

Nature May be the Best Medicine for these Trying Times

The last few months has been like no other in our lives, and it has left a lot of us on uncertain ground, both physically and mentally. There is really not much about our daily lives that has not been affected, and we all wish things could go back to the way they were.

But there is one thing that hasn't changed: Nature. The trees, the shrubs, the flowers, and the grass, have not been affected by virus, nor have the birds, the squirrels, or the butterflies. The virus can't live there.

So, there is one place you can go that is safe—outside. You can only become infected by another infected person, or from some object that they have touched recently.

But even if you go outside with another person, you are better off than inside because of the better air currents diluting and carrying away infected droplets. And if you both wear masks, you are about as safe as you can be.

But all of the above is not the only reason why being out in nature may be beneficial. Being in contact with nature is good for you.

As someone with a science background, I generally ignore statements like that as being unscientific or unproven, or just someone's opinion. But there is some scientific evidence that suggests nature is indeed good for you.

A study was done in a big-city hospital that had one wing devoted to the recovery of surgery patients. Rooms on one side of the hall had a view of an adjacent tall building. The rooms on the other side of the hallway had a view of a natural area. It was observed that the patients on the nature side of the hall required less painkillers and were discharged somewhat earlier than patients without the view of nature.

It was noted that there were no differences in the type or severity of the surgery for people on the two sides of the hall.

Google "The effects of nature on mental health" and you will find many articles, studies and statements that seem to connect nature with improved mental health or well-being.

When I suggest you spend some time with nature, that can mean any of a large number of activities and locations. What is probably easiest for most of us to spend time in our back yard.

Even if you have a somewhat boring yard with just some grass and a tree, it is still better than staying inside. And as long as you have a shady place to sit, if you find the view boring, then bring a book to read. It is certainly better for your psyche than that time spent watching TV.

The point is you don't have to be walking all the time, just sitting and watching the birds and butterflies can be very enjoyable and relaxing.

Folks in Kerrville are lucky in that they have the River Trail with lots of access points and lots of different habitats. But since there may be a lot of other folks on the walk as well, you should at least take your mask with you if you can't keep a safe distance from other walkers.

Another place where you can go to see lots of native plants in a native setting is the grounds of Riverside Nature Center, which are now open to the public. It is a place where you can take a leisurely stroll and stop many places around the trail to study the plants or the educational exhibits. Or there are benches when you can just sit and relax, or a bird-blind to watch the birds.

The point is there are no rules when it comes to observing, visiting, or studying nature, you can do whatever you want at whatever pace, and who knows, you might even forget about the virus for a time.

I expect we are all in for living with this virus for many more months, so anything we can do which is safe, takes our mind away from the virus and is also fun, enjoyable and relaxing, is a good thing.

Enjoy nature, be safe.

Until next time...

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