

Rewilding Mental Health: Connecting with Nature, Connecting with Ourselves

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Texas Master Naturalist Coastal Prairie Chapter

Ecotherapist & Mindful Outdoor Guide

Land Acknowledgement

<https://native-land.ca/>



iSTOCK PHOTO: ENZO
DATO

Nature is Public Health

The Texas Master Naturalist Program's mission is to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas.

A definition of public health: "The science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting health through organised efforts of society." — Donald Acheson

"Public health is not just *for* everyone; it is *by* everyone. Public health is everyone's responsibility. It is co-created." — Orlaith O'Sullivan

(Wake Up Schools as a Public Health Movement, The Mindfulness Bell)

“Imagine a therapy that had no known side effects, was readily available, and could improve your cognitive functioning at zero cost. Such a therapy has been known to philosophers, writers, and laypeople alike: interacting with nature.”

The Cognitive Benefits of Interacting With Nature

The Need for Nature

The average American spends 11 hours a day on screens

Americans spend 90% of life indoors

Kids spend more than 7 hours a day on media outside of school but play outside for less than 7 minutes a day

“Nature Deficit Disorder”

Place blindness

Sensory anesthesia

Species loneliness





***One thing I noticed was the color purple.
And not just any purple. The purple of
spiderworts.***

***Not that long ago, this would have been
just another pretty purple flower. Now I
know this is the spiderwort!***

***Every time I learn something about
nature, I experience intimacy with place.
Little by little, I overcome place
blindness.***

***I receive the gift of recognition of nature
beings as friends. No longer a stranger in
the crowd. I stop and say hello!***

Nature Journal entry,

4/8/23



Nature in Childhood

“Everyone has a ditch, or ought to. For only the ditches—and the fields, the woods, the ravines—can teach us to care enough for the land.”

“These are places of initiation, where the borders between ourselves and other creatures break down, where the earth gets under our nails and a sense of place gets under our skin...It is through close and intimate contact with a particular patch of ground that we learn to respond to the earth, to see that it really matters...”

—Robert Michael Pyle, Lepidopterist

(Everyone Ought to Have a Ditch by David Sobel)

The Privilege Walk

Privilege is defined as “Unearned access or advantages granted to specific groups of people because of their membership in a social group.” ([United Way](#)).

“What does privilege mean in terms of access to healthy and safe natural settings, and the ability to go on outdoor adventures?”
([Doing the Privilege Walk by Thomas Doherty](#))





PHOTO: NPS/JIM
PEACO


REWILDING

Rewilding of ecosystems

Trophic cascades

- Yellowstone National Park, reintroduction of wolves (1995)

Rewilding of human life

A man with long, wavy brown hair and a full beard is looking upwards with a contemplative expression. He is wearing a dark, possibly waterproof, jacket. The background is a dense forest with tall, thin trees and a soft, dappled light filtering through the canopy, suggesting a misty or rainy day.

One transcendent
experience in nature
is worth 1000 nature
facts.

DAVID SOBEL

Rewilding of Mental Health

DECREASES ↓

- Stress and cortisol
- Anxiety and depression
- Rumination
- ADHD symptoms
- Anger and hostility
- Heart rate and blood pressure
- Cardiovascular disease
- Pain
- Mortality risk

INCREASES ↑

- Relaxation
- Mood (serotonin, Vitamin D)
- Cognitive performance and Creativity
- Attention
- Social cohesion and prosocial behavior
- Immune system function
- Memory
- Sleep



REWILDING THERAPY

Have you ever taken a walk with your therapist or counselor?

Ecotherapy

Walk and Talk Therapy

Adventure Therapy

Animal Assisted

Therapy

Equine Assisted Therapy

Horticultural Therapy

Nature as Co-Therapist

Co-regulation with nature

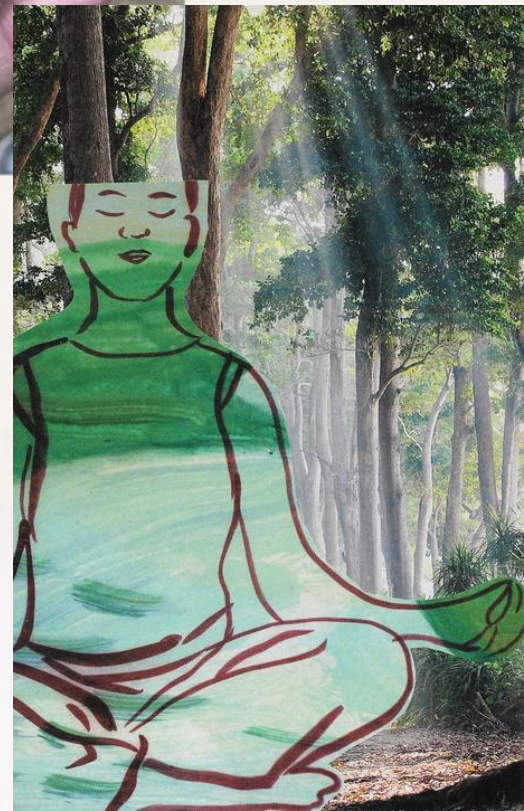
Bilateral stimulation

Sensory invitations

Nature allies & tiny teachers

Nature based metaphor

Eco expressive arts





GROUNDING

Soil microbes & mental health

Nature's antidepressant: mycobacterium vaccae

- immunoregulatory properties
- antiinflammatory
- stimulates serotonin
- relaxation and stress resilience
- improved mood

Sensory invitation: Handful of Earth

Sit Spot Practice

- ♣ **find a special place of tranquility in nature to stop and sit a while**
- ♣ **notice, observe, be present, pay attention, breathe**
- ♣ **get to know your more-than-human neighbors**
- ♣ **visit your sit spot regularly to develop "intimacy with place"**

"When we make a practice of being present and paying attention, we notice the little miracles that are all around us."

—Micah Mortali



Bringing Nature Indoors

Bowl of nature treasures

- hold a nature friend
- sensory mindfulness
- grounding
- creative wisdom
- nature journaling

Living plants

Nature images

Nature sounds

Nature visualization

- 5 finger nature meditation



Give Yourself a Nature Rx

Write Your Own Nature Prescription

ParkRxAmerica.org

Rx My Nature Prescription

English Español

NAME	Enter Your Full Name
PLACE	Where do you feel safe and comfortable, outside? Where do you like or intend to spend time outdoors? Looking for a park?
ACTIVITY	What do you enjoy doing outside? What can you commit to do outside. With whom or alone? Unplugged without earbuds?
FREQUENCY	How many times per week, which days of the week, afternoons, mornings, after school or work, on the weekends? Is frequency commensurate with therapeutic goals?
DURATION	How many minutes or hours can you commit to engaging in this activity? Be realistic. Is duration commensurate with therapeutic goals?

Rx My Nature Prescription

NAME:	Tierra Ortiz-Rodriguez
PLACE:	Cullinan Park
ACTIVITY:	Sitting at the Bird Viewing Area listening to and watching the birds
FREQUENCY:	Twice a week in the mornings
DURATION:	30 minutes

DATE CREATED: 10/30/2023

Share this prescription with your healthcare professional to safely optimize your therapeutic potential!

Health Professionals learn more at parkrxamerica.org

Resources

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL - NATIONAL PARKS & FEDERAL RECREATIONAL LANDS ACCESS PASS

<https://store.usgs.gov/access-pass>

<https://mhanational.org/blog/get-free-national-parks-access-pass>

Park Rx America

<https://parkrxamerica.org/>

Rewilding George Monbiot

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8rZzHkpyPkc>

Scientific Review: The Benefits of Forest Bathing

<https://www.natureandforesttherapy.earth/about/the-science>

TEXAS PARKLANDS PASSPORT

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/park-information/passes/park-passes/#texas-parklands-passport->

The Privilege Walk

<https://selfsustain.com/blog/doing-the-privilege-walk/>

Photo by [lars kuczynski](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Book Rx

A Field Guide to Nature Meditation by Mark Coleman

Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Last Child in the Woods by Richard Louv

Love Poems from the Earth by Kai Siedenburg

Ornithery: For Your Mind, Body, and Soul by Holly Merker, Richard Crossley,
and Sophie Crossley

Rewilding: Meditations, Practices, and Skills for Awakening in Nature by Micah
Mortali

Sit Spot and the Art of Inner Tracking by R. Michael Trotta

The Nature Fix by Florence Williams

The Nature Principle by Florence Williams

Your Brain on Nature by Eva Selhub and Alan Logan

Infused
by Kai Siedenburg

When I
came here,

with song of bird
and hum of bee.

I was
an ordinary human,

Although
my form
may appear unchanged,

full of
ordinary
human cares.

inside it's clear
I'm not
the same.

Now I am
infused
with blue of sky
and green of tree,

Thank You

***"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."
~ William Shakespeare***