

Goal

Learn the term **environmental ethic** and reflect on experiences or moments that have shaped your environmental ethic.

Time

30-45 minutes

Materials

- Blank pieces of paper
- Pencils, colored pencils or crayons

Find More on the Website

Other great activities to help you explore your environmental ethic

Before You Start

You can do this activity inside or, even better, outdoors. If outside, send group members off to sit quietly by themselves for 10 minutes to sketch, and then bring everyone back together to discuss snapshot drawings.

Instructions

1. Our **ethics** are the values and principles that guide the choices and actions we make. We also form an **environmental ethic** that reflects how we make decisions about nature and Earth's resources.

When it comes to the environment, what do you believe and value, and what are some of the important experiences that have formed or transformed your views?

Fold a blank piece of paper in half twice so that you have four square/rectangular areas. Label each one: First Memory, Early Childhood, Teen Years, and Future.

First Memory	Early Childhood
Teen Years	Future

2. Next, draw a picture in each box – a “snapshot” – that shows an important memory, experience or moment in your environmental autobiography. For the Future box, draw a snapshot that shows how you hope to live or act at some point in the future. Don't worry about artistic skill. Stick figures are fine! Once everyone finishes, show your snapshots to each other. How many people had similar experiences? What are the differences?

Experiment in Living Simply

Explore Ethic | Activity 3

Goal

Follow in Thoreau's footsteps by conducting your own small experiment in simple living.

Time

Introduction/Reading:

30-45 minutes

Experiment: 3 days

Discussion: 45-60 minutes

Materials

Thoreau Reading Handout

Find More on the Website

Meet Henry: Read about Thoreau's experiment and life at Walden Pond

Before You Start

Explore the "Meet Henry" area of the website. You may want to share additional biographical and background information about Thoreau with your group.

Instructions

1. In 1845, Henry David Thoreau built a small cabin by Walden Pond and spent the next two years living what he called his "experiment"— an experiment that had a profound effect on his environmental ethic.
2. Read a short reading passage from Chapter 2 of Thoreau's book *Walden*, "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," and discuss his reason for going to the pond and the principles he wanted to test.
3. Now try your own experiment in living simply. Brainstorm a list of ways you could simplify your life – things you could change about the way you live or things you possess that are not necessities. Pick something from your list and live the change for three days. Observe yourself. What effect does your experiment have on you? On other people in your life? Record your observations and thoughts in a notebook or journal.

Discussion Questions:

- What were the positive effects or benefits of your experiment?
- What were the biggest challenges?
- What is your definition of necessity?
- What are some of the simple things you enjoy?
- Does living simply look the same for everyone?
- What does living simply look like at school? What about for a whole community or country?