

When It Comes to Depression and Anxiety, Remember Nature's Power

Lifting one's spirit can be as simple as spending more time outdoors — if we can yank ourselves away from our phones and other electronics

by *Lucinda Bakken White*

There are many types of depression and many ways to treat it.

My depression recurred during pivotal times in my life. Each episode took me down a different path of discovery, restoration and balance. Although my life became more complicated over time and I often slipped in and out of depression, I knew that every healing step I took made me stronger in the long run.

In addition to working with a psychiatrist, I found there was one common theme that brought me through my dark periods: nature.

The demands of modern life are so vast that we tend to overemphasize routines and sameness to power through our days, months and years. We forget our inner authentic self craves wildness — and that's not an overstatement. Spending time outside in nature, with our senses open, can energize and enliven us.

When we are outside with nature, the vibrations touch us deeply and positively influence our mental, emotional and spiritual health. Here are five easy ways to incorporate more nature in your life to help you improve your mood — and fight off anxiety and depression.

1.) Meditate outside. If you haven't meditated before, it is simple. Just find a nice spot to sit, close your eyes, and listen to all that is around you. When I take time to pause in nature, without the distraction and noise of a cellphone or even

music, I find the space to hear my inner voice — and I'm able to connect deeply with everything around me.

By opening my senses, I allow the sights, sounds, and smells of nature to soothe, replenish and renew my body, mind and spirit.

2.) Bring nature into your home. Include plants, flowers, driftwood, seashells, rocks, feathers — or whatever calls to you. Having natural elements around me to touch, smell and look at is soothing, and keeps me connected to the natural world. This is an especially wonderful way to lift your spirit and improve the energy in your home during dreary winter months.

3.) Follow the moon and its rhythms, just as our ancient ancestors did. When the moon guides me, I feel connected to something deeper and larger than myself.

Like the moon, life waxes and wanes. New moons are traditionally the time for setting intentions. Write down the goals you would you like to achieve during this 29 day-and-night cycle. As the moon grows, know that you, too, are manifesting through your actions. Celebrate your progress under the full moon and then as the moon darkens, go inward to reflect, review, adjust and renew in preparation for a rebirth at the next new moon.

This sense of focus and connection can help alleviate feelings of anxiety, hopelessness and depression.

4.) Watch for animal wisdom. Humankind has long used animals as symbols for life guidance. Seeing a deer can remind us of gentleness and gracefulness. A rabbit symbolizes fertility and abundance. Even that spider in the bedroom room could be nudging us to do something creative — or be a reminder of our connectedness to the larger web of life.

5.) Explore a new area in nature. Adventuring to places you've never been to before can be enlivening. Is there a beach you've always meant to visit? Or a mountain where you've wanted to camp? Nourish and rejuvenate your inner wildness by taking in some unfamiliar sights, sounds and smells.

Nature is part of my daily life now, and there has been no return of the depression. Of course, deep depression should be treated by a professional. But for me, the answer to freeing myself from the recurrences was returning to the wilderness.

Humans are part of nature. When we spend a significant amount of time outside, that can foster healing by connecting and attuning us to the original wild nature inside and outside of ourselves.

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