

Why people should connect more with nature theology religion essay



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In the twenty-first century, people have practically forgotten how important it is to connect with nature. Despite all the technological advances and scientific inventions that make us believe we have nothing in common with the rest of the animal world, we are still part of the planet's fauna, whether we realize it or not. Needless to say, back when humanity's main achievements were the invention of a round wheel, or specific tools for farming agriculture, people were very dependent on nature and paid a lot of attention to the changes of its course. Now, with the technological revolutions and discoveries that made our past history, we seem to pay extremely little attention to nature, getting more and more disconnected from it every day. However, the links that were initially there, couldn't just disappear and there is a number of important reasons in favor of the statement that people should try to get back to basics and connect with nature more than they do today.

First of all, nature has historically been the home for human beings, just like it remains a home for animals and plants (of course, with the exception of those that are kept in zoos and greenhouses). Nature is able to show us true beauty, without modifications, exaggerations and falseness. After all, isn't it a little ironic that people go to galleries and exhibitions to look at paintings of colorful flowers, mighty woods, green hills and fast clear streams; those simple things that they can easily observe in real life if they just get outside their urban environment that looms around them? Or the fact that people purchase recordings of calming sounds of nature, like what you'd hear at night in the woods – damped quavering of an owl, ringing flare of crickets and susurrus rustle of bushes. What we are in fact doing is trying to deceive

our minds and make ourselves believe that we ARE in the wood, next to those owls, crickets and bushes, while we are instead trapped inside our tiny, well-furnished and packed-with-technology apartment.

Secondly, in the era of absolute informational chaos and noise, it becomes more important than ever to be able to pause from the crazy pace of life and relax. Finding silence and peace in the global vacuum of competitiveness, haste and strain, is very challenging. We go to doctors to treat us for depression, insomnia and anxiety. We ask for prescriptions and pills, while what we should be doing instead is turning to nature for help. What can be more relaxing and stress-free, than a cup of warm herbal tea with fresh honey, on the porch of a cozy wooden country house with a view of a small natural lake, or little green forest, or beautiful mountains? It's the cheapest, simplest and most accessible treatment one can think of. We laugh at those 'freaks' hugging trees in the park, or walking barefoot on the grass. However, these people remember something very important; something, most others have forgotten somewhere along the race to progress and prosperity: the key to being healthy, emotionally sustained and resistant to everyday stress, is staying connected to nature and allowing ourselves to put all business on hold and take a break.

Nature is about balance and harmony - things we lack most living inside the swirling pit of urbanized cities. Sometimes, we escape, but so rarely and so abruptly, that such escapes can hardly help us re-establish our links with nature. People should seriously consider changing their routine and getting out into nature more regularly. When was the last time you took a walk to the nearby pond, or spent a weekend outdoors doing active sports? When <https://assignbuster.com/why-people-should-connect-more-with-nature-theology-religion-essay-essay-samples/>

was the last time you went hiking, or fishing, or took your family or friends for a picnic in the nearby park? We should try to move our weekly entertainment, as well as our holiday celebrations, parties and friendly gatherings, from homes, pubs and restaurants to lake shores, mountains, parks, forests, ponds, rivers and groves. The beautiful landscapes of America are incredibly rich and diverse and this is our true natural wealth that we unfortunately often forget about.

Many parents and teachers today can remember hours spent in the great outdoors, called in only for dinner or when the last ray of summer light disappeared. Bookworm that I was, I can personally remember being told many days, “ It’s a much too beautiful day to be inside. Go read that book in a tree!”

Today, children’s lives seem to be structured much differently, a world where the phrase “ Go play outside” has been replaced by television programs, computer time, and Wii Fit.

Modern humans lived in nature for most of their long history. Even once colonization into cities occurred, people were surrounded by nature in the fields and farms where they lived.

And until thirty or so years ago, children still spent the bulk majority of their free time in contact with nature. Urbanization brought about parks and playgrounds to play in; fields, forests, and empty lots to explore; and even in nearby backyards. Children freely played, explored, and interacted with nature without restriction.

Today's world is much different. Children no longer freely explore the world around them, and many have extremely limited contact with nature at all. Fear for safety, structured lessons and activities, and electronics are some of the main inhibitors to natural discovery that involve children today. Spontaneous interaction with nature is most often limited, at best.

Free play in nature encourages children to create games with their own invented rules, conduct experiments with nature, and learn lessons that aren't "taught" by anyone. These types of "no rules" situations promote inventive play and give children a deeper understanding of nature.

While playground equipment is a perk of modern urbanization, its uses are more finite than those nature provides. Although equipment can be open-ended, imagined as a castle one day and a boat the next, nature is ever changing. Crossing a stream one day might become searching for treasures under river stones another day as the stream dries up. Tactile outdoor experiences teach children differently than a lesson or even reading about a subject can.

Besides the educational benefits, connecting with nature has more benefits than might be obvious. Research shows that children who are allowed to explore outdoors are socially and emotionally happier and healthier.

Unstructured outdoor play is also touted as one of the most direct ways to combat childhood obesity, a very real and prominent problem for children. Vitamin D exposure from the sun is known to help prevent a host of diseases, as well as treat and prevent depression.

Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*, has coined a phrase to sum up the current state of the modern child: nature deficit disorder. He believes that contact with nature can aid in preventing and treating Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and that children need regular contact with nature to stay physically and emotionally healthy. I highly recommend his book if you are interested in learning more about these ideas.

Outdoor play gives children the opportunity to value nature, and see it as an important part of our world. This is a tangible way to ensure that we help them developing environmental stewards who will be both appreciative and respectful of nature as they grow.

Here are a few ideas for incorporating natural play into children's everyday lives:

- * Find a nature trail (or any place in nature, really) and encourage children to play, rather than just hike. Help children make up a game or collect bugs or leaves

- * Allow children a small patch of land as "their own." This can be in a backyard or a school yard. One school where I worked had a children's garden in the strip of land that ran right next to the side of the school building. Let them use their imagination to dig, garden, build, etc.

- * Invest in a few inexpensive outdoor exploration tools: bug box, magnifying glass, butterfly net, shovel, spade, and compass

- * Rather than working indoors, take lessons outdoors. Learn about water cycles from the true source, use nature to teach about categorization, or <https://assignbuster.com/why-people-should-connect-more-with-nature-theology-religion-essay-essay-samples/>

compose a symphony of nature sounds. Even a language or math lesson is more fun when done outside on a beautiful day

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Images used during study

“ Stopping to experience our natural surroundings can have social as well as personal benefits,” says Richard Ryan, coauthor and professor of psychology, psychiatry and education at the University of Rochester. While the salubrious effects of nature are well documented, from increasing happiness and physical health to lowering stress, this study shows that the benefits extend to a person’s values and actions. Exposure to natural as opposed to man-made environments leads people to value community and close relationships and to be more generous with money, find Ryan and his team of researchers at the University of Rochester.

The paper includes four experiments in which 370 participants were exposed to either natural or man-made settings. Participants were encouraged to attend to their environments by noticing colors and textures and imagining sounds and smells. In three of the studies, participants were shown a selection of four images on a 19 inch computer screen for two minutes each. Half of the subject viewed buildings, roads, and other cityscapes; the other half observed landscapes, lakes, and deserts. The urban and nature images were matched for color, complexity, layout, and lighting. In a fourth study, <https://assignbuster.com/why-people-should-connect-more-with-nature-theology-religion-essay-essay-samples/>

participants were simply assigned at random to work in a lab with or without plants. Participants then answered a questionnaire assessing the importance of four life aspirations: wealth and fame (“to be financially successful” and “to be admired by many people”) and connectedness and community (“to have deep enduring relationships” and “to work toward the betterment of society”).

Across all four studies, people exposed to natural elements rated close relationships and community higher than they had previously. The questionnaire also measured how immersed viewers were in their environments and found that the more deeply engaged subjects were with natural settings, the more they valued community and closeness. By contrast, the more intensely participants focused on artificial elements, the higher they rated wealth and fame.

To test generosity, two of the studies gave participants a \$5 prize with the instructions that the money could be kept or given to a second anonymous participant, who would then be given an additional \$5. The second participant could choose to return the prize money or keep it. Thus, subjects had nothing to gain if they chose to trust the other participant, and risked losing their money.

The result? People who were in contact with nature were more willing to open their wallets and share. As with aspirations, the higher the immersion in nature, the more likely subjects were to be generous with their winnings.

Why should nature make us more charitable and concerned about others?

One answer, says coauthor Andrew Przybylski, is that nature helps to <https://assignbuster.com/why-people-should-connect-more-with-nature-theology-religion-essay-essay-samples/>

connect people to their authentic selves. For example, study participants who focused on landscapes and plants reported a greater sense of personal autonomy (“ Right now, I feel like I can be myself”). For humans, says Przybylski, our authentic selves are inherently communal because humans evolved in hunter and gatherer societies that depended on mutuality for survival.

In addition, write the authors, the richness and complexity of natural environments may encourage introspection and the lack of man-made structures provide a safe haven from the man-made pressures of society. “ Nature in a way strips away the artifices of society that alienate us from one another,” says Przybylski.

Lead author Netta Weinstein says that the findings highlight the importance of creating green spaces in cities and have implication for planners and architects. Incorporating parks and other representations of nature into urban environments may help build a stronger sense of community among residents, she explains. By contrast, “ to the extent that our links with nature are disrupted, we may also lose some connection with each other,” the authors warn. This alienation may help explain other research showing that urban as compared to rural dwellers show more reservation, indifference, and estrangement from others.

On a personal level, Weinstein says the take home message from the research is clear: “ We are influenced by our environment in ways that we are not aware of,” she says. Because of the hidden benefits of connecting with nature, people should take advantage of opportunities to get away from

built environments and, when inside, they should surround themselves with plants, natural objects, and images of the natural world. “ The more you appreciate nature, the more you can benefit,” she says.