

NOTICING NATURE

Difficulty: **MODERATE** | Frequency: **1X/DAY** | Duration: **10 MINS**

WHY YOU SHOULD TRY IT

Our surroundings can impact our well-being for better or worse, but we're not always aware of these effects. This practice asks you to pay attention in particular to the feelings evoked by nature. Research suggests that people often feel positive emotions like awe, connectedness, and hope in natural settings, and taking time to acknowledge these feelings can strengthen them.

For this practice, you don't have to budget extra time to spend outdoors; just notice the nature that's already in your life, whether it's a scenic view from your window, a park down the street, or a house plant.

TIME REQUIRED

5-15 minutes per day for two weeks. Eventually, you could make this activity part of your daily routine.

HOW TO DO IT

1. **Be mindful of nature.** Give special attention to the natural elements and objects around you on a daily basis (e.g., trees, clouds, leaves, the moon, moving water, animals, etc.). Ask yourself and notice: How do these make you feel? What emotions do they bring up? Take a moment to allow yourself to fully experience the nature around you.
2. **Take a photo.** When you encounter a natural object or scene that evokes a strong emotion in you, that moves you in some way, take a photo of it. You can use any type of camera that's available to you. Don't worry too much about the quality of the photo or how creative it is. Remember that tuning in to what you are photographing is more important.
3. **Save, share, and describe your photo.** If possible, upload the photo to your computer, share it with people, or even have it printed. Along with the photo, write a short description of why you took the photo and how the nature scene made you feel. This can be a few words or a few sentences.
4. **Repeat.** You can take as many photos as you like, but try to take at least 10 photos over the course of two weeks. Be mindful of how the nature you encounter makes you feel on a daily basis, and try to space out your photos across different days.

EVIDENCE IT THAT WORKS

Passmore, H. A., & Holder, M. D. (2016). [Noticing nature: Individual and social benefits of a two-week intervention.](#) *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(6), 537-546.

For two weeks, some participants took photos of nature scenes that evoked strong emotion in them, then wrote a description of those feelings; others took photos of human-built environments or went about their lives as usual. Afterward, they answered survey questions about their feelings and values. Compared to the other groups, the participants who focused on nature reported feeling more positive emotions and **elevation** (a sense of awe, inspiration, and transcendence) recently, being kinder and more helpful toward other people, and feeling a greater sense of connectedness to others and the world around them.

WHY TO TRY IT

Some researchers believe that humans evolved to feel attached and drawn to natural scenes. In our busy world, nature may help us recharge by capturing our attention gently and effortlessly, the way we're mesmerized by the rays of the sun or delighted by the crunch of fall leaves. Other researchers theorize that the calming influence of nature reduces our distress and sense of isolation. When we notice the nature around us, we can tap into its profound benefits.

And you don't have to be a nature lover to reap the advantages; according to research, the Noticing Nature practice is just as beneficial for people who don't feel a sense of kinship or oneness with the environment.

SOURCES

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This practice is part of [Greater Good in Action](#), a clearinghouse of the best research-tested methods for increasing happiness, resilience, kindness, and connection, created by the [Greater Good Science Center](#) at UC Berkeley and [HopeLab](#).

