



# Larchwood Nature OT Weekend Groups Family Guide

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## Our Team

Welcome to our 8-week Larchwood Nature OT Group! Groups will be led by our team of Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapist Assistants. The week before your session date begins, you will be sent an email sharing which group your child has been assigned to. Your OT/OTA will then email you to introduce themselves.

The groups led by an OTA are supervised by an OT. This means the OT is reviewing the caseload prior to the session start, attending Week 1 and Week 8, debriefing weekly with the OTA, providing strategies and recommendations and participating in documentation.

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[Check out the team profiles on our website!](#)

We also rely on volunteers to ensure the safety of our participants in nature! Volunteers go through a selection process and must provide their Vulnerable Services Sector Check before beginning a session. Many of our volunteers have an interest in pursuing academic studies in the field of Occupational Therapy.

## What to Expect

As this is a group format, the typical 1:1 individual assessment will not take place. Instead we will gain an understanding of your child and their OT needs through reviewing your intake forms and following up via phone or email as needed. If you are new to the Larchwood family we ask that you either attend the **Nature Play Group pop up** OR schedule a **15 minute video call** with your OT/OTA prior to the start of the group. This is to answer any questions that you may have, explore the natural space and lessen some of the anxiety that comes with a new thing!

## Nature Group Goals

We will observe your child(ren) in nature and adjust the curriculum each week to meet the individual needs of the group. Our group goals include:

- Fostering independence,
- Improving confidence,
- Building a nature connection,
- Developing social skills,
- And using nature-based OT activities to strengthen emotional regulation!

We continue to use an Emotional Regulation Curriculum developed by our team. Each week the OTs will be facilitating activities to lay the foundation for emotional awareness, identification of feelings and strategies to help manage emotions.

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OTs will be available for chats with parents and caregivers at pick up and drop off to discuss their child. If it's a rushed time, please feel free to connect with your OT by email and arrange a time to have a quick chat on the phone, especially if you're struggling with a behaviour at home. We are here to support you through this 8 week session.

## **Social Media & Photography**

Each week our social media accounts (@larchwoodnatureot) will present photos and activities that were enjoyed. We love to take photos and share them with our families at the end of each session; however on social media we only use photos that do not allow for the identification of a child. Please reach out if you have any additional questions.

Lots of great information is also available under '[Parent Resources](#)' on our website.

Each week the OTs will be documenting the weekly goals and any observations that were made. At the completion of the 8-week program you can choose to either receive a 1 page summary of your child(ren)'s progress OR a 15-minute 1:1 phone call with your OT/OTA.

## **Locations**

### **East End Toronto: [Todmorden Mills Park](#)**

The team will meet children and parents across the long wooden walking bridge (at the north end of the second parking lot) near the old brewery building. You can park either in the first lot which is small or head through (as long as the gate is open) to the larger second lot. We will be hiking along the [Oxbow Trail](#) during our weekly sessions. There are also many [historical buildings](#) on site which will be great for exploring.

### **Etobicoke: [Marie Curtis Park](#)**

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## Groups & Timing

Groups typically run on **Saturdays**, beginning at 10:00am. All Weekend Nature OT Groups are 90 minutes long. Parents are encouraged to drop their children off. If you would like to accompany your child to the first session please discuss with your OT.

Please refer to your Jane appointment reminder for the date, time and location. This is where the most up to date information will be shared.

Children are grouped based on their age/developmental status. We offer the following groups:

- **Seedlings [ages 4-6]**
- **Sprouts [ages 7-9]**
- **Explorers [ages 10-13]**

\*If you're running late, please call or text to our main line at 647-933-2404. Please let us know of any planned or unplanned absences.

## Health & Safety

We are committed to providing a safe environment for participants, staff and family.

Caregivers will be required to accompany their child(ren) to the drop off. If someone other than the legal guardians will be picking up or dropping off, this needs to be indicated on the intake form.

## Illness

If your child is ill or anyone in the household, please keep them home and notify your OT.

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## Hygiene & Sanitation

- All high touch items (clipboards, buckets, pencils, compasses, etc.) will be frequently cleaned and disinfected.
- Hand sanitizer (>70% alcohol) will be provided, as needed.

## Washrooms

The parks are not equipped with washrooms so we ask that you ensure your child has gone to the bathroom before arriving. Should your child need to use a bathroom when we are in nature, each OT will have a 'toilet kit' and assist your child as needed.

## Allergies

If your child has any anaphylactic (life threatening) allergy this will have been indicated on the intake form. Your OT/OTA will be following up with you, via phone call, to complete an *Anaphylactic Emergency Plan Form*. Please ensure your child has their epi pen and a pouch/fanny pack so they can carry the pen with them. If you choose, your OT/OTA can also carry a second epi pen.

## Safety and Emergency Policies

Our students and staff are certified in Standard First Aid and CPR Level C.

All students and volunteers are required to complete a Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Screening prior to their placement.

In the event that a child is injured, ill, or in need of emergency medical assistance, the team will provide first aid or CPR as necessary, and seek emergency medical assistance on behalf of the child.

We contact parents/guardians when:

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- A child has significant bumps, bruises, or cuts where we have applied first aid;
  - A child has been exposed to a contagious disease, bug, or parasite;
  - A child is sent off-site for professional medical treatment; or
  - Any other concerning medical issue is brought to the attention of students or staff members that they deem necessary to communicate with parents.

## **Behaviour Policy**

At Larchwood Nature OT, all students and staff members are trained in behaviour management and we are neurodiversity affirming. It is our goal to provide a positive experience for your child, and as such we partner with your child and you to develop successful strategies for managing challenging behaviours. We are committed to communicating regularly with you, providing and receiving feedback, and collaboratively problem-solving should challenges arise.

We reserve the right to cancel a child's participation in the session if their behaviour is deemed dangerous to themselves or others. We will only do so as a last resort if all possible resources and strategies have been exhausted.

As Occupational Therapists, we use deep pressure techniques as treatment in cases of extreme emotional dysregulation when the child is in danger of hurting themselves or others. In this technique, we talk to the child while coming around behind them and giving them a big bear hug. We then gently lower them to the ground and use strategies to help them work through their big emotions. If this technique is used we take extra time letting the family know, document extensively, and also inform the other children/parents that a child was having some big emotions and needed some space. Deep pressure can facilitate regulation to sensory seeking children. We use careful clinical reasoning and rationale when we decide to use this as a team. In our experience it has worked well with some of our participants and they often thank us for helping them get through the big feelings.

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## Cancellation Policy

Absences to the Nature OT Group Sessions are not entitled to credit or refund. If you need to cancel participation in a session after enrollment and start of the session, it will be determined by the Program Director what the appropriate action will be. This is done on an individual basis.

## Weather

We do not cancel sessions due to weather, unless it is extreme including lightning, thunder, or high winds. In the event of bad weather we will send an email out 24hrs prior to the original session with details for the newly rescheduled session. If the weather change happens less than 24hrs prior to the original session then a phone call will be placed with details outlining when the rescheduled session will take place.

We employ strategies to stay warm including keeping active, finding or creating shelter. Your child will likely be very dirty and happy when you pick them up!

## What to Bring

- ❑ Weather Appropriate Clothing:
  - ❑ Make sure to dress for the outdoors! We are outdoors in all weather - rain, shine, snow and cold! Check out this great Parent Resource that OT Katie created on [Dressing for Winter Play](#).
  - ❑ Cold Weather: insulated and waterproof boots, snowsuits, gloves/mittens, neck warmers and hats.
  - ❑ Rainy Weather: rain boots, rain jackets and splash pants
  - ❑ Extra socks and mittens are helpful to have in your child's backpack.
- ❑ Small backpack (be sure your child is comfortable carrying it)
- ❑ Labeled water bottle
- ❑ Nut-free snack

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The OTs will be carrying a backpack with supplies including first aid kits. Please DO NOT bring anything valuable, electronic or distracting toys.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Davis Occupational Therapy      **(647) 933-2404**

Email      [help@davisoccupationaltherapy.com](mailto:help@davisoccupationaltherapy.com)