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IT'S ALL CONNECTED

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We Love Forests - And Science is Showing Us Why.

In today's fast-paced and concrete-dominated world, spending time in nature provides immense benefits to both physical and mental health. [Scientific studies](#) indicate that exposure to early morning sunlight helps optimize sleep patterns and hormonal balance. As few as two hours

spent in nature each week is enough to boost cognitive faculties and show improvements in mood, mental health and emotional well-being. Research suggests that any green oasis - an urban park, rooftop garden, or a small patio with potted plants - can be beneficial.

Not surprisingly, more remote and biodiverse spaces, especially forested areas, provide an even larger benefit. [Time spent in a forest](#) environment can ignite a remarkable transformation within our bodies. Breathing in forest air means we are inhaling phytoncides, a powerful defensive compound released by trees. Phytoncides increase our body's natural defense system by boosting the number of and activity level of NK cells. NK cells, also known as natural killer cells, are a type of white blood cell that fights cancer and

other viruses. These forest effects linger, meaning that our immune system is buzzing with activity for several days afterward.

Take time amidst your busy schedule to integrate nature into your life. You can then tap into nature's profound health-enhancing qualities and experience restorative effects, some of which you might not have thought possible. Need more incentive? Check out this [recent research from Unyoked and All Trails](#) which, of course, highlights the benefits of spending quality time out in nature.

Since Mother Nature is so important for our well-being, perhaps we should make her a priority for preservation as well. Get out, use your voice, stand up for nature protections, advocate as much as possible, and **be a good steward for the future of our outdoor spaces**.

'Awe'-some Nature

Psychologists define an awe-inspiring experience as self-transcendent. Think majestic waterfall, the Grand Canyon, aurora borealis, or an African safari with massive herds of animals. Such moments of awe shift our very foundation, our sense of time, and provide a feeling of being part of something greater with less focus on oneself. Awe may even contribute to more generosity toward others.



Vastness of space and nature can create awe because it pushes our understanding of reality. Awe may be a fleeting experience, but it resonates and a person's sense of self alters a bit. A person often feels a larger connectedness to others and to nature after a moment of awe. According to research being conducted by UC Berkeley professor Dacher Keltner, there are at least [Eight Reasons Why Awe Makes You Feel Better](#).

When experiencing awe, our bodies release oxytocin, the "love" hormone, which generates positive feelings that extend to others. Look for awe in life because such experiences can be powerful forces of change in our lives which remain with us after the event has passed. Life-altering awe events are not an everyday occurrence, but you can find some magic and health benefits in nature more regularly as well.

One does not need to be in the Amazon jungle or on top of Everest to find awe. Everyone loves a rainbow. How about a stunning sunrise/sunset, clouds with a silver lining, or full moon just coming into view? How do you feel in a thunderstorm, even when you are inside? This is nature instilling a sense of awe. There is a reason the saying "stop and smell the roses" rings true. Taking time to see, hear, smell, slow down, and enjoy what nature has for us truly makes a difference in our moods, health, and happiness. After all, taking time for nature is truly taking time for yourself.

Quick Connections

Books, websites, documentaries, podcasts, events, quotes, and more



Jumpstart Nature founder, Michael Hawk, says "Wow, just watch it" in reference to [Chasing Coral](#), an impactful documentary now streaming on Netflix.



Quote we're pondering

"For most of history, man had to fight nature to survive; in this century, he is beginning to realize that, in order to survive, he must protect it." - **Jacques Cousteau**



Conservation measures do work and here is some good news about [bull trout population recovery](#) in the Northwest.



[Ocean Sanctuaries](#) and [REEF](#) offer free eLearning community science programs with an emphasis on marine organisms and marine field practices. Check them out.

Community Connections

We want to connect with you. What nature, climate, and environmental questions do you have? Ask us and we will seek out answers from someone with expertise in the field.

We read each and every response and will share selected reader stories in upcoming newsletters.

Share With Us

Your feedback is important. [Tell us](#) how we are doing and what you would like to see covered in future newsletters.

Every connection counts! Please help us grow our community of everyday heroes by sharing this newsletter with a friend or colleague.

Thank you,

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