



life Happens

HEADLINES

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Nature is Nurturing: A Dose of the Natural World is an Antidote to Stress

Nature has an inherently calming quality. Something about the warmth of the sun and the gentle brush of a breeze on skin feels therapeutic. Now, recent studies reinforce what many of us already know- nature is healing! A dose of the natural world reaps physical benefits like lowered blood pressure, reduced muscle tension, enhanced immune system functioning, and a reduction in cortisol, the stress hormone, making green spaces a natural antidote to stress! In the hustle and bustle of urban environments, it takes more effort to focus and think clearly. But natural environments have a calming effect. With little thought, you can become effortlessly immersed in the tranquil scenery of clouds floating overhead, leaves rustling in the wind, or flowers blooming in a field. These serene experiences increase self-esteem, lower aggression, and improve mood. Becoming attuned to nature isn't just good for your mental and physical health. Purposefully connecting with the natural world significantly correlates with life satisfaction, meaningfulness, and happiness.

More Time On Screen, Less Time On Green



Until recent history, humans spent thousands of years living fully immersed in nature. Theory suggests this evolution is why people instinctively gravitate to green spaces. The human brain isn't attuned to the highly-stimulated, artificial places we now spend most of our days. The added pressure to constantly be productive can lead to stress, anxiety, and depression. These mental symptoms can manifest in physical reactions like elevated blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and suppressed immune function. Connecting with your natural roots and simply being in nature alleviates stress and fatigue by refocusing your mind on the present.

A Dose of Natural Medicine

Taking time to immerse yourself in the natural world reaps many health benefits.

Sunshine Vitamin: Spending time in the great outdoors allows you to soak up vitamin D from the sun, a nutrient most people don't get enough of in their diet. Vitamin D fortifies the body's immune defenses and may prevent osteoporosis, diabetes, and Alzheimer's.

Vision: Exposure to artificial light from phone and computer screens every day takes a toll on eyesight. It can cause problems like dry eyes, myopia or nearsightedness, and chronic headaches. Taking time rest your gaze on natural beauty helps improve focus and eyesight.

Focus & Attention: Technology pulls your attention in a million different directions each day. Bouncing between emails, texts, and scrolling on social media trains the mind to have a short attention span, leading to mental fatigue, overwhelm, and burnout. Fully engaging in the natural world gives your brain a break from the distractions of multitasking. Effortlessly immersing yourself in natural scenery helps you become more observant and attentive.

[Learn more about how nature impacts well-being.](#)

A Universal Remedy for Health & Happiness

The restorative powers of nature appear to be universal. The benefit is the same regardless of race, gender, age, disability, income, and social group! A study of 20,000 people in England found that of those who spent little to no time in nature, **25%** reported poor health, and nearly **50%** said they were unsatisfied with their life. In contrast, of those who spent at least 2 hours in nature each week, just **15%** stated their health was poor, and **33%** were not satisfied with their life.



Sources: [Study by the University of Exeter Medical School](#)

Getting Back to Your Roots

So what's the right dose of nature? Research shows two hours each week is all it takes to reap mental and physical benefits! Simply being in and appreciating natural spaces builds greater resilience, develops a stronger connection to self, and improves overall well-being. Wondering how you can get a healthy dose of nature each week? Here are a few ideas to get started:

- Walking outdoors or in a park
- Hiking
- Gardening
- Bird watching
- Eating outdoors
- Planting flowers or a tree

Even bringing nature indoors with a landscape painting or plant can reduce stress

and anxiety!

Looking for more ideas? Listen as environmental advocate Leslie Berckes helps us explore the many ways someone can interact with the natural world to boost physical and emotional well-being.

[Click here to listen to Find Your Roots: Exploring Environmental Wellness](#)



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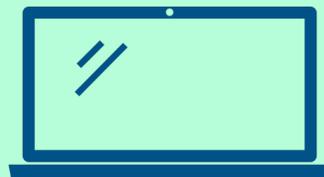


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PODCAST

Emotion Well is EFR's monthly podcast. Listen to our latest episode featuring Alysa Mozak, owner of Blossoming Pathways, LLC. Tune in as Alysa shares ideas for establishing and maintaining boundaries in all types of relationships.

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Looking for further readings on a variety of health and wellness topics? Check out our monthly blog posts! Everyone faces challenges in life, and those with physical disabilities often have their condition broadcast to the outside world through the assistive devices they use. But a majority of people with disabilities go undetected in the public eye. Learn what invisible disabilities are and how stigma keeps these conditions hidden.



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