



CONCERN:EAP

Healthy & Resilient You

Spring Fever

Nature is both the
cause and the cure.

Ah, spring 

Winter's on the wing. Birds are singing, buds are budding, and you're feeling the urge to bust out in song. Well, maybe not *literal* song, but you may be feeling the urge to bust out and shake off the winter cobwebs.

Poets call it *spring fever*; this urge to go outside and play after a long winter confinement. It's an artistic term for a phenomenon that's actually science-based.

Not so long ago, most of humanity (a.k.a. our ancestors) dwelled in natural environments. During the time spent evolving in the great outdoors, our bodies and minds developed to the rhythms and flow of nature, and consequently, our *default state* is to operate in sync with nature.

These days, many of us live and work almost exclusively indoors. This modern city life routinely separates us from our default (natural) state, sometimes causing dissonance and unease. So much so that you might feel that itchy separation from your natural habitat (spring fever) at any time, not just when winter wanes and spring sprouts each year.

The good news is that reuniting with nature—even in small ways—can help return us to our default state.



In this [Resilience Hub article](#), we explored the physical benefits that even brief periods spent in the outdoors can afford — things like reduced stress, increased blood flow, and relaxation.

Nature RX: Get a Dose of the Outdoors

We've seen how we can experience the **restorative power of nature** firsthand simply by going for a walk in the park. New research shows that even less immersive exposure to organic or natural materials can also have a powerful, and beneficial effect on our state of mind.

A recent study observed brain activity while subjects handled different objects such as a real leaf, a synthetic leaf, bark, or metal. The participants were also asked to describe their feelings when touching the different materials. Whenever participants touched organic material, like the real leaf or tree bark, it triggered a series of calming neurochemical reactions,

even though the participants weren't consciously aware of it. **(The way they described how they felt didn't change, but their brainwaves did.)**

The study's authors believe this shows a clear connection to nature on a physiological, measurable level. So, if our bodies unconsciously and positively respond to natural materials, we may be able to benefit from even small-scale exposure.

That's helpful because sometimes it's feasible to step away from our urban environment into a woodsy wonderland for a nature boost, and sometimes it's not. Here are some other ideas for adding a resilience-building dose of **Nature RX** into our modern routine.

The Assorted Flavors of All-Natural

Inch by Inch, Desk by Desk

Gardening has proven to be an effective hobby for stress relief. This makes sense because it not only gets us outdoors but also requires us to handle a lot of organic material. But for those of us without access to a lot of land (or without green thumbs), it might be best to start small. There are lots of great gadgets out there for setting up an unobtrusive, vibrant indoor garden that you can tend at work or home. Or you can go minimalist with a simple potted plant. Either way, this can help you reap the benefits of maintaining a colorful and aromatic plot of land, just with much less dirt. Some **easier to grow plants** you might try for an indoor, potted oasis: aloe, snake plant, bromeliads, jade plants, pothos and other philodendrons, or dieffenbachia.



Walk on the Wild Side

For all the support they offer us, shoes also separate us from connecting with the ground. Tactile interaction with the earth, a practice known as **earthing**, is connected to improved sleep and lowered stress levels. Walking around barefoot might not be an option at work or in the winter months, but once the weather permits, take a break to visit a park, playground or beach, kick off those kicks and squidge your toes in some grass or sand.

Nature's Many (Other) Colors

You don't always have to go green to go natural. After all, depending on where you live, a green, lush forest might not be accessible. Luckily, nature comes in many colors.

- **BROWN:** The desert is a natural landscape too, and the flora there can be endlessly captivating.
- **BLUE:** There may be a body of water not far from where you work, either natural or human-made. The sound of lapping waves and babbling brooks—even the gush and trickle of a community fountain—can help us relax and recharge.
- **BLACK:** Who hasn't marveled at a nighttime sky? Stargazing is an accessible activity, one that only requires stepping outside and looking up.

For even more ways to help cultivate mindfulness and resilience, visit the Resilience Hub™ at www.ConcernResilienceHub.com regularly. (First time users may be asked to enter their company ID.)

This newsletter is intended for informational purposes only, and should not be used to replace professional advice. If you find your level of stress is impacting your well-being, you can contact us for additional help and support.

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