



10 Ways to Stay Alive in Nature by Anne Murray

Online, indoor, instant communication lifestyles are second nature to most of us today, yet maintaining our "first nature" is essential for mental and physical health.

We need to stay in touch with the natural world. Study after study has shown that outdoor exercise, views of trees and sky, and interactions with animals have hugely beneficial effects. Exposure to nature on a regular basis can decrease recovery times from operations, reduce the length of depressive episodes, and help children with cognitive and behavioral disorders.

Sometimes it can be difficult to move away from the computer, put aside the smartphone, and take in what nature has to offer. A good incentive for stepping outside is to learn about local ecosystems. It is surprising how much there is to see, even in the city.

Richard Louv, author of the 2005 bestseller *Last Child in the Woods*, defined the condition of "nature-deficit disorder", suffered by many urban children who do not roam free like their parents and grandparents often did. He links "the lack of nature in today's wired generation" to rises in "obesity, attention deficit disorder and depression".

Children need to explore nature and their local landscape, on their own terms and in unstructured play. Fortunately, this need not be a problem in the Lower Mainland where many beaches, forests, and parks offer opportunities for families to get out in nature on a regular basis. Naturalists and gardeners often live long, healthy lives—not just because of all the fresh air and exercise, but also because they absorb the inner calm of their natural surroundings. Furthermore, if each new generation knows and values nature they are more likely to develop both a strong

conservation ethic and interest in wise stewardship. One does not destroy what one loves.

Here are 10 ways to come alive in nature:

1. **Go out early in the morning to see wildlife**, go outside as early as possible in the morning. Birds greet the dawn in springtime with a riot of song. Although they are quieter in late summer, there is still much more bird activity around sunrise than later in the day. In more rural areas, larger animals, such as deer, bears, and coyotes are often seen first thing in the morning.
2. **Learn the names of plants, birds, and animals**. When you know a name, recognition becomes much easier. There are dozens of field guides to help you identify what you have seen. Taking photos and checking on the Internet can also work, although not everything is correctly labeled there. The easiest way to learn is to ask a keen naturalist, bird-watcher or gardener.
3. **Go for a nature hike**. Walk quietly, watch and listen.
4. **Explore the beach**. Strolling by the ocean is one of the most mentally restorative activities possible. Every beach is different. Look for shells, seaweed, and treasures washed in with the tide.
5. **Putter around a pond**. Wherever there is fresh water, there is life. Listen for croaking frogs, watch dragonflies darting around, and look for fish. Herons, grebes, ducks, and shorebirds are all attracted to fresh water too.

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Play & Learning

"Play is simply shorthand for our capacity for curiosity, imagination, and fantasy — our creative dispositions," writes David Elkind in his article, "Preschool Academics: Learning What Comes Naturally," in the new Exchange Essential: Advocating for Play. "What makes play unique," Elkind continues, "is that it enables us to create new learning experiences. To illustrate, an infant who drops a rattle from the crib, is learning about gravity. He or she is also creating a game with the parent who is retrieving the rattle. In addition, the infant learns that different objects make different sounds when they are dropped. Certainly children can learn these lessons from watching an adult perform the same actions, but it is much more powerful when the infant creates these experiences through his or her own actions. Learning by doing is always much more effective than learning by watching.

"Perhaps the best example of how children learn from their self-created experiences is babbling. No one teaches the infant to babble, it comes entirely from the infant. In the process of vocalizing, the infant creates all of the sounds needed to speak any language on earth. As the infant listens to the language being spoken around him or her, the baby selects those vowels and consonants that are unique to the language of the parents. As toddlers, children often create their own grammars. So called 'pivot' grammars are a case in point. That is the child uses a single word as the pivot of many different shorthand sentences, 'Baby up,' 'Baby drink,' 'Baby down,' and so on. Language is a powerful example of the importance of children's self-initiated play activities in their social learning."



11th Annual Pumpkin Festival at Stone Mountain



Come out and enjoy some cooler weather at Atlanta's favorite place to celebrate the fall season. Now in its 11th year, this annual Pumpkin Festival has become a family favorite with kids and parents alike. Enjoy the park's attractions, entertainment, activities and fall decorations that are fun for all ages. Event highlights include the Kids Trick or Treat Scavenger Hunt, Costume Dance Party, storytelling, a pie eating contest, Pumpkin Palooza game show, Pumpkin Party Patch crafting area, and the Little Quarry Discovery Zone.

NOW THROUGH OCTOBER 27th...WEEKENDS ONLY

Why Go Outdoors?

"Nothing coaxes jumbled thoughts into coherent sentences like sitting under a shade tree on a pleasant day," wrote Carol Kaufman in her September 16, **New York Times** article, Time to Write? Go Outside. "With a slight breeze blowing, birds chirping melodies, wee bugs scurrying around me and a fully charged laptop or yellow legal pad at hand, I know I'll produce my best work...."

"Turns out there are perfectly good reasons why writing outdoors works for me....Back in the 1970's, two pioneering environmental psychologists, Rachel and Stephen Kaplan, began investigating nature's healing effect on the mind. Decades later, their studies concluded that connections with nature could help us shirk mental fatigue, restore drifting attention and sharpen thinking. Even in an urban environment, a little green stimulates our senses, they report."

10 Ways to Be Alive in Nature (continued)

6. Plant a garden. Gardening is well known as an excellent therapy for mind and body. Those with a garden might like to create a hummingbird and butterfly patch, or a water garden. If you do not have a yard, even a couple of large plant pots on a balcony can be fun to sow with annuals or bulbs. Fall is a good time to plant bulbs for spring flowering.

7. Feed the ducks. A lovely activity for young and old.

8. Take a boat tour or ride a ferry. The Georgia coast has several options for exploring nature including Cumberland Island. Also consider one of our natural wonders or lakes.



9. Lists, diaries and bio-blitzes. Taking observation a step further helps keep your brain active. Many birdwatchers and naturalists keep diaries, or annual, area, and life lists of species they have seen. Some nature photographers and artists make visual records through the seasons.

10. Share your knowledge with someone else. Great friendships are made in nature.

Anne Murray is an independent writer, naturalist, and author of two books on the natural history of Boundary Bay: *A Nature Guide to Boundary Bay* and *Tracing Our Past—A Heritage Guide to Boundary Bay* (www.natureguidesbc.com). Learn more about children in nature and natural living for families through the Children & Nature Network.

Parenting Responsibilities: 10 Things You Are (and Aren't) Responsible for as a Parent

by Sara Bean, M.Ed.

These days, we're bombarded with mixed messages about how to parent "the right way." It's easy to buy into advice from the media, relatives, and other parents and start to worry that we're doing something wrong. Part of the reason this is happening is because adults, just like kids, are over-stimulated. We're more wired and connected, which means we're receiving more outside input than ever before. We have easy access to advice (good and bad) on the web, to information about how other parents are doing things, and to each other through social networking sites. This means we're also more actively comparing ourselves to others—and getting more judgment and criticism from others as a result. We're on informational & emotional overload, which is causing many, many parents to feel overwhelmed and confused.

Trust your instincts as a parent—you know your child best, and in the end you're the one making the decisions about your child's future. You have to run your family like a business. You're the chief executive officer of your "family business" and as CEO you have to learn how to set emotions aside and to parent as objectively as possible. Forget how guilty you feel, forget that echo of

your sister's advice in the back of your head—you need to do what is best for *your* business. You can ask for advice, but in the end, you know your family best.

One of the most important ways to clear through all the clutter of advice, guilt and comparisons to others is to understand what you are and aren't responsible for when it comes to raising your child.

What you are *not* responsible for:

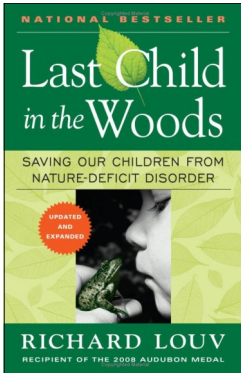
1. Making sure your kids are always happy.
2. Getting the approval of others.
3. Controlling your children.
4. Doing for your children what they are capable of doing for themselves.
5. You do not have to be Superman, Wonder Woman, Mike Brady or June Cleaver.

What you are responsible for:

1. Making tough decisions that are not popular ones.
2. Teaching your child to function independently.
3. Holding them accountable.
4. Going along for the ride.
5. Doing your best

Above all else, remember that your child is unique and you know him better than anyone else on the planet. You will always get input, no matter how obvious or subtle, from the world around you as to how you should parent your child. You, however, are the expert on your child and get to make your own decisions about how to parent her in a way that teaches her to be independent and accountable while also being loving and respectful of your child and her needs. When you find yourself personalizing, remember the tips here to help you be more objective and remember what your role as a parent really is.

RECOMMENDED READING... TWO TITLES BY RICHARD LOUV



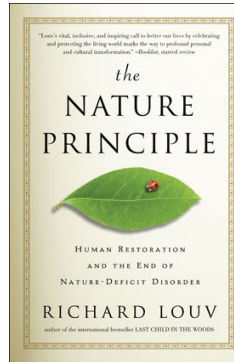
Last Child in the Woods

Nature-deficit disorder is not a medical condition; it is a description of the human costs of alienation from nature. This alienation damages children and shapes adults, families, and communities. There are solutions, though, and they're right in our own backyards. *Last child in the Woods* is the first book to bring together cutting-edge research showing that direct exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood development—physical, emotional, and spiri-

tual. What's more, nature is a potent therapy for depression, obesity, and ADD. Environment-based education dramatically improves standardized test scores and grade point averages and develops skills in problem solving, critical thinking, and decision making. Even creativity is stimulated by childhood experiences in nature.

Yet sending kids outside to play is increasingly difficult. Computers, television, and video games compete for their time, of course, but it's also our fears of traffic, strangers, even virus-carrying mosquitoes—fears the media exploit—that keep children indoors. Meanwhile, schools assign more and more homework, and there is less and less access to natural areas.

Parents have the power to ensure that their daughter or son will not be the "last child in the woods," and this book is the first step toward that nature-child reunion.



The Nature Principle

For many of us, thinking about the future conjures up images of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*: a post-apocalyptic dystopia stripped of nature. Richard Louv, author of the landmark bestseller *Last Child in the Woods*, urges us to change our vision of the future, suggesting that if we reconceive environmentalism and sustainability, they will evolve into a larger movement that will touch every part of society.

This New Nature Movement taps into the restorative powers of the natural world to boost mental acuity and creativity; promote health and wellness; build smarter and more sustainable businesses, communities, and economies; and ultimately strengthen human bonds. Supported by groundbreaking research, anecdotal evidence, and compelling personal stories, Louv offers renewed optimism while challenging us to rethink the way we live.

What's Happening...



COMMUNITY HELPERS WEEK:

Sept 30th—Oct 4th

FALL CONFERENCES (Infant, Toddler, Tows, Private Pre-K 3 & 4): Oct 14th-18th

FALL PICTURE DAY: October 23rd

PUMPKIN PATCH FIELD TRIP:

Room 4 (Oct 23rd), Room 1 (Oct. 24th), Room 2 (Oct 29th), Room 3 (Oct 30th)

HALLOWEEN PARADE & PARTY

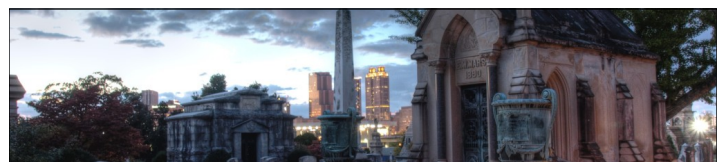
October 31st

Pinnacle



October "FALL FUN"

Harvest Happenings Fall on the Farm
Fall in the City Fairy Tales & Fables



Historic Oakland Cemetery presents...

CAPTURING THE SPIRIT HALLOWEEN TOURS

OCTOBER 18TH-27TH

Historic Oakland Cemetery receives many visitors each day, but only at Halloween do the gates stay open after dark. Witness the magnificent final resting place of Atlanta's sons and daughters. Join us this year and hear first-hand accounts about our city's past, narrated by a host of Oakland's eternal "residents." You'll also see gorgeous candlelit mausoleums in this one-of-a-kind annual tradition. Bring a flashlight and wear comfortable walking shoes. Adults: \$20.00; Children 4-12 years of age: \$10; Children 3 years of age and under: Free. See website for dates/times and to purchase tickets.