

# Clear your mind. Get outside.

## Why is nature so good for your mental health?

A recent study, led by researcher Craig Anderson and his colleagues (including the Greater Good Science Center's faculty director, Dacher Keltner), suggests it could be awe—that sense of being in the presence of something greater than ourselves that fills us with wonder.

Before and after the trip, the participants reported on their well-being, including their stress levels, mood, and satisfaction with life. During the trip, they kept diaries at the end of each day about their feelings, including whether they'd felt awe, amusement, peace, gratitude, joy, or pride that day. At the end of the trip, participants' well-being had increased dramatically, with youth particularly helped by the experience. Analyzing the diary entries, the researchers discovered that awe—above and beyond any of the other positive emotions—seemed to explain these improvements.

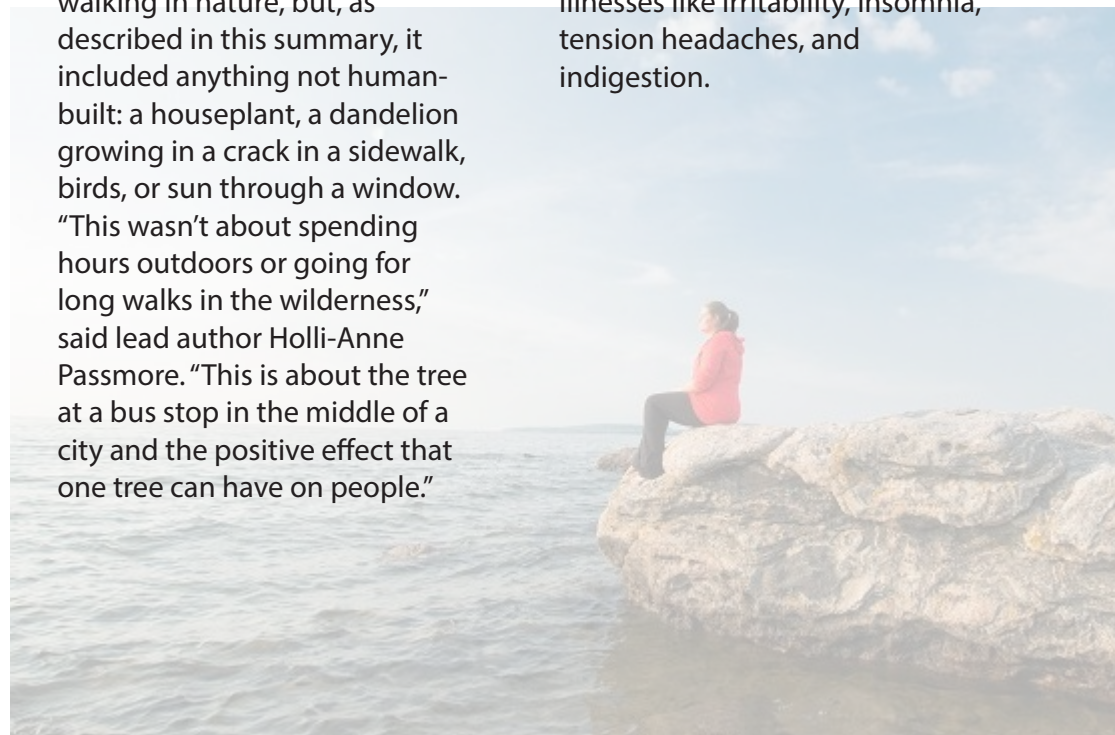
"Experiencing awe in nature is a powerful way to impact people's psychology, even as they're doing something they really like to do," says Anderson.

## Why connecting with nature elevates your mental health

Immersion in nature was defined as taking time to engage in some form of connection with the natural world. That included not just walking in nature, but, as described in this summary, it included anything not human-built: a houseplant, a dandelion growing in a crack in a sidewalk, birds, or sun through a window. "This wasn't about spending hours outdoors or going for long walks in the wilderness," said lead author Holli-Anne Passmore. "This is about the tree at a bus stop in the middle of a city and the positive effect that one tree can have on people."

## Mental health benefits of spending time in nature

A simple stay in the outdoors can do wonders for relieving anxiety, stress, and depression. Countless studies have proven that nature has a positive effect on your mental health. What you see, hear, and experience in nature can improve your mood in a moment. There is a strong connection between time spent in nature and reduced negative emotions. This includes symptoms of anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic illnesses like irritability, insomnia, tension headaches, and indigestion.



## Resources...

[www.greatergood.berkeley.edu](http://www.greatergood.berkeley.edu)  
[www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com)  
[www.ontarioparks.com/](http://www.ontarioparks.com/)

[www.edmonton.cmha.ca](http://www.edmonton.cmha.ca)  
[www.anxietycanada.com](http://www.anxietycanada.com)  
[www.mdsc.ca](http://www.mdsc.ca)

[www.depressionhurts.ca/en](http://www.depressionhurts.ca/en)  
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