

Nature Heals

Excerpts from “Nature Heals. Reconciling Your Grief Through Engaging with the Natural World” by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

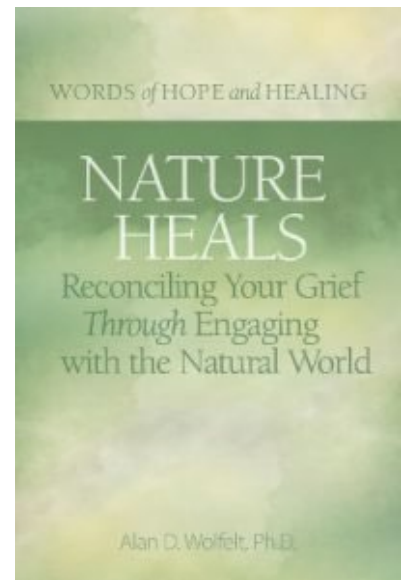
When we’re grieving, we need relief from our pain. Today we often turn to technology for distraction when what we really need is the opposite: generous doses of nature. Studies show that time spent outdoors lowers blood pressure, eases depression and anxiety, bolsters the immune system, lessens stress, and even makes us more compassionate.

How much time do you have to spend engaging with nature to feel positive effects? Recently one large study in England determined that 120 minutes a week spent in nature was sufficient for people to report high levels of wellbeing. The research also showed that those two hours could be split up among many brief outings, several half-hour sessions, or a single exposure.

I definitely don’t think you need to follow a regimented nature schedule. Grief and healing are esoteric matters that defy measurement. But it might help you to know that engaging with nature for just seventeen minutes a day, on average, is likely to have a big impact on your life.

- Explore and find activities and places you enjoy (parks, trails and natural spaces located within a few minutes of your home). Try some new outdoor activities.
- Explore outdoor activities and places associated with the person who died. If there’s a special park or bike ride or fishing hole that helps you connect with your grief, that’s probably a good spot to visit now and then.
- When you enter nature, go alone or with others. You don’t have to venture into the wilderness by yourself to have a transformational experience. No – the whole point here is to find ways to regularly dose yourself with short encounters with nature, sometimes alone and sometimes in the company of friends or family. Both can be effective parts of your nature therapy.

This guide to the tonic of nature explores why engaging with the natural world is so effective at helping reconcile grief. It also offers suggestions for bringing short bursts of nature time (indoors and outdoors) into your everyday life as well as tips for actively mourning in nature.



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