

Mental Health Benefits of the Outdoors

Source: [Ontario Parks](#)

Do you ever find yourself feeling calmer, more relaxed, or more focused after spending time in nature? That's because time outside has studied and proven benefits for your mental health.

Mental illness affects one in five Canadians in any given year. Let's talk about what some Vitamin N (nature) can do for your mental health...

Relieving anxiety, stress, and depression

A simple stay in the outdoors can do wonders for relieving anxiety, stress, and depression. Countless studies have proven that nature has a positive effect on your mental health. What you see, hear, and experience in nature can improve your mood in a moment.

There is a strong connection between time spent in nature and reduced negative emotions. This includes symptoms of anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic illnesses like irritability, insomnia, tension headaches, and indigestion.

Feeling stressed? Research shows a link between exposure to nature and stress reduction. Stress is relieved within minutes of exposure to nature as measured by muscle tension, blood pressure, and brain activity. Time in green spaces significantly reduces your cortisol, which is a stress hormone. Nature also boosts endorphin levels and dopamine production, which promotes happiness.

Other mental benefits

Nature has a myriad of other brain benefits as well. Contact with nature has restorative properties, increasing energy and improving feelings of vitality and focus. Being nearby to nature has been shown to reduce symptoms of ADHD.

Are you stuck on a project or idea? Being outside also improves creative thinking. Proximity to green space can restore capacity for concentration and attention.

Trouble sleeping? A two-hour walk in the woods is enough to improve sleep quality and help relieve sleep problems. Sleeping away from artificial light and waking up with natural sunlight can reset your circadian rhythm, which will help you feel refreshed after a better night's sleep.

Nature can also help with the grief process. This is because exposure to nature causes better coping, including improved self-awareness, self-concept, and positively affected mood.

The positive effects of nature affect the way you treat others. People are more caring and positive when they are exposed to and around various forms of nature.

What you can do

Getting outdoors doesn't have to be a lot of work. There are lots of simple ways you can get quality time in nature.

Start with taking a walk in the woods. Nature walks help combat stress while improving mental well-being.

Move your workout into the outdoors. Regular use of natural areas for physical activity can reduce the risk of mental health problems by 50%. Completing activities like walking, cycling, jogging, or doing yoga in a natural environment makes you happier than in the city.

Engage your senses to maximize the health benefits of being outside. Breathe deep, as the scent of fresh pine has been shown to lower stress and anxiety. Make sure to pause and listen, as studies show that listening to nature sounds like bird songs and rushing water can help lower stress levels.

Book a camping trip. Immersing yourself in nature for a longer period of time is a great way to absorb the health benefits of the outdoors.