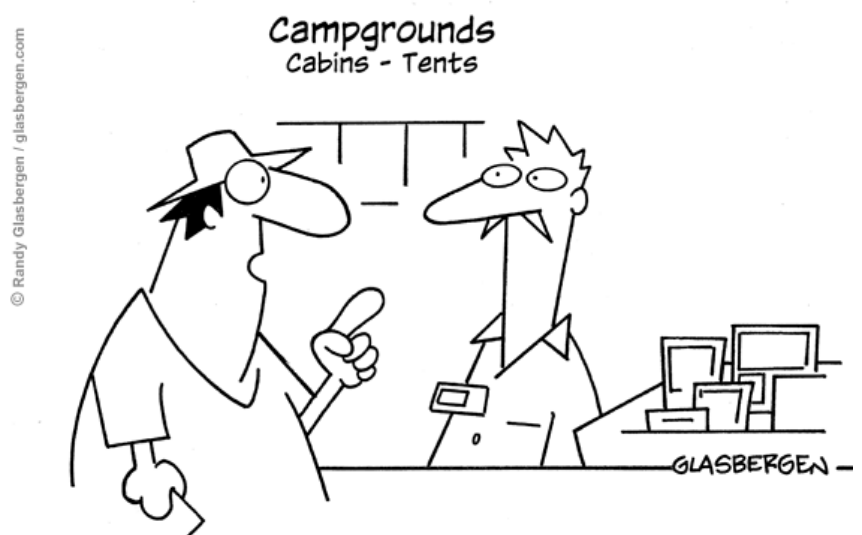Nature is incredibly important to our well-being. Here are eight compelling reasons to spend more time enjoying the great outdoors:

1. Spending time in nature increases your sense of vitality. A series of studies examined the effects of nature on participants' self-reported levels of vitality. The results showed that spending time in nature (and even looking at pictures of it or visualizing nature scenes) increased participants' energy.

2. Exposure to nature makes you more resilient to stress. In one study, participants were shown a traumatic video (of workplace accidents, in case you're curious) followed by a video that showed either outdoor scenes of nature or urban environments. Researchers found that the individuals who viewed the nature scenes showed faster physical recovery from the effects of stress than the subjects who viewed urban scenes. Going outdoors may just be the most natural remedy there is for all different kinds of healing.

3. Exercising in nature boosts your mood. We all know that exercise produces endorphins and boosts your mood. So add nature to the equation and we've got a whole new level of natural mood-boosting. A review of several studies showed that exercising outdoors improved participants' moods and self-esteem after just five minutes. Interestingly, having water in the outdoor environment was found to be particularly beneficial.

4. Spending time in nature helps you focus. Research has shown that when people spend time in nature, it can help their ability to concentrate. One study showed that taking a walk in the park (or even just looking at green space) helped to ease brain fatigue and increase participants' abilities to concentrate. Spending time outside makes us feel connected to a bigger picture of life. We feel tuned into the rhythms of nature, and as a result, less distracted by the little stressors of the every day. Who knew the smell of grass could be an elixir for concentration?!

5. Living near green space can improve your mental health. One study that followed participants over five years found that moving to an area that has more green space increased participants' sense of well-being. And this effect lasted for three years!

6. Spending time in nature can boost your immune system. Researchers have found that spending time in nature increases your sense of awe (e.g. that feeling of wonder you get as a result of being overwhelmed by the beauty of a sunset or the vastness of the ocean). Not only does awe make you more aware of the present moment and increase your life satisfaction, awe is also linked to lower levels of cytokines, which are markers of inflammation.

7. Living near green space may even increase your life span. A five-year study of Japanese senior citizens indicated that living near areas with walkable green spaces was associated with a lower probability of dying during the study.

8. Can't get outside? Having indoor plants can positively affect your health. If time (or the weather) doesn't permit you to go outdoors, bringing nature inside can also benefit you. For example, a study of hospital patients recovering from surgery found that individuals who were randomly assigned to rooms that had plants showed lower blood pressure and heart rate, lower ratings of pain, anxiety, and fatigue, and took fewer doses of pain medication compared to patients who did not have plants.

Source: http://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-18055/8-scientifically-proven-reasons-to-spend-way-more-time-outside.html

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