

Name of Activity: Indra's Net Yarn Toss



When to use: beginning of the day, can be done as an icebreaker activity

Overarching Topic: interdependence / cause and effect

Whole Group or Small Group/Age specific: Whole group/can be adapted to any age

Estimated timing: 15-20 minutes

Gardner's 8 Intelligences: visual-spatial | logical-mathematical | bodily-kinesthetic | interpersonal | intrapersonal

Objective: to give students an experiential understanding of the hidden interconnectedness and interdependency of everything and everyone in the universe. Ecological contemplation. Icebreaker.

Motivation/Hook:

“Far away in the heavenly abode of the great god Indra, there is a wonderful net which has been hung by some cunning artificer in such a manner that it stretches out infinitely in all directions. In accordance with the tastes of deities, the artificer has hung a single glittering jewel in each “eye” of the net, and since the net itself is infinite in dimension, the jewels are infinite in number. There hang the jewels, glittering like stars in the first magnitude, a wonderful sight to behold. If we now arbitrarily select one of these jewels for inspection and look closely at it, we will discover that in its polished surface there are reflected all the other jewels. Not only that, but each of the jewels reflected in this one jewel is also reflecting all the other jewels, so that there is an infinite reflecting process occurring.” – Avatamsaka Sutra

Procedure/Steps:



Give your students a brief introduction starting with the the story of Indra's Net. Then give a simple explanation of the philosophical concepts the metaphor illustrates. Dependent origination (also called interdependence) is probably the best place to start. It might be helpful to talk about

interdependence in terms of what students are already familiar with. Older children may have an understanding of ecology and how changing one aspect of an ecosystem effects the whole. [The Environmental Protection Agency has a great site for kids](#) that helps them understand how climate changes impact Earth's inhabitants.

Then play the Indra's Net Yarn Toss activity to give the students an experiential understanding of how they play a roll in their immediate environment and with one another!

Step one: Have the students sit in a circular pattern. The children themselves will be the jewels.

Step two: Have the students toss the yard ball and have them tie the string around their finger so it stays put. After the ball has been tossed to everyone have the students reflect that they are all *really* connected now by this web of connection.

Possible Guiding Questions: Ask the children to each explore what happens when they even gently pull on the web. Take turns. Then have some one pull hard. What happens? Can someone sitting close repair the damaged web? Can we stand up together now? Is it hard? What does this require? Do we have to look at each other? Could there still be a change if we don't see it with our eyes?

Closing contemplation and meditation: Asks the students for their thoughts and reflections with, "How can we keep all the jewels connected to Indra's Net?" After all the children's thoughts are heard, conclude with a short meditation session. The children can still be connected to each other by the string if desired. (**Mind Jars** can be used at this time to support the meditation.) Dedicate the merit of this activity for the benefit of all beings connected to each other in the web of existence.

Product/Outcome (if any): Icebreaker. Bonding.

Resources Needed: Ball of yarn. Adhesive Jewels.

Possible Misunderstandings/Cultural Barriers: If a child is shy and doesn't want to comment or give feedback that's alright they can still be connected. Use eye-contact to let them know they are seen but don't engage them too much directly.

Extensions/Connections: Carry the experience of interdependence through the day or other lessons.