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EcoSpiritual Video Diaries for Teens

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This resource (EcoSpiritual Video Diaries for Teens) is directed at adult leaders of religious youth groups. The resource is most appropriate for older middle- and high school-aged youth, though adult leader discretion is advised for middle school-aged children because of this activity's dependence on social media.

The purpose of this 4 week long activity is to create a video diary that will catalog a participant's process of exploring and reflecting upon ecospirituality. The themes for the four weeks are:

1. Imagine That! (Imagination)
2. Hallowed be all the Names! (Spirituality)
3. Going it Together! (Community)
4. Joy to the World! (Nourishment)

Participants' video diaries will be shareable amongst participants but can remain public or private to other viewers depending on the participants' preference.

Resources on Instagram may need to be updated as time passes. Instructions for proper Instagram usage may also need to be updated if the platform changes significantly.

Instructions for Getting Started

If you don't have an Instagram account, or you want to make a new one separate from your personal account, head over to [this link](#) to set up your account.

Once you and your group mates have accounts, follow each other so you can stay up-to-date with each others' activities through the duration of the project. This is a collaborative experience, and we all learn better when we're learning from each other!

To make your Instagram account private, which means that people can't see your posts unless you permit them to follow you, go to "Settings" and click on "Privacy and security." Click on "Private account." Your new settings should automatically save.

To make a post, click on the square button with a plus-sign in the middle of it. You can choose to add a Reel, Post, Story, Story highlight, Live, or a couple of other options for content. For this project, you'll mostly be creating Reels or Lives. **Reels** are short-form videos up to 15 minutes long. **Lives** are videos streamed in real-time that can be up to four hours long.

Social media usage and safety

Please advise your group participants that their safety and mental wellness are more important than any objectives this activity may have. Although social media opens up a world of knowledge and possibilities for engagement with ecospiritual community, it also poses potential dangers.

Here are some tips for healthy engagement with this activity.

1. Encourage participants to [turn off their public "like" count](#) on posts. This will help prevent this activity from becoming a popularity contest.
2. Encourage participants not to engage in this activity late at night so that they have a better chance of getting sufficient sleep.
3. Through this activity, participants are intended to interact with each other through communally viewable comments and videos. Participants are not encouraged through this activity to engage with users outside of the group.
4. Model healthy social media usage.
5. Ask open-ended questions about social media usage. Most teens are well aware of the dangers of social media and can voice them in a convincing manner to themselves. [Here is a list of open-ended questions](#) that can be posited to participants.

Week 1: Imagine That!

This week's accounts, [@girlinwaterphotography](#) and [@intersectionalenvironmentalist](#), inspire us to think about possibilities. Imagination is an important part of ecospirituality because it's our portal from "what is" to "what can be." It's hard to get somewhere that we can't imagine, isn't it? That's why we want to provoke our creativity. Beauty and possibility can come out of a healing planet and our relationship to it.

Let's hear from environmental thinkers and activists and then turn the mic on to ourselves.

1. Day 1: Record your first thoughts as a Reel. Here are some questions to spark your thinking:
 - a. What do you imagine the planet could be like in 20 years if we all commit to healing the planet?
 - b. What beauty is in your native environment that you'd like to see healed or preserved? What beauty do you want to tell other people about — what landscapes, species, or natural phenomenon?
2. Day 2: Explore [@girlinwaterphotography](#). What feelings do these photographs inspire in you? These photos are mostly taken of small organisms. What small things are you curious about in your native environment? What purpose does beauty serve to plants and animals? Record your thoughts in a Reel.
3. Day 3: Explore [@intersectionalenvironmentalist](#). What does the word "intersectional" mean? What does it mean that environmentalism is intersectional? How do your different identities interact with environmentalism, like your gender, race, abilities/disabilities, age, and more? Record your thoughts in a Reel.
4. Day 4: Respond to your group mates' videos with comments and/or video replies (strive for 3-4 responses)
5. Day 5: Respond to any responses on your videos
6. Day 6: What other thoughts do you have on this topic now that you've had a conversation with your group mates about it? Record your thoughts in a Reel.

Week 2: Hallowed be all the names!

Having a mindful approach to ecology can be a spiritual undertaking. We connect to something much bigger than ourselves – something that we at times don't understand. This week's accounts, @mikaelaloach and @somaesiliency, are individuals with a strong spiritual connection to their environmental activism.

Let's hear from environmental thinkers and activists and then turn the mic on to ourselves.

1. Day 1: Record your first thoughts as a Reel. Here are some questions to spark your thinking:
 - a. Do your spiritual/religious beliefs mix well with your relationship to the planet? What does your religious background teach you about the planet?
 - b. Do you have to have a spiritual life in order to be a good friend to the planet?
2. Day 2: Explore @mikaelaloach. What do you learn from how she talks about her religious beliefs and her environmentalism? How does she encourage others to be open about their religious beliefs in this field? Record your thoughts in a Reel.
3. Day 3: Explore @somaesiliency. What does the word "somatic" mean? Why is Selin's approach to healing and grief important for environmental work? Is it okay to feel despair when you think about the planet's health? What do you do when you feel despair? Record your thoughts in a Reel.
4. Day 4: Respond to your group mates' videos with comments and/or video replies (strive for 3-4 responses)
5. Day 5: Respond to any responses on your videos
6. Day 6: What other thoughts do you have on this topic now that you've had a conversation with your group mates about it? Record your thoughts in a Reel.

Week 3: Going it together!

There's an African proverb that says, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." It's not easy to practice ecospirituality by yourself, even though sometimes it seems activists are like celebrities. This week's accounts, @allwecansave and @ecojusticeproject, are community platforms where many individuals and ideas come together. They help us remember that environmentalism is not a personal brand or a solo project. And if we want to see big changes happen, we've got to stick together.

We'll hear from these environmental thinkers and activists and then turn the mic on to ourselves.

1. Day 1: Record your first thoughts as a Reel. Here are some questions to spark your thinking:
 - a. Most of us know, up in our heads, that we can do more when we work together. So, why is it so easy for people who care about social justice issues to end up working alone?
 - b. Have you worked with others before on a project that turned out well? If so, tell us about it. If not, tell us what went wrong. Either way, what are some lessons you learned about cooperation?
2. Day 2: Explore @allwecansave. This account arose out of a book about collective wisdom. What is some of the wisdom you've gleaned from this account? Do you have any pieces of climate-related wisdom or have you heard any elsewhere that you'd like to share? Record your thoughts in a Reel.
3. Day 3: Explore @ecojusticeproject. This is a storytelling platform where we can hear from different people about their environmental concerns and activism. Why is storytelling so important? Why is it important to hear about environmentalism from diverse and young perspectives? Record your thoughts in a Reel.
4. Day 4: Respond to your group mates' videos with comments and/or video replies (strive for 3-4 responses)
5. Day 5: Respond to any responses on your videos
6. Day 6: What other thoughts do you have on this topic now that you've had a conversation with your group mates about it? Record your thoughts in a Reel.

Week 4: Joy to the world!

Ecospirituality isn't all doom and gloom. We can also be fueled by joy and nourished by the planet! What we're hoping for, after all, is a planet that's healthy. The world can feed our souls with its beauty and feed our bodies with its creations. This week's creators, @blackforager and @farmersfootprint, talk a lot about food. And who doesn't love food? Let's look at how our bodies and souls get fed when we have a good relationship with the planet.

We'll hear from these environmental thinkers and activists and then turn the mic on to ourselves.

1. Day 1: Record your first thoughts as a Reel. Here are some questions to spark your thinking:
 - a. When you feel despair about the state of the world, what nourishes your soul and helps you feel better?
 - b. Do you know any food growers or creators near you? If not, do you think there are any? If so, what do you know about what they produce and who they are?
2. Day 2: Explore @**blackforager**. Alexis invites us to consider what can be foraged and what is edible in our own communities. How do you feel when you find something edible in your backyard, neighborhood, or community? Why don't you think these foods are in your grocery stores? Record your thoughts in a Reel.
3. Day 3: Explore @**farmersfootprint**. This account asks us to explore where our food comes from: who tends it, where it grows, and what it requires to get to us. Take a look at some of the food in your fridge or pantry. What can you tell us about where it came from? How far did it travel to get to you? How many hands do you think had to hold this food before it got to you? Record your thoughts in a Reel.
4. Day 4: Respond to your group mates' videos with comments and/or video replies (strive for 3-4 responses)
5. Day 5: Respond to any responses on your videos
6. Day 6: What other thoughts do you have on this topic now that you've had a conversation with your group mates about it? Record your thoughts in a Reel.