

32. Waterdrops

Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink



Themes	Environment, General human rights
Level of complexity	Level 2
Age	7 - 13 years
Duration	60 minutes
Group size	5-20 children
Type of activity	Experiential learning, prioritizing, discussion
Overview	Children decide how they can use water so that they do not waste it. They discuss the importance of personal action in order to save one of the most important resources for the environment.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop awareness of natural resources' sustainable use in everyday life • To discuss ways to protect water and the environment in general • To help children become aware of their rights • To encourage individual action for the sustainable use of resources and water saving.
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare as many glasses or mugs as children you have in your group. • Prepare a 2-litre bottle and fill it with water. Make sure there is enough water to fill all the glasses. With a bigger group of children, prepare more bottles. • Prepare a bowl or a vessel for water saving. <p>Copy the 'Waterdrop' provided in the Handout for each child.</p>
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-litre bottles • Glasses or mugs for each child • A teaspoon for each child • A bowl to hold the common water saved <p>Flipchart Paper and pens</p>

Instructions

1. Ask the children to think of as many reasons as possible why water is important (e.g. for plants, animals, human beings, industry, agriculture, recreation), and introduce the idea of water conservation, asking questions such as these:
 - Where can you find water on Earth? (the ocean, icecaps, freshwater)
 - How much of the water on Earth is useful for human beings? (97% oceans, 2% icecaps, only 1% freshwater of all water is useful.)
 - What would life on Earth be like without water? With less water?
 - Is freshwater equally available everywhere on Earth?
 - Which special phenomena today endanger sufficient amounts of freshwater being available in the future?
2. Brainstorm a list of how every child uses water every day (e.g. for cooking, for having a bath or shower, flushing the toilet, washing clothes) and list these on chart paper or the blackboard.
3. Explain that this activity will challenge them to decide how to use water more carefully. Show them one bottle and ask them to imagine that this is all the water that they as a group will have for the period of one day. They must be careful not to waste it.



4. Give every child a glass and fill it with water from the bottle. Explain that this glass represents the amount of water they have individually to use in a day. Make them guess how much water they use a day. (In Europe, the average is approximately 135 litres/day) As they hold their glasses, remind the children of the list they made in Step 2 of the ways they use water.
5. Ask the children to decide how they can make small changes in their daily behaviour so that they can save water. Allow them some time to decide about their choice. Propose that one spoonful of water represents one litre. Then go around the group asking each child to present their decision and pour some spoonfuls of water that they think they could save into the group bowl. Ask children to write their ideas on the 'Waterdrop' provided them as a handout.
6. When every child has spoken, explain that the water that they have decided to save belongs to the whole group. Explain that the bowl will be full as long as each child continues to save some water every day. Otherwise the group will run out of water.
7. Tell them that the group will now have to decide how to use their common resource in their environment. Ask the children to decide as a group how they intend to use the common water they have. Can they recycle some water?

Debriefing and evaluation

1. Debrief the activity by asking question such as these:
 - Was it easy to think of all the ways you use water every day?
 - Did you notice anything new about the way you use water? About the way their families use water? What about water used in public places (e.g. schools, hospitals, public buildings and parks)?
 - How did you decide to give up a part of your daily water?
 - Which ways of saving water are realistic for your daily life? Which ways of saving water would be hard to maintain every day?
 - Was it hard to decide how to use the 'common water'? Are you satisfied with the group's decision about their common water? Can you think about any other ways to use this water?
2. Lead children to generalize about water conservation:
 - Why is it important to save water?
 - What happens when people do not have access to enough water for their needs?
 - Where does the water our community uses come from? How does it get to us?
 - Does our community waste some of this water?
3. Relate the activity to human rights by asking questions such as these:
 - Water is an essential need for life and survival. What are other resources in the environment which play a key role for life and survival?
 - Do all people get access to these resources, such as clean water, clean air and environment? What happens if the resources are available but not of good quality?
 - Who is responsible for providing these quality resources?
 - Can children also do anything to make sure that everyone gets access to good quality environmental resources?

At the end of the debriefing, ask the children to look back at their 'Waterdrops' and add any other ideas on how to save water and how to use it in their environment. Display the 'Waterdrops' somewhere in the room so that the children can refer to them in the future.



Suggestions for follow-up

- The activity 'WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD', p. 182, also engages children in looking more deeply into what they understand by a healthy and safe environment.
- Use the approach used in this activity to consider other essential resources and how they affect children's lives (e.g. clean air, safe and wholesome food, electricity, gas or oil). Similarly, consider how children themselves can conserve these resources (e.g. recycling, using different bins for different types of rubbish, using public transport, using renewable resources, etc).
- Research situations in countries that do not have adequate access to clean water (e.g. North Africa, the Middle East).
- Learn more about the problem of water (e.g. films, documentaries, myths and folk tales, newspaper articles). Underline the link between individual action and water saving, in this case, and the more abstract right to resources, sustainable development, and the right to life.

Ideas for action

- Develop group plans of action for saving water. Using measuring tools such as a 500 ml bottle and a 10l bucket, children can measure approximately how much water they use in one day. They can take note of it every day for a week. Return to the discussion after a week or so to see if children found it hard to save water and if they think it is useful to do so.
- Get in contact with the children's parents or with adults that live together with children in order to prepare them for a water-saving week.
- Play 'Pollution patrol' with the children. If there is a small pond or river near the school, take a closer look at it. Check the rubbish in the water and on the banks. How do people use this water?
- Take a walk in the surroundings with children and identify how the rubbish is collected and also analyze and explain to children how the rubbish is processed and why it is also important to have a clean environment.
- Build on the children's ideas on changing their behaviours in respect to the resources they are given, e.g. healthy food, water, light, gas, etc. Support them in understanding that each personal action is related to the global context and that individual change can make a difference in the sustainable use of resources.

Tips for the facilitator

- Help the children understand that the way the 'environment' is preserved depends on the respect of human rights and of the right to survival that every human being has.

Adaptations

With older children, the discussion can be continued towards the more abstract right to resources, sustainable development, and the right to life by asking questions such as these:

- What can be done in order to respect everybody's right to water and to all the resources of the Earth?
- Are there other resources which are limited on the Earth?
- What can be done in order to allow future generations to live in a world with access to the necessary resources they need in order to live?



Further information

The 'Trip with the Drip – The Water Drop' workbook contains basic facts, interesting information, and several 'learning-by-doing' activities on various aspects of water. It includes information and practical tools on how to study the origin of water, the amount of water used by human beings, the way people use water for agricultural, industrial and domestic use, and the problem of water pollution.

http://unep.org/publications/search/pub_details_s.asp?ID=3729

HANDOUT: A WATER DROP

