

Health and Wellness:
Nature Deficit Disorder:
What Is It, What To Do About It and What Are the Implications?

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What is Nature Deficit Disorder?

“The future will belong to the nature-smart—those individuals, families, businesses, and political leaders who develop a deeper understanding of the transformative power of the natural world and who balance the virtual with the real. The more high-tech we become, the more nature we need.” – Quoting Richard Louv in his 2011 book titled The Nature Principle – Reconnecting with Life in a Virtual Age.

Regardless of anyone’s comfort level with the great outdoors – or any outdoors for that matter, stunted academic and developmental growth can occur when a person experiences a lack of routine contact with nature. For those people who are nature adverse, this is not about hugging a bug. Everyone can be in touch with nature in their own way. The term Nature Deficit Disorder (NDD) was first coined in 2005 by Mr. Louv in his book Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder. NDD is an unintended and unwanted side-effect of the electronic age. While everyone is hard-wired to live a nature-oriented existence, for those who do not adapt well to this relatively-new over stimulating indoor environment, it is becoming increasingly more commonplace to experience various symptoms such as attention problems, obesity, anxiety and depression.

What To Do About It?

Some people just need to be pointed in the right direction and they will thrive. Here are only a few basic guidelines to get everyone started so NDD is prevented:

- 1) Understand What Drives Creativity – Nature calms children struggling with information overload and fosters creativity. The best kind of toys are water, trees, bushes, flowers, woods and streams because unlike action figures or collectables, they can be anything.
- 2) Allow for Controlled Risk – Because child abduction is an unfortunate somewhat frequent reality of our current culture, wandering freely outside needs to be carefully monitored. By providing careful observation from a safe distance, a child’s imagination and inner life can blossom.
- 3) Focus on Nature-Oriented Camps – For those children who attend summer camp, consider camps that foster use of all of their senses and lots of imagination.
- 4) Schedule Outdoor Time – There are lots of structured and unstructured activities right in our own county, municipal, state and federal parks and green spaces. With planning and a family vote, every family member’s interests can be addressed through periodic exploration.
- 5) An occasional disconnect from electronics, whether it’s going to a remote vacation location without cell phone access or simply temporarily shutting off the phones, is not only cleansing but can be truly inspiring.

What Are the Implications of NDD?

On an individual level, nature holds such restorative powers that mental acuity can be boosted, creativity supported and health and wellness promoted. On a community basis, smarter and more sustainable businesses, communities and economics can be built which ultimately strengthens human bonds. Readers of Louv’s books will find not only renewed hope for our world but also a challenge to rethink what we are doing to ourselves and our planet with an eye toward the potential for vast improvement.

Sources Used:

As with most other health topics, there is a lot to learn and know. Listed below are some of the websites used in this article:

- (A) <http://www.education.com/topic/nature-deficit-disorder/>
- (B) <http://richardlouv.com/books/nature-principle/>
- (C) <http://www.aarp.org/politics-society/advocacy/info-07-2012/health-benefits-of-nature.html>
- (D) <http://www.floridawildlifekids.org/whatis-nature-deficit-disorder.php>
- (E) <http://www.childrenandnature.org/>

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