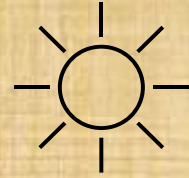




Getting Back to Nature



It's one of the things we recommend in counselling all the time, but perhaps understanding the science and research behind it might just be the extra nudge you need to do it.

- ❖ Being in nature is a proven mood booster. It increases the serotonin, dopamine, and endorphins which are our "happy" brain chemicals or neurotransmitters.
- ❖ Breathing in the fresh air increases the amount of oxygen in our brain which provides greater clarity to the brain and gives us better focus, concentration, and cognition.
- ❖ Being in nature helps lower cortisol levels (the stress hormone) by suppressing the sympathetic nervous system.
- ❖ Sunshine helps strengthen our immune system and helps protect against illness. It also decreases the hormone melatonin which helps us wake up in the morning. Getting sunlight at the right time of day can lead to a better night's sleep.

Recent studies have shown that 120 minutes per week - that's 30 minutes 4 times per week or 20 minutes 6 times per week. Whatever combination you choose, in intervals of at least 20 minutes, the benefits will be the same. According to Dr. Lisa Nisbet, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Trent University, "Our research shows that connection with nature is associated with greater well-being. The more somebody feels a connection with the natural world, the more that person will report having a greater sense of happiness – more positive (and fewer negative) emotions, a greater sense of vitality, as well as more satisfaction with life." The research even indicates that exposure to nature makes us nicer to others. How about that?



Take the 120 Minutes Per Week Challenge!!!!



- ❖ Take a walk, stroll, hike, or bike ride.....outside.....anywhere outside - on the trails, at the national parks, down a red clay dirt road, in the forest, on the roadside, around your community. We are surrounded by nature and beauty.
- ❖ Clean up your yard. Rake, fertilize your lawn, get ready for summer planting.
- ❖ Walk your dog, play outside with your children.
- ❖ Sit in the sun and take in the Vitamin D.
- ❖ Breathe-in deeply the smells of spring. Feel the hope and promise for a good crop, a warm summer, some time off work, and gatherings with friends and family.
- ❖ Listen to the sounds of geese returning home, birds chirping.
- ❖ Take a walk on the beach, feel the ocean breeze, smell the ocean spray.
- ❖ Go fishing in a lake or stream, if you have a license.

Nature is a powerful force. It can heal us. It can soothe us. And it can restore us. Get out there and enjoy!!

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