

More Scientific Proof that Nature is an Effective Treatment for Depression and Negativity

By L.J. Devon, *Natural News*



Walking alongside the creek with sand squishing in between his toes, a wandering man watched as the water rippled across the rocks. Looking back at his sandy foot trail, watching it meander along the water's edge out of sight, it seemed almost as if time had been frozen in place for fifty feet or so.

Getting lost in the passing trees, each step he took into the green was one step further from being heard or seen. He felt like he was losing himself with every step. A fulfilling kind of drunkenness swelled up inside him. The erratic noises of city life and the false images of self were beginning to fade away as nature's palette of colors came into full view.

Kneeling creekside, cupping his hands to splash water onto his face, it seemed like anything was possible. With his eyes wide open and his ears perked to the sounds of birds calling, he could feel his worries dissipate.

Nature walks prevent negative self-talk that fuels depression

Nature is healing in all its diversity and color. The way everything cooperates is solace to the mind. The way everything is interconnected brings peace to the soul. Researchers are now aiming to harness these mystical qualities of nature to help rehabilitate those who are struggling with depression and cognitive decline.

A plethora of scientific studies are now finding that people who take micro-breaks to view nature have better attention spans throughout the day. Likewise, schools that allow children to view more nature see remarkable improvements on cognitive tests.

A new cognitive neuroscience study by Stanford University captured the benefits of nature

through neural changes in participants' brain scans. The results were published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

The study featured 38 individuals living in urban areas who had "no history of mental disorder." After being divided into two groups, the individuals were asked to take a 90-minute walk and answer a few questions before and after the walk. A brain scan was also conducted before and after the walk. The first group walked along a noisy downtown road in Palo Alto, California. The other half enjoyed a walk through a natural setting near the Stanford campus.

The questionnaire was designed to measure the individuals' degree of "rumination", which is a type of inner, negative self-talk that causes people to overthink their life. Rumination is tied to an increased risk of depression. Finding ways to stop this cycle of inner negativity could ultimately be the greatest forms of therapy for mental disorders. The questionnaire asked the participants if they agreed with statements like, "My attention is often focused on aspects of myself I wish I'd stop thinking about," and "I spend a great deal of time thinking back over my embarrassing or disappointing moments."

When the researchers looked at the participants' brain scans, they honed in on a special region of the brain called the subgenual prefrontal cortex. The study called this area of the brain "an area that has been shown to be particularly active during the type of maladaptive, self-reflective thought and behavioral withdrawal that occurs during rumination."

Without a doubt, the participants who took the 90-minute nature walk answered their questionnaire differently after the walk, showing a decrease in negative self-talk. The change was also observed on their brain scans, which showed less activity in the subgenual prefrontal cortex.

"This provides robust results for us that nature experience, even of a short duration, can decrease this pattern of thinking that is associated with the onset, in some cases, of mental illnesses like depression," said the lead author of the study, Gregory Bratman.

The brain scans validated longtime speculation that being around nature has a therapeutic effect on the mind, erasing depression. This new evidence strengthens the case that nature provides the ultimate form of cognitive therapy. Vitamin N (nature) is also a free, non-invasive treatment that doesn't have deadly side effects as observed in many SSRI depression medications and other psychotic drugs.

Sources:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com>