

Toilet Tribune

In the Know, Wherever You Go



Nature Can Make You Kinder, Happier, and More Creative

With Distance Learning, we are spending a lot of time indoors on our screens. Recent studies suggest that nature can help our brains and bodies to stay healthy.

I've spent a lot of time outside my whole life. Right now talking a walk in nature, is my personal way of dealing with life when I feel overwhelmed. According to my Advisory poll, it's actually a way many of us deal with stress, but if you still think being outside is not for you, I'm hopeful scientific research will change your mind...

1. Being in nature decreases stress

In **one recent experiment** conducted in Japan, participants were assigned to walk either in a forest or in an urban center while having their heart rate variability, heart rate, and blood pressure measured.

Results showed that those who walked in forests had significantly lower heart rates and higher heart rate variability and reported better moods and less anxiety, than



Zoom Book Club

All are welcome. Let's connect by sharing what we're reading & what we should read next. Sign up [here](#).



Crazy Legging Day Book Talks

Check out Sparks YouTube book reviews [here](#).



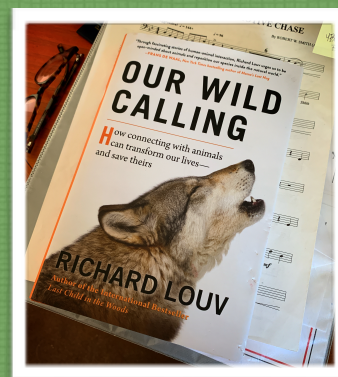
May is National Mental Health Month

1 in 5 people have a mental health issue. You are not alone. Check out resources in our virtual [BHS Chill Zone](#) and on [mental health here](#).

those who walked in urban settings. The researchers concluded that there's something about being in nature that had a beneficial effect on stress reduction, above and beyond what exercise alone might have produced.

READING IN THE WILD

Last month I finished reading [Our Wild Calling](#) by [Richard Louv](#). The messages in this book are offered mainly through the stories of others: an oceanographer whose worldview is changed by a dangerous encounter with a giant octopus, a man who teaches people to understand bird language, a boy who learned ethics from his dog, the owner of an eco-cruise line who says elephants taught him everything he ever needed to know about business, a remarkable young woman on the autism spectrum and her equally remarkable service dog, and many more. Get outside and get reading!



3. Nature relieves attention fatigue and increases creativity.

Right now, we are depending on our omnipresent technology to learn and connect. But many scientists believe our brains were not made for this kind of information bombardment. And, if you're like me right now you are feeling quite a bit of mental fatigue, overwhelm, and burnout, requiring "attention restoration" to get back to a healthy state.

Strayer, of Psychological Science is one of those researchers. He believes that being in nature restores depleted attention circuits, which can then help us be more open to creativity and problem-solving. "If you've been using your brain to multitask—as most of us do most of the day—and then you set that aside and go on a walk, without all of the gadgets, you've let the prefrontal cortex recover," says Strayer. "And that's when we see these bursts in creativity, problem-solving, and feelings of well-being."

4. Nature may help you to be kind and generous

Whenever I go on a walk in Stanley Eddy County Park, I seem to return to my home life ready to be more kind and generous to those around me—just ask my husband and kids! Now some new studies may shed light on why that is.

In a [series of experiments](#) published in 2014, Juyoung Lee, Greater Good Society director Dacher Keltner, and other researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, studied the potential impact of nature on the willingness to be generous, trusting, and helpful toward others, while considering what factors might influence that relationship.

GREATER GOOD SOCIETY'S HAPPINESS CALENDAR

This month, protect your relationships and build optimism. [Click here](#) for a pdf of the Happiness Calendar for May from Greater Good Society of UCC-Berkely. You can even import the daily exercises into your Google Calendar.

