

## NATURE and STRESS RELIEF

Researchers are discovering that surrounding yourself with nature can be one of the most powerful stress relievers out there. There's something about being in our natural element that's hard to beat, says study author Catherine Ward Thompson, director of the OPENspace Research Centre at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland.

Spending time in nature reduces stress, eases mental fatigue and can calm an anxious mind. A University of Rochester study found that just looking at natural landscapes makes us feel more generous, connected to others and in tune with our inner selves.

A group of researchers from Stanford University examined whether a nature walk could reduce negative thoughts and worry in healthy people. They found that natural environments are more restorative and thus confer greater psychological benefits.

A Swedish study found that people recovered more quickly from stress when they heard water and birds than when they didn't.

Greenspaces make kids smarter. A new study finds that vegetation around schools cuts down air pollution and boosts memory and attention. Greenspaces reduce noise and stress while increasing exercise opportunity.

Wide open spaces mean more opportunities to boost your health. Exercise is the best natural mood booster there is and being in a park out and about makes you more likely to encounter neighbours and friends and social contact is another no fail way to cut stress.

Stress increases blood pressure and our bodies produce more cortisol hormone; chronic stress leads to heart disease and depression. Relaxing in nature can lower blood pressure and reduce cortisol production.

Physical movement in a natural setting has been shown to increase the activity of natural killer cells which enhance immune strength and boost resistance to stress – for up to 30 days.

Embrace the stress reducing power of nature in your daily life.

1. Gardening
2. Nature sounds – birds, water, breeze
3. Water therapy – see it and hear it [waves and water falls]
4. Pet therapy – walk your dog, be outside
5. Walk in the woods – leave techno-toys at home. Soak up the restorative effects of greenery, sunshine, natural scents and birdsong.
6. Visit greenspace as often as possible to enhance your well being and reduce your stress levels. Move daily activities outdoors ie yoga, eating, exercising.