

*To the East I see a lovely old church,
To the South I see a bridge,
To the West I see an enchanted wood,
To the North I see a path leading far away,
Above I see rain struck puffy clouds,
Below I see spring flowers on the ground
Inside I feel loved,
Altogether, I am happy.
I give thanks for all there is.*

By Dotty, age 9

Seven Directions Poem – Poems from the Heart

About 20 mins

Ages 6 and above

Small to large groups

Ready

The seven directions poems are lovely and simple to do, especially written at sunrise when the day is fresh, the birds are singing with open hearts and you know which direction you are facing in! Of course you can do this activity at any other time of day, you just need to have *some way* of telling which way you are facing to start the poem off facing East.

In the process of drawing in inspiration for the poem, I ask the participants to send their attention to their hearts, and develop a heartfelt connection with the outside world, before we begin to write. Our hearts operate on many different levels. Stephen Harrod Buhner, a poet and a senior researcher for the Foundation of Gaian Studies, has this to say about the heart in his book *The Secret Teachings of Plants*:

“At its most basic, the heart is a pump, circulating blood and generating pressure waves throughout the body. But the heart, it turns out, is much more than a muscular pump (and there is some question to whether it is a muscular pump at all). It is an electromagnetic generator, producing a wide range of electromagnetic frequencies; an endocrine gland, making and releasing hormones; and a part of the central nervous system. It is, in fact, a brain in its own right. (The heart has)...deep impacts not only on our physiological functioning and health, but also on how we think and feel – in fact, on our consciousness.”

Get set

You will need a compass (kept hidden, so you can appear very wise by knowing which direction is East!), pens and card or notebooks to write in. Something to sit on, if the ground is wet or damp. Perhaps some colouring pencils, two or three per person.

Go!

“Gather in, everybody. Let’s pretend we are famous poets. Here is some card and a pencil to write a special poem with. Let’s sit down in a huddle, all facing the rising sun (or simply the East), with enough room for every person to shuffle round in a circle, on the spot.” We have a bit of fun and a wriggle getting into the best position.

Turning to face everyone, I say “We are about to write a poem, using all our senses. Please write these three words at the top of your page:

“To the East,”

I centre myself in the here and now and invite everyone else to do the same by having few deep breaths, with their eyes closed.

“Without telling me and keeping your eyes closed, can you smell anything? Can you feel the air going down into your lungs? Can you feel or hear your heart beating? Imagine warm, soft rays, like sunshine, coming out from your heart, touching every thing, gently sensing the world around you. With each breath draw inspiration to your heart and feel connected to everything around you.

“With our eyes still shut, let’s get our pencils and notebook ready. Okay, let’s open our eyes! Describing whatever you see, hear, feel, touch or smell is fine to add to the poem.”

Guide the group through the rest of the poem by prompting them to complete each line of the poem;

“To the East I ...
To the South I ...
To the West I ...
To the North I ...
Above I ...
Below I ...
Inside I feel ...
Altogether I am ...
I give thanks for all there is.”

If it is appropriate let the group spend time decorating their poems with some natural colours from grass, earth, flowers, berries etc. Simply rubbing the colours on to the page can be quite effective. Allow the poets to mingle with friends and show off their work to each other.

When the poem is done we gather everyone in, sit as a circle and people are invited to share their poem with the group as a whole.

This activity is an excerpt from my book, I love my world. To get a free sample of the introduction and first chapter, or even to buy a copy click here: <http://www.wholeland.org.uk/chriss-books/>