

Mental Health and the Outdoors

How can time outdoors improve our mental health?

1

Lifts Our Mood



A representative study of 20,000 adults found that those who spent at least two recreational hours in nature during the previous week reported significantly greater health and well-being, whether that was in one day or spread out over the full two weeks.

"Contact with nature is associated with increases in happiness, subjective well-being, positive affect, positive social interactions and a sense of meaning and purpose in life, as well as decreases in mental distress."



Makes Us Kinder

2

After a study with young children found that children acted more prosocially to classmates and strangers after a field trip to a nature school than they did after a visit to an aviation museum, researchers suggested that "awe [may be] associated with generosity, and nature can be a way to induce awe. One of the things that may come from awe is the feeling that the individual is part of a much bigger whole."

3

Helps Our Brains

Exposure to natural environments improves working memory, cognitive flexibility and attentional control. One theory suggests that spending time in nature physiologically lowers stress levels, and another theory posits that time in nature replenishes cognitive resources and helps people to concentrate and pay attention.



Keeps Us Connected

4

Research suggests that feeling connected to nature is a significant predictor of happiness. Even folks who reported low levels of social connectedness reported greater well-being when they had higher levels of nature nearby.

PROJECT
AWARE