Link:</b>	<a href="#">Mana aotūroa (Exploration)</a>
<b>Te Whare Tapa Whā (Māori model for well-being):</b>	<a href="#">Taha hinegaro (Mental &amp; emotional)</a>
<b><a href="#">Te Whare o Oro (Māori framework for understanding the brain):</a></b>	Cortex: abstract reasoning, creativity, respect, & moral and spiritual foundation.
<b><a href="#">Tapasā (Cultural competency resource for teachers working with Pacific learners):</a></b>	Turu 1: Identities, languages and cultures
<b>Materials:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tree branch</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prop/costume to wear that will represent when you are acting as the Tree.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Crayons with wrapper/paper removed or charcoal. Enough for each child.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Plain white paper. Enough for each child.</li> </ul>	
<b>Things to consider:</b> <p>This activity could be triggering for children who have experienced a natural disaster that results in fallen branches. Use your discretion whether this will be a supportive activity for your class context.</p>	
<b>Prepare ahead:</b> <p>Part #1 has two options depending on your situation. Read ahead to decide which works for you.</p>	



This learning experience engages the Teacher In Role convention. Here is [an instructional video to explain this teaching convention](#).

In Part #2, you will be helping the children make a rubbing of the branch. Here is a video of how to make a rubbing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTjIPPjEIG0>

### Instructions:

#### Part #1 – Finding the Branch – Two Options

**Option A:** Take your group of children for a walk in an area that may have some fallen branches. When you come across a fallen branch, say to the children: “Wow it looks like this branch fell off this tree! Let’s take it back to our room and learn more about it!”

**Option B:** If you are not able to take your children for a walk to find a fallen branch, find a branch elsewhere and bring it to your Centre. Introduce the branch when the children arrive sharing how you found this branch that had fallen off a tree. Share how you thought it would be interesting to bring it to the group for us to play with it and maybe learn more about its life before it fell off the tree.

#### Part #2 – Getting to know the Branch

1. Sit with the children around the branch.
2. **Engage the children’s senses as they explore the branch.** Invite the children to touch the branch, stroke the branch, and/or cuddle up close to the branch. Ask the children:
  - a. “What do you notice about the branch?”
  - b. “What does the branch feel like to you?”
  - c. “What colours do you notice on the branch?”
  - d. “What do you notice or see on the branch?”
  - e. “What does the branch smell like?”
  - f. “What sound does the branch make?”
3. Ask the children: **“I wonder what happened to the branch?** Was it a person or something else that made the branch fall off?” “What do we think might have happened?”
4. Share with the children: “I wonder where that branch was on the tree when it came off?”
5. **Ask the children: “Could we all make the tree with our bodies?”** Invite the children to lie down on the ground together to create a tree shape. You can support the children to make a configuration of the tree by asking: “Who would



like to be the trunk? The roots and the earth? And other branches?” Then together, make the tree.

*Optional: You can engage the teacher in role convention and the teacher becomes the tree. Instead of the children using their bodies to recreate the branch on the tree, the teacher can lie on the ground and the children can configure the teachers arms and legs into the tree. Then the children can lay the branch against the teacher as a tree.*

6. Once the children are in formation of a tree on the ground, place the branch as if it is re-attached to the tree. You or a child could take a picture of them.

*Optional: you can give different weather prompts and ask the children still in the formation of the tree to move as the tree might in the wind, rain, snow or sunshine.*

7. **Gather the children seated again and ask: “Do we want to find out a bit more about the branch from the tree?”**
8. Introduce the children to the teacher in role convention. **Share with the children: “You’ll know I’m the tree because I will have this prop.”**
9. Put your tree prop/costume on, and as the tree, share with the children: “The branch no longer lives with the tree – does it? Would you like to talk to me - the tree - about what happened? Or about when the branch left the tree? Or how it feels like to have lost a branch?”
10. **Answer the children’s questions as if you are the tree.** You can remove the tree prop when you have answered the children’s questions or at anytime that you need to return to being the teacher for a while. If the children cannot think of any questions, you can share some made-up information with them about the branch’s history with the tree to prompt more discussion.

*Note: at this point you can take a break or continue directly into Part 3. If you are going to take a break, remove the prop and tell the children you are back to being their teacher. You can pretend to not remember anything when you were the tree and ask them what the tree shared with them to have a reflective discussion about what they just learned.*

11. **In role again as the tree (make sure you have your tree prop/costume on), ask the children: “Can you help me make something so I can always remember the branch?”** “I’ve heard that your teacher knows how to make a rubbing of bark. Could you each make me a rubbing of the bark on the branch so I can remember the branch please?”

*Note: you can also invite the children to draw a picture of the branch attached to the tree instead and/ or in addition to a rubbing.*

12. **Remove your tree prop/costume.** Explain to the children that you are back to being their teacher.
13. **Invite the children to the area where they can make a rubbing or draw pictures of the tree and branch.** Explain to the children how to take a rubbing of

the bark: place a piece of white paper on top of a piece of the branch, rub the crayon on its side on the piece of paper.



Figure . Children making charcoal rubbings of the branch. Image copyright Jennifer Boyd.

14. **As the children are doing the rubbing, you may want to ask them questions:**
  - a. **Have you ever lost something important to them? What was it and how did they cope with losing that?**
  - b. Is there anything they have done in their classroom or home to remember something that they lost, that went away, or maybe that died?
15. After the children finish their rubbings, ask the children: “What have you made to help the tree remember its branch?”
 

*Optional: you can also do this in role as the tree if you want to*
16. Ask the children to place their drawings around the branch.
17. **Thank the children for their beautiful artwork.** Share how you are so happy that you have something really special to remember the branch. Ask the children if they could keep the rubbings safe by maybe hanging them on their classroom wall.
18. **Ask the children: “What did it feel like to help the tree remember their branch?”**
19. If possible, hang the branch rubbings and any photos of the activity on the wall with the branch for the children to reflect upon over the coming days and weeks.