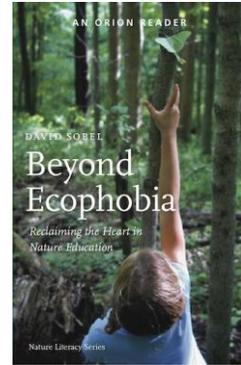


10 Minutes For The Planet

Beyond Ecophobia ©

by Valentine Rinner



Hello everyone and welcome to this week's **episode** of 10 minutes for the Planet. Today I'm going to tell you about a book I read a few years ago that had a critical **impact** on how I talk about nature and **environmental** issues. It is still a **reference** for me now when I think about what I'm going to share with you in 10 minutes for the Planet and *how* I am going to share it with you.

The title of the book is "Beyond **Ecophobia**, Reclaiming the Heart in Nature Education". It was written by David Sobel, an American education writer, and published by The Orion Society in 1996 and **re-edited** in 2013.

Sobel is **concerned** about the way in which we talk about nature and the **environment**, that more often than not **instigates** a fear of nature: ecophobia. **Indeed**, today we **overburden** young kids (and less young humans too) with **alarming** problems about the natural world. This early **awareness strategy** just **overwhelms** children most of the time - and again to me this applies to **adults** as well - and causes at best **disengagement** and at worst **despair**.

In "Beyond Ecophobia" Sobel **addresses cognitive** readiness regarding when children should be **introduced** to the world they live in and specifically to **different** types of environmental concerns. He **distinguishes** 3 stages of **development** between the ages of four and seventeen. During those stages, the world **spontaneously** perceived by a child **expands** as he grows up. The idea is to work hand in hand with their growing perception of the world and engage children in age-**appropriate** environmental educational **activities**. The book is specifically for teachers and parents and Sobel **identifies** ways in which we can teach **pupils** to **apprehend** the nature around them at different stages of growing up.

to instigate (vb.) to cause

to overburden (vb.) to place an excessive load on

awareness (n.) knowledge that something exists

to overwhelm (vb.) to be too much to deal with

despair (n.) hopelessness

In short the intention is to start by **encouraging voluntary empathy** with the natural world through allowing and developing strong relationships with nature. Empathy **prepares** the next stage which is about exploration: further **exploring landscapes**, pushing **boundaries**, **discovering** new places. Only later during early **adolescence**, when the sense of self **strengthens**, has the time come to engage in social awareness and action. At this stage of cognitive development children are now able to apprehend not only their local environment but also how it is linked to the rest of the world, how local actions can **affect** the **global** environment and vice versa.

In essence, as Sobel puts it: “if we want children to **flourish**, we need to give them time to **connect** with nature and love the Earth before we ask them to save it.” For me this **principle** is **relevant** for any human being at any stage of their lives. It is only after one learns to love nature, **value** it and care for it that one is **available** and **equipped** to **eventually tackle** larger environmental problems.

With 10 minutes for the Planet, I **constantly** try to focus on **aspects** of the environment that **foster** empathy, **enjoyment**, love and care for the Planet, that encourage exploration and observation before we start getting into problems and global issues that are difficult to **relate to** in our **everyday** lives.

If you are **interested** in nature education and/or children I encourage you to **get ahold of** “Beyond Ecophobia”. It is a short book and easy to read. As another option I **invite** you to take a few silent **minutes** and list what you **personally** enjoy the most about nature. Then, ask yourself whether or not it would be possible to enjoy those specific things a bit more in your life, outside of your **organised** activities. Now: just go for it!

Bye everyone and see you next week for a new episode of 10 minutes for the Planet.

boundary (n.) limit, border

to strengthen (vb.) to become stronger or more effective

global (adj.) relating to the whole world

in essence (adv.) basically

to flourish (vb.) to grow or develop successfully

relevant (adj.) pertinent

eventually (adv.) finally

to tackle (vb.) to try to deal with something

to foster (vb.) to promote, encourage

to relate to (phrasal vb.) to be connected with

to get ahold of (got-got) (exp.) to manage to find

*Tip!

Syllable stress can help us to understand spoken words. Let's take the words 'environment' and 'environmental' as an example. First count the syllables: 'en.vi.ron.ment' has 4 syllables, 'en.vi.ron.men.tal' has 5 syllables. Syllable stress is when you say one of the syllables slightly louder or with more emphasis. So in this example we say:

environment

and

envi**ron**mental .