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EDUCATE AS IF ECOLOGY MATTERS

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Any person born and raised in a closet has and causes problems. As that individual grows, they adopt and bond to their closet, not to living responsibly in society or the environment. Hurt and anxious, they fearfully cling to their closeted ways.

With respect to responsible survival, the plight of a closeted person is little different than our own. On average, we Americans spend over 95

The natural world within and around us survives responsibly by continually organizing, preserving and regenerating itself. This creates a perfection, an optimum of life and diversity without war, pollution, garbage, crime, insanity, or excessive stress and violence. In striking contrast, our closeted cultural story irresponsibly says "*To survive, we must continually conquer the natural world and grind it into grist for building our indoor environment.*" None of us are born evil, bad or wrong. It is this story that is wrong.

The natural world within us is our trusting dependent *inner child*. We seldom learn that conquering the natural world includes demeaning and injuring it. Moreover, conquest demeans, stresses and injures our inner child, just as it does the rest of the natural world. Our injured inner child continually seeks pacifiers, substances and resources, for when we hurt, we want, and when we want, there is never enough. This vicious circle is the core of most personal, social and environmental problems.

Changing our destructive conquer-nature story is only part of the solution. As demonstrated by the ineffectiveness of the warning notices on cigarette packages, changing stories seldom changes our dependency relationships.

To live responsibly, we must learn to rejuvenate our natural connections with nature's ways and wisdom. Our hurt inner nature craves that genuine, fulfilling, lasting partnership. We each need bonds with Earth and natural people, not just with our closet. People(s) who bond to the natural environment are seldom subject to excessive hurt, stress or abandonment feelings. They don't create our problems. Rather, they enjoy and help sustain Earth's vitality, balance and peace.

Today, new state-of-the-art backyard and backcountry sensory learning activities enable individuals to build lasting bonds with ecosystems. The activities scientifically create teachable moments in natural areas, moments in which more than 50 inherent, nature-connecting senses and feelings awaken. These non — language ways of knowing play, strengthen and safely enjoin our inner child with

the natural world in people and the environment. Ensuing thoughts, feelings and understandings motivate sharing, community and involvement. The hands-on experiences have been shown to catalyze personal, social and environmental responsibility. They give added impact and value to natural areas as well as to environmental and outdoor education, stress management, counseling, personal growth and peace studies.

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