



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

Settling Stones

Designed for ages:	3 - 5 years old
Adaptable for ages:	2 - 8 years old
Learning Experience Description:	<p>Children will be introduced to a practice of settling themselves through selecting a stone with their teacher who guides them on how to take care of a special item.</p> <p>This activity is offering you the opportunity to set a daily ritual with your children to help them settle. This ritual can be particularly helpful when you are transitioning from a busy activity to another activity.</p>
Te Whāriki (Aotearoa New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum):	Mana atua – well-being
Te Whare Tapa Whā (Māori model for well-being):	Taha wairua – spiritual
Te Whare o Oro (Māori framework for understanding the brain):	Limbic system: emotional regulation, empathy, affiliation and tolerance.
Tapasā (Cultural competency resource for teachers working with Pacific learners):	Turu 1: Identities, languages and cultures
Materials:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Stones – one for each child and adult. You might be able to walk locally where each child can select a stone or you may choose to have a selection of stones in the learning environment ready for them to select. <input type="checkbox"/> Paint brushes – one for each child <input type="checkbox"/> Paint - a selection of colours - acrylic works best <input type="checkbox"/> Optional: music to play in the background while the children are painting their stones.
Things to consider:	<p>This learning experience is designed to be facilitated in two parts so as to allow the rocks to dry before working with them.</p>



It is recommended to facilitate this activity on a smaller scale when a new child joins your learning environment so that all children have their own stone.

As the teacher, it is really helpful to model how to take good care of the stone.

Prepare ahead:

- Stones/Small Rocks – identify whether you are able to go on a walk and the children collect their own small rocks or if you should pre-collect them and bring them to your learning space for the children to choose.
- Designate an area where the children can store their stones while easily accessing them
- Designate an area where you want the children to gather with their stones to settle. We encourage this space to be a ‘soft place’ with elements of low lighting, soft things (cushions, carpet) and enough room for the children to be alone or to receive cuddles if needed.

Instructions:

Part 1 -

1. Facilitate that each child and teacher **choose their own stone**. Either:
 - a. Take the children out on a walk to find a large stone/small rock that speaks to them. Depending on your cultural practices, you may want to show the children how they can ask permission and give thanks before taking something from nature.
 - b. Offer the children an opportunity to choose their stone from the ones you have pre-collected. You can share with them about where they were found and how you collected them.
2. Invite the children to explore the stone in their hands. You can ask them reflective **questions that engage their senses**:
 - a. What colour is your stone?
 - b. What texture is your stone?
 - c. What does your stone smell like?
 - d. What does your stone feel like in your hand? i.e. heavy/ smooth/ cold.
 - e. How do you feel when you are holding the stone?

Optional: if you have access to water, you can have the children explore how the stones change when they are wet. How long does it take to dry?

3. Invite the children to an area where they can **paint their stones**. Share how they can paint a design on the stones that makes them feel calm and happy. You can



engage them in a conversation about what calm means, what colours might feel more calming, what shapes feel like calming shapes etc.

4. After the children have finished painting their stones, place them collectively to dry and then sit down with the children to discuss; “Stones are often made by breaking off bigger rocks. **How do you think your stone looked like when it first came off a big rock?**” Some children might say that there were sharp edges and that it wasn’t as smooth etc.
5. Ask the children to **show you with their bodies** how tall the rock might have been, how wide the rock might have once been, and what shapes it might have taken.
6. Ask the children: “If we imagine that when your stone first broke off a big rock, it might have had some sharp edges, **how do we think that it now came to be smooth?**” Children might share that it tumbled through a river/ocean and got smooth. Or that someone sanded down the edges.
7. Ask the children to make space for you to lie down on the floor. Show the children how to roll across the floor. Invite a few children to lie down with you and roll across the floor and then settle by being still. Take turns. You might play music for rolling and to pause the music as a signal to stop rolling and be still. Ask children ‘did they bump into anything? How did it feel rolling on the hard floor?’
8. Ask the children: “**How do you think the stone might have felt as it was getting smoother/changing its shape?**” There will likely be a mixture of positive and negative emotions and all are valid.
9. Share with the children: “Sometimes when we experience changes we can feel a little unsettled.” **Share with the children some examples of how you might have felt unsettled** i.e. butterflies in your tummy, lots of energy or not enough energy, sad, nervous, etc.
10. Ask the children, “**If the stones could talk to each other, what advice do you think they would share with us for when we are feeling unsettled?**”
11. Let the children say farewell to their stones and explain how ‘we will let them dry and then come back to them tomorrow.’

Note: when the stones are dry, we suggest spraying them with clear varnish and leaving them to dry. This is the best way to protect the artwork and longevity as the children use and work with them.



Part 2 -

1. Invite the children to collect their dry stones and gather in a circle.
2. You can **repeat Part 1 - Step #4** now that the rocks have dried and encourage the children to make comparisons from what their stone was like before it was painted to now
3. Share with the children: “Since this rock has been through quite a transformation, it **now has the special power** to help us feel calmer/more relaxed/settled when we are feeling upset.”
4. Ask the children: “**What does it feel like to be calm?** Show me what your body looks like when it is calm. What do our bodies feel like when we are calm? What does your mind feel like when it is calm?” You can invite them to put their hands on different parts of their body i.e. their belly, and ask how do they know when their belly feels calm?
5. Share with the children: “These stones are special stones. They have experienced so much in their life. They have many memories stored within them. And because they have lived such a long time, they know how to feel calm and relaxed. **And they are happy to help us to also feel calm and relaxed when we hold and take care them.**”
6. Let the children know that **they can hold their stone at any time** when they are looking for support in feeling calm and settled.
7. Share with the children how **whenever they hear a certain song, you are inviting them to collect their stone and move to the designated area.** Practice this process with your children.
8. Share with the children: “**Because our stones are so helpful for us, we also want to respect them and keep them in a safe spot.**” Share with the children where they can leave their stones, and how they are not to take other peoples stones away from the space. Discuss with the children what it means to respect and care for things from nature.
9. Remind the children how they can go and hold their stones whenever they feel they need to.

Additional Suggestions for using the stones:

1. You can invite the children to bring their stones to meal time. The children may use their stones as a way to come together or as part of the table setting, settling in, and with the ritual of shared food. The table might have a tablecloth and the children could set the tables with crockery, plates and cups.
2. Reconnecting with nature by placing a flower or foliage alongside the painted stones – weaving in themes of connection and togetherness with its natural origins through metaphors of spiritual well-being.
3. If one child is feeling particularly unsettled, you can invite the other children to put their stones in a circle around the child’s stone.



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