8 Mental Health Benefits of Spending Time in Nature

1. Did you ever wonder why your mood feels better after a good walk? It's because of bilateral stimulation. Bilateral stimulation is either visual, auditory, or tactile stimuli experienced in a rhythmic left-right pattern. Exercise like fast walking with arms swinging utilize bilateral stimulation and it is very useful in an indirect way to help deal with stress and trauma symptoms. The benefits include a relaxation effect, your thoughts become less “stuck” on whatever was bothering you, the problem seems smaller or farther away, and decrease in worry. Pair that with a walk in nature, well you got yourself one great self-care skill! For more info go to this Anxiety Release link.

2. One doesn’t have to take on a 5 mile hike in the woods to obtain the benefits of nature and an improved sense of well-being. It can be taking a moment to admire the trees near the bus stop, focusing on a bird’s song in the far distance, or getting lost in the dance of sun on the sidewalk as it peaks through the clouds. Just take that moment…you will be better off for it.

3. Sunlight! Sunlight promotes the release of serotonin which improves mood, focus and attention, and helps with your sleep cycle. Even if the sun is tucked behind some autumn cloud cover, get out there! It’s a natural way to boost your mood.

4. Get on the trail...be it on bike, on foot, or by wheelchair. This pandemic has kept us indoors and isolated. Being in nature, waving hello to strangers, feeling the crisp autumn air, can help us feel like we are a part of the world. Explore the Ohio Metro Park system and try out a new park you haven't been to before! Also check out these TrailLink Wheelchair Accessible Trails and Maps.

5. Group walk? There have been several studies showing that nature-based activities, such as group walks, have a correlation with improving chronic stress, mental health difficulties, and building resilience. Through socializing with others, stress reducing activities, and being in nature can be restorative. Check out this NIH study for more in-depth information.

6. Autumn seems to come and go in a blink of an eye. One minute the leaves are green with summer sun and then they’ve turned red, gold, brown, and float by on a crisp autumn breeze. Take a minute, breathe in the change of season. Reflect on what you’ve learned, what you’ve lost, and what you hope for. With every new day there are possibilities.

7. Break time can be a good time to get in a 10 or 15 minute walk outside. It can give you the pause button to your work day and provide a different perspective as you return to the hospital, your office, or your home office. Schedule your walking break and stick to it, just like you do your meetings for everyone else. Make you a priority.

8. Global urbanization has reduced access to and engagement with greenspace, but there is good evidence of a positive relationship between levels of neighborhood greenspace and mental health and well-being. Individuals have less mental distress, less anxiety and depression, greater wellbeing and healthier cortisol profiles when living in urban areas with more greenspace compared with less greenspace.