

How to Use this Information

This information highlights the *social benefits* people receive when they connect with nature and how being outdoors improves our overall well-being.

Promote the concept!

Use this information to help promote healthy in nature activities, policies and programs in your area.

Spread the news!

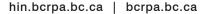
- Give this information and research to members of the public, fellow staff members, municipal leaders, community partners and others.
- Incorporate this information in your communication materials such as a recreation newsletter or programming guide or in correspondence with municipal council and community partners.



Being outdoors in nature provides opportunities for people to connect with others and, as a result, to develop relationships. For example, you may come across the same person when you're walking your dog or, when waiting your turn at a public water fountain, you may chat with someone in line. When people feel connected to others, it creates a sense of belonging and that contributes to a sense of community.¹ Neighbourhood spaces such as parks, green belts or nature paths contribute to social interaction, which improves a person's overall sense of well-being.

Being outdoors:

- fosters social connections.³
- while interacting with others develops social skills such as sharing, taking turns, helping others and resolving conflict.³
- creates positive feelings about and respect for others.8
- encourages people to love and protect the environment.⁸
- increases social capital, which is how well people look after each other, cooperate and trust others.⁷
- Playing outdoors develops gross motor skills in children such as jumping, running and climbing and it develops fine motor skills such as touching, feeling and scooping.¹⁰
- Playing outdoors positively influences the development of life-long conservation values and promotes ecological knowledge.^{3,4}
- Children engage in more creative, interactive play in nature.⁵
- Playing outdoors together is an ideal time for parents to engage with their children.⁶
- Being outdoors promotes healthy personal development and a sense of freedom and independence. It nurtures an inner strength that promotes stress resiliency.⁵
- Studies show that people are more caring when they are around nature.¹





FOOTNOTES

1 | Bird, W., (2007). Natural Thinking: Investigating the links between the Natural Environment, Biodiversity and Mental Health. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Retrieved from http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/naturalthinking_tcm9-161856.pdf

2 | Sullivan, W., et al. (2004). The Fruit of Urban Nature: Vital Neighborhood Spaces Journal: Environment and Behaviour. 36(5), 678-700. Retrieved from http://www.willsull.net/Publications_files/Sullivan,%20Kuo,%20DePooter.pdf

3 | Be Out There Campaign (2010). Whole Child: Developing Mind, Body and Spirit through Outdoor Play. National Wildlife Federation. Retrieved from https://www.nwf.org/pdf/Be%20Out%20There/BeOutThere_WholeChild_V2.pdf

4 | Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Childhood (2008). Nature Play. Retrieved from http://www.greenheartsinc.org/Nature_Play.html

5 | Pretty, J., et al. (2009). Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways. University of Essex, Interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society. Retrieved from http://www.hphpcentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Nature-Childhood-and-Health-iCES-Occ-Paper-2009-2-FINAL.pdf

6 | Ginsburg et al. (2007). The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds. American Academy of Pediatrics, 119 (1), 182-188.

7 | Maller, C., Henderson-Wilson, Pryor, A., et al. (2008). Healthy parks, healthy people: The health benefits of contact with nature in a park context. (2nd ed.) Deakin University and Parks Victoria. Retrieved from http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/313821/HPHP-deakin-literature-review.pdf

8 | White, R., (2004) Young Children's Relationship with Nature: Its Importance to Children's Development & the Earth's Future; White Hutchinson Leisure and Learning Group. Retrieved from http://www.whitehutchinson.com/children/articles/childrennature.shtml



