

Get Outside! Connecting with Nature Could Change Your Life



7 Dimensions of Wellness: Environmental

Being good stewards and caretakers of our environment is one of the seven dimensions of wellness. Whether it's taking a walk, kayaking, going for a hike or a boat ride, connecting with nature has great benefits.¹ Studies show that whether you live in nature, visit it, or simply look at it in paintings, each can have a positive impact.² Research revealed that looking at photos of natural environments can be enough to elicit feelings of awe, reverence, and gratitude, which can lead to a greater sense of health and wellbeing.²



Regardless of where you live or how busy you are, try to make time to spend time in nature for these three reasons:

- ▶ **It will boost your immune system:** Microorganisms found in nature act as triggers to prepare your immune system to fight against serious threats. So, while soap is great, getting muddy occasionally can do you some good!³
- ▶ **It's like getting a mental tune-up:¹** Disconnect from the traffic, the pressures, and the overstimulation of everyday life. Unwind, recharge, and soothe your senses.
- ▶ **You will come back reinvigorated and refreshed:** You'll experience more energy, more focus, less fatigue, and better sleep. It also allows you to make room for a greater sense of empathy, appreciation, and gratitude.¹

Remember, walking in the park, sitting by a pond, or watching TV shows on nature aren't just for recreation, there are concrete benefits to be had. Your overall happiness, increased positivity, and sense of wonder can go a long way in leading to living longer and living better.²

Humana and the International Council on Active Aging are dedicated to helping you on your journey to whole person health. [Click here to download our complimentary Playbook for Active Aging: 7 Keys for Whole Person Health.](#) Inside, you'll find tips to starting an outdoor walking routine, and how to improve wellness from within your own walls.

There are countless older adults who are actively engaged in their community, working to protect the world so we all can benefit from time in nature. Here are some examples of those giving back to the environment in their later years:



[Clyde Butcher](#) is one of the greatest large-format environmental photographers alive today. His focus on the Florida Everglades brought unprecedented appreciation to this unique natural resource. “When I started doing work in the Everglades the politicians thought it was just a swamp,” said Butcher. “They had no idea how much it opens their souls to nature and its healing beauty.” Now 80, he believes being immersed in such pristine, unadulterated surroundings is helping him recover from a recent stroke, both mind and body.



Photo Courtesy Dr. Sylvia Earle

[Sylvia Earle](#) is an oceanographer and marine biologist who was named a Living Legend by the Library of Congress. At 88, her passion for the environment drives her to keep working, with no plans to retire. “I think that has a lot to do with why I’m still alive,” said Earle. “When you have something to look forward to every minute of every day you don’t have time to think about anything else. I hope I live 100 years more to see how what we’re doing will change the world, but at the very least I’m going to make the best use of whatever time I’ve got.”

References

1. Mental Health Foundation

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/research/nature-how-connecting-nature-benefits-our-mental-health>

2. University of California, Berkeley

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what_happens_when_we_reconnect_with_nature

3. White, M.P., Alcock, I., Grellier, J. et al. Spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature is associated with good health and wellbeing. Sci Rep 9, 7730 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-44097-3>

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