

WELLNESS TIPS

CONNECT WITH NATURE

Numerous studies show that spending time in nature is associated with positive impact on our mental and physical health and well-being. Potential benefits include decreased stress and anxiety, increased sense of well-being, improved mood and physical health, as well as improved working memory, attention, and cognitive flexibility.

You do not need to take a strenuous hike in the woods, a twenty-mile bike ride, or a camping trip. Research indicated two hours per week (either in one shot or spread out over the week) can result in significantly improved health and well-being. One review of studies revealed college students experienced positive changes after spending 10-20 minutes sitting or walking in nature.

One can experience positive results by noticing one tree, spending time in a greenspace or park, or sitting by some flowers or a body of water. You may enjoy spending time on your deck or balcony, in your backyard, tending to your garden or potted plants, walking barefoot, or listening to the birds. Or you might enjoy looking at nature through your living room window.

Being outdoors in a natural environment can help maintain motivation for exercise. Outdoor exercise decreases perceptions of fatigue, decreases stress, and improves mood more than indoor exercise (which is also helpful).

The impact of a variety of nature settings are being studied, such as green vs blue environments, environments with biodiverse flora and fauna, and remote vs urban environments.

While being outside in “real nature” is most beneficial, other settings and strategies can also provide benefits. If being outside is not feasible, think about ways to bring nature inside. Get some plants. Worried about keeping them alive? Succulents are currently popular and do not need frequent watering (plants have the added benefits of decreasing air-borne pollutants), have an inexpensive bouquet of flowers, or get some fish, which also require minimal care.

Nature videos can be helpful if one cannot go outside. Nature sounds such as crickets chirping, or waves crashing have been associated with better performance on cognitive tests. Open your drapes and let in the sun. Natural light enhances performance, increases job satisfaction, and decreases feelings of depression.

Consider incorporating landscape paintings, photos, or nature scenes in your home decorating.

Take advantage of spring's arrival and anticipated warmer weather. Go outdoors, explore a new trail, or park, and notice the redbud trees in bloom. Experience an increased sense of well-being!

Delagran, L. "Enhance Your Wellbeing in Nature." University of Minnesota Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing.

<https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/enhance-your-wellbeing-nature>

Delagran, L. "Taking Charge of Your Health and Wellbeing." University of Minnesota Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing.

<https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/>

Meredith, G.R.; Rakow, D.A.; Eldermire, E.R. B.; Madsen, C.G.; Shelley, S.P.; Sachs, N. A. "Minimum Time Dose in Nature to Positively Impact the Mental Health of College-Aged Students, and How to Measure It: A Scoping Review." *Frontiers in Psychology*.

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02942/full>

Weir, K. "Nurtured by Nature." American Psychological Association. 52(3), April 1, 2020.

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2020/04/nurtured-nature>

Check the MSCC Website for past Wellness Tips <https://medicine.uiowa.edu/md/student-support/student-counseling/mscc-wellness-programs-and-resources>

Stay safe and stay well!

Feel free to contact the MSCC to talk with a counselor or schedule an appointment for questions and concerns.

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