



CTA-075-“Blue Mind”-Your Brain

Join WFCRC

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Reprinted 8/28/17

Hack Spirit

A scientist reveals what being near the ocean actually does to your brain

August 5, 2017



There is something magical about a large body of water.

A stretch of ocean across the coastline with never ending waves; a large flat lake glistening in the early morning mist; a quiet, dark pool at the bottom of a waterfall. A river passing by on its way to the ocean. These are nature’s incredible tranquilizers.

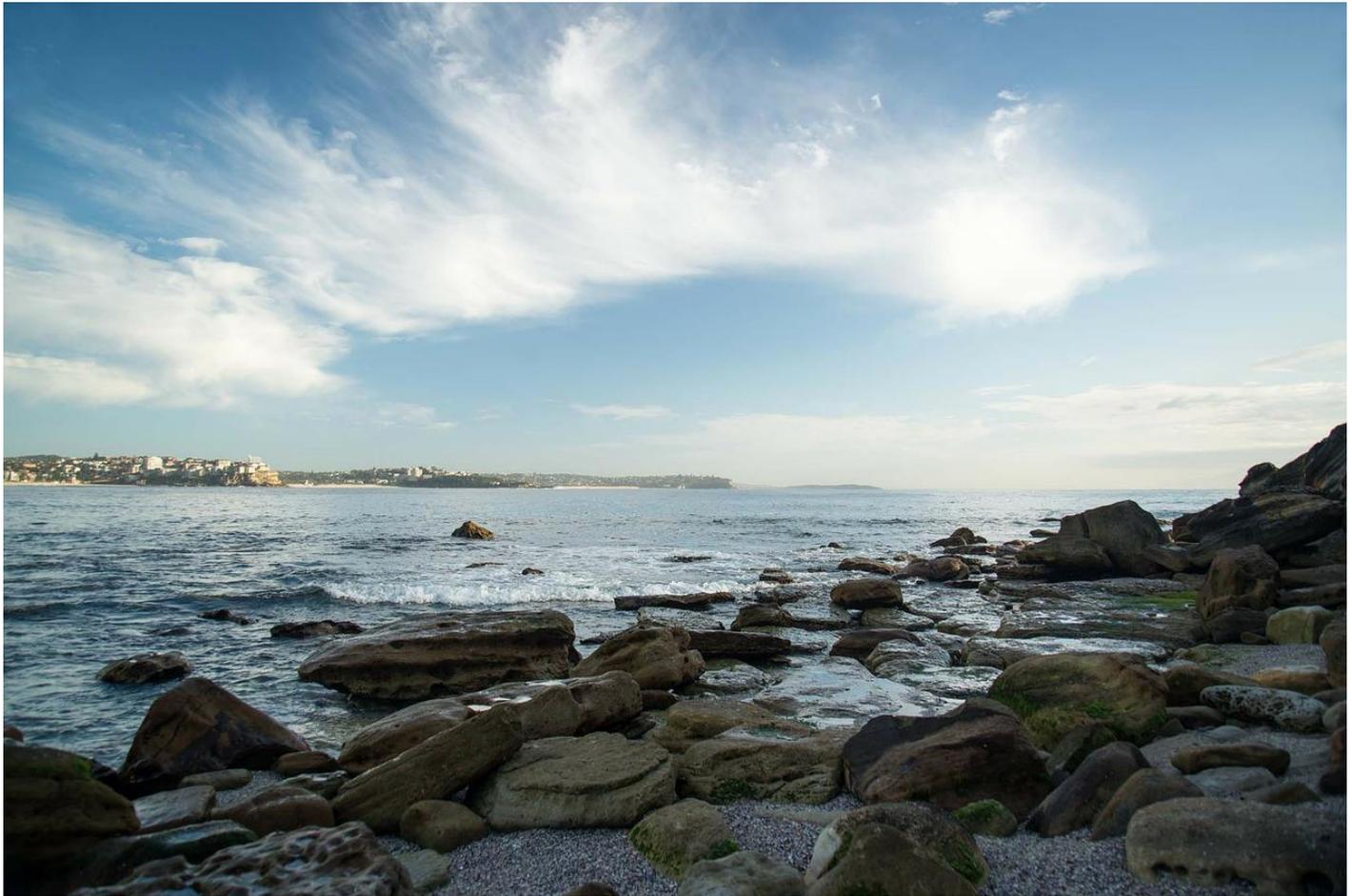
We know intuitively from experience that it’s healthy to be near the ocean. Now science is demonstrating that the ocean inspires creative thinking, reduces anxiety and promotes compassionate thinking.

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The latest research is revealed by scientist and marine biologist Wallace J. Nichols in his latest book, [Blue Mind: The Surprising Science That Shows How Being Near, In, On, or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do.](#)

He writes: “We have a ‘blue mind’ — and it’s perfectly tailored to make us happy in all sorts of ways that go way beyond relaxing in the surf, listening to the murmur of a stream, or floating quietly in a pool.”



“Blue Mind” is defined as “a mildly meditative state characterized by calm, peacefulness, unity, and a sense of general happiness and satisfaction with life in the moment. It is inspired by water and elements associated with water, from the color blue to the words we use to describe the sensations associated with immersion.”

We experience this state when we sit near water and gaze out at it. It induces a mindful state in which the brain is relaxed but focused.

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During one of his numerous [TEDx Talks](#) on the topic (see below) he explains that water holds vast cognitive, emotional, psychological and social benefits. “Nature is medicine – a walk on the beach; a surfing session; a stroll through the woods heals us. It fixes what broken inside of us. Nature can reduce our stress, it can make us more creative and bring us together.”

Nichols also speaks of the sense of awe we feel when we step out onto the beach towards the water — a common feeling confirmed by his research. “This sense of awe moves us from a ‘me’ to a ‘we’ perspective. Awe and wonder, and passion takes over in water. There is a feeling of connection to others and something beyond the immediate.”

It is no wonder that being near the ocean is a natural choice for many of life’s meaningful events, celebrations and ceremonies. And it’s also no wonder that so many people dream their whole life of retiring at the seaside.

[Researchers](#) at the University of Exeter found that people are healthier when they live closer to the English coast. The researchers looked at data from 48 million people in England from the 2001 census, comparing how close people lived to the sea with how happy they said they were.

Even just a view of the ocean can boost a person’s mental health.

A [study](#) carried out by researchers at Canterbury University, Otago University, and Michigan State University in the USA, looked into the relationship between mental health and exposure to green and blue space. Blue space refers to the visibility of water. The study found that just being able to see the ocean contributes to wellbeing, and lower stress levels.

As so often is the case, scientists come up with research results that are not surprising at all. Most people intuitively seek water knowing that it holds something special for them. Now it’s backed by science.

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- Marine Protected Areas (MPA)
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- Natural Science Reports (NSR)
- Oil Spill Alerts (OSA)
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