

## Lesson Title: Nature and You

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## Teachers Guide

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**Time needed to teach lesson**: 15 - 20 Minutes.

**Lesson Focus and Description:** The benefits of nature on physical and mental health and how to acquire those benefits.

**Objectives:**

Participants will learn how spending time in nature will decrease the risk of asthma, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and stroke and enhance mental well-being.

Participants will learn techniques for spending time in nature.

**Materials Needed:**

Tree Handout for participants or laminated to pass around for viewing. Journal for each participant (optional)

**Preparation**:

Before the lesson: Review the lesson information, make copies of the Lung and Fingerprint handout, or laminate them to share with the group.

Purchase inexpensive journals if you plan to use them.

 After the lesson: Collect Evaluations

**Evaluation:** Standard FCS post evaluation survey

## Lesson Outline

## Title: Nature and You

**Introduction:**

We have more in common with nature than you realize. Here are two photos; can you tell which belongs to a human and which belongs to a tree. (show photos of tree rings and fingerprints along with the photo of our lungs and the tree branches) There are many physical and mental health benefits gained from spending time in nature.

**I: What are the physical and mental health benefits of nature:**

* Spending more time in green space drops your risk of asthma, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and stroke.
* Living in a neighborhood with 10 more trees per block improves your health perception similar to an increase in your personal income of $10,000 per year.
* Sitting in a forest for just 15 minutes significantly reduces your cortisol levels and heart rate variability---while sitting on a urban street does nothing.
* Adults who take short day trips to the woods boost their levels of immunoproteins and natural killer cells for at least 7 days.
* Your memory, creativity and task performance increase much more after a walk in a park than on a city street.

**II: What is the recommended time to spend in nature and tips to incorporate more time in nature:**

* Research shows that people who spend at least 2 hours per week in nature report significantly better health and wellbeing. If you want to maximize the stress-busting effects of nature, one study showed that the most efficient drop in cortisol happens between the 20-to-30-minute mark. Hence our 20-minute rule.
* Book a lunchtime walk in the park with a coworker. Do your next cardio workout on a trail instead of at the gym. Choose an active commute to work or school along a greenway-and take a break along the way. Plan a weekend getaway around an outdoor experience. There are so many ways to add more nature to your life without adding extra hours and effort.
* Schedule and prioritize green time like you would a doctor’s appointment or a dinner date. That means entering it in your day planner. Science tells us that when we write something down it’s more likely to happen.
* Sometimes we need a little extra help to establish a good habit. Getting your loved ones involved increases the chances that you’ll meet your nature goals – and they can win prizes too!
* Dress for the weather. Stay on the trail and avoid risky detours. Always pack out what you pack in and don’t litter. Treating nature with respect keeps our parks safe and accessible for everyone.

**III. How to get started:**

* Before you get started here are a few things to keep in mind….first, it does not matter where you live….city, country, or in an alleyway…..nature is all around us….if we just stop and notice.
* Second, don’t overthink it. Just get out before you change your mind. Stepping outside into your backyard might be a great place to start and when ready consider going to a park. Have the courage to turn off the TV and other devices and just go outside. Begin where you feel comfortable.
* **Once outside:**
	+ LOOK UP. As simple as this sounds…just look up. What do you see? Are you under the trees? Or the clouds? As you look up, your thoughts begin to slow down, and you may begin to notice things you have not seen before.
	+ LOOK DOWN. What is under your feet? Mud? Grass? Tiny flowers? Notice how you feel in this moment. Do you feel like sitting/ Did you see something you wanted to take a closer look at? It is always amazing to me to see flowers or grass growing out of tiny cracks in rock or concrete!
	+ LISTEN. Stop and listen. What do you hear? Birds? Wind? Cars? Is it quiet? Our senses come alive when we take the time to be still.

**IV. Prompts to help you journal:**

* I notice………….
* I wonder………...
* It reminds me of………

**References:**

Gallup. S.L. (2021) How to Do Nature: A Beginners Guide to Going into Nature

PaRX A Prescription for Nature;

<https://www.parkprescriptions.ca/en/whynature#For-Adults>

The Shift RX Challenge, Take Your Doctor’s recommendations for physical activity outside; [WWW.SHIFTIN.ORG](http://WWW.SHIFTIN.ORG)

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