



News

Boost your mental health by spending time outside

June 24, 2022 – Spending time in nature has been shown to improve both physical and mental health—and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health’s [Peter James](#) has advice on how to get the most benefit from time spent outdoors.

In a May 18, 2022 MarthaStewart.com article, James, assistant professor in the [Department of Environmental Health](#), discussed previous and current research on the health benefits of being in nature and offered tips on maximizing them.

For example, James recommended finding calm outdoor surroundings—away from noise, traffic, and pollution—and leaving distractions behind. Being physically active and spending time socializing outdoors can also help. Noting that research has suggested that regular exposure to smaller amounts of green space can be as effective, or even more effective, than a single annual camping trip, he urged people to make nature a part of their everyday lives.

James explained that biophilia—our innate human instinct to connect with nature—may be why being outdoors helps us feel better. He noted that “the ability to recover from stress is better in natural settings, because that’s where we are meant to be. Just the idea of getting out, being in nature, looking at a tree—the theory is that this helps you to recover from stress, improves your mental health, and improves cognition. It’s just a direct pathway.”

Read the MarthaStewart.com article: [5 Ways to Reap the Mental Health Benefits of Getting Outside](#)

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