Healing Benefits of Nature
By Maria Loebach, RN

“Look deep, deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better…”
-Albert Einstein

Summer is upon us after a long, rainy winter and spring. The longer days and sunshine may be beckoning you and your family to get outdoors! And your body may intuitively know that some time connecting with nature can support your health and well-being. There is actually a large body of research that shows how connecting with nature, whether by being in nature, living near nature, or even simply viewing nature in paintings, pictures or videos, can have a positive impact on our bodies, mood, and brain. Time in nature can improve mood, foster creativity, and promote a sense of inner calm. Research is showing the positive effects of nature on blood pressure, cholesterol, and stress reduction. As you can see, time spent with nature can be an investment in your mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

What are some ways to connect with nature? I encourage you to get creative! The Pacific Northwest is full of beautiful forests, rivers, mountains, and lakes to explore. However, one can enjoy time in nature by visiting a park in your neighborhood, sitting under a tree in your backyard, enjoying the changing colors of the sky at sunset or sunrise from your home, or playing with your children or pets in the grass. Connect with nature by watching a nature documentary with your family, viewing a book of photography of nature from the library, or enjoying images of nature online. Whatever you choose, have fun as you integrate time spent connecting with nature as part of your self-care this summer!

Resources:
http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what_happens_when_we_reconnect_with_nature
https://www.fs.fed.us/pnw/about/programs/gsv/pdfs/health_and_wellness.pdf
What to do with kids this summer!
By Leah Christensen, LCSW

Summer is upon us and filling the long summer days and keeping kids active can be a challenge. Whether they are your own little ones or they are visiting from out of town, here are a few ideas to engage the whole little person!

- Have a backyard campout
- Engage in a water fight
- Make homemade popsicles
- Take a bike ride over the Tillicum bridge in Portland
- Grow a fairy, ninja or dinosaur garden
- Pick berries at a local farm
- Make tie die t-shirts
- Attend an outdoor summer concert / or outdoor theater
- Have a lemonade stand
- Take a hike in Forest Park
- Create a summer music playlist and dance outside

Kids calendars:
SW Washington [https://vancouverfamilymagazine.com/](https://vancouverfamilymagazine.com/)

Kids bowl free all summer long: [https://www.kidsbowlfree.com/](https://www.kidsbowlfree.com/)

Don’t forget to check out your local city/county Parks and Recreation programs & your local library for summer reading programs
Now Available
Safety Workbook for Home Caregivers of People with Dementia


- Workbook with evidence based information
- Practical tips for home safety for caregivers
- Includes itemized list to take to the store
- Easy to read with helpful illustrations
  - A home safety toolkit with this workbook was tested in a randomized control trial (RCT) with safety equipment (such as night lights and motion sensors). Veterans had significantly fewer risky behaviors and accidents. Caregivers had significantly improved: Home environmental safety; Caregiver self-efficacy (confidence in their caregiving skills); and Caregiver strain.
- Based on research led by investigators at the Edith Nourse Rogers Veterans Hospital in Bedford, MA.

VA Concussion Coach App

https://mobile.va.gov/app/concussion-coach

The Concussion Coach App was designed for Veterans, Servicemembers and other people who have symptoms that may be related to concussion, or mild to moderate traumatic brain injury. This App can be used by itself, but it may be more helpful when used along with treatment from a health provider.

Features:
- Education about concussion symptoms & treatment options.
- Tools for screening & tracking your symptoms.
- Relaxation exercises & tools for managing problems related to concussion.
- Direct links for community-based resources & support.
- Personal contact list, photos and music.

Concussion includes any blow to the head that results in a change in perception, loss of consciousness or a loss of memory for the events right after the injury. Symptoms that can result from concussion include emotional challenges (such as getting angry more easily), physical problems (such as headaches and dizziness) and cognitive issues (such as concentration or memory problems).

The Concussion Coach App offers tools to assess and cope with concussion symptoms. This app is best used when you are in face-to-face treatment with a health provider, and is not meant to be a replacement for diagnosis, medical treatment, or rehabilitation therapy with a health provider.

Concussion Coach is available for Apple mobile devices (iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch) and will be available for Android phones and tablets in 2014.
Recipe Corner

Honey Grilled Watermelon Caprese Salad

http://www.howsweeteats.com/2013/07/honey-grilled-watermelon-caprese-salads/

Yield: serves 4  Total Time: 30 minutes

Ingredients:
2 large, round watermelon slices, each cut into 4 triangles
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
2 tablespoons honey
1 pint of grape tomatoes, quartered
4 ounces of fresh mozzarella, cut in half or sliced
a bunch of fresh basil leaves
balsamic glaze for drizzling

Directions:
Preheat your grill to medium heat. Brush both sides of each watermelon triangle with olive oil and season all sides with salt and pepper. Add a drizzle of honey over each triangle and place them on the grill, grilling each side for about 2 minutes. Remove and add a little more honey if desired.

Assemble salads by placing 2 watermelon triangles on each plate, then cover with a sprinkle of tomatoes, mozzarella and basil leaves. Add some salt and pepper on top, then drizzle with balsamic glaze.

Serve!

Chair Yoga

Crescent Lunge

How it helps:
Stretches hip flexor muscles; strengthens low back and legs; creates stability and balance; relieves low back pain; opens chest and shoulders. In short, it’s just the thing for those who sit a lot.

How to do it:
Stand tall facing the back of the chair. Inhale, bringing arms wide and overhead, then exhale, arms wide, bringing hands down to the chair back. Step your left foot back, lengthening through the heel; bend your right knee, keeping it directly above the ankle. Hipbones should be facing front. Draw inner thighs toward each other like magnets, and lift your chest as you extend your right arm overhead (as shown). Hold for three full breaths, then step forward, inhale as you raise your arms wide and overhead, and repeat on the opposite side.

http://spryliving.com/articles/top-chair-yoga-poses-for-seniors/
Summertime Self-Care
by Judy Ulibarri, RN

Summer brings with it beautiful weather, a change in daily activities. Family reunions, summer camps, social activities, and vacations are in full swing, which can affect the time we rise and sleep, the nutritional choices we make, our exercise routine, and our schedule. When you’re on vacation with your family during the summertime, how do you maintain your daily routine? Keep in mind that it took dedication and commitment to establish your daily routine ... and it will require dedication and commitment to maintain your healthy lifestyle practices when the season—and your schedule—changes. Try waking up 30 minutes earlier. The sun rises earlier in summer months, which makes it a little easier for us to do the same. Giving yourself some extra time in the morning will provide a buffer of space and time to mindfully choose how to unfold the day.

Connect to Stillness and Silence
Get your meditation in. If you’re vacationing with family and sharing close quarters, find a quiet place to meditate. Pack a set of ear plugs for those ‘off-the-map’ meditation locations and remember, there is no substitute for your silent, mantra-based meditation practice.

Choose Your Meals Consciously
If you know you’re going to be eating on the go, be sure to pack healthy snacks and lots of water. Eat and drink your greens. Select foods that have all the colors of the rainbow. This will keep you feeling healthy, strong, and vibrant on your vacation and throughout the summer months.

Move Your Body
When you’re sitting in airports, at rest stops, on airplanes, or as a passenger on long car rides, try chair yoga. It’s a fabulous way to increase your circulation and create movement in your body while traveling. For more movement, walk around a city block, stroll the decks and corridors of the cruise ship, do crunches in your hotel bed, and practice standing balancing poses while waiting for your toast to brown.

Laugh Often and Laugh Out Loud
Laughter triggers healthy physical changes in the body. Humor and laughter strengthen your immune system, boost energy, diminish pain, and protect you from the damaging effects of stress. When laughter is shared, it binds people together and increases happiness and intimacy. Crack jokes, tell stories, tickle yourself (or someone else!), watch comedy, partake in child’s play giggle for no reason, and have fun!

Stargaze
The stars have shifted, the sky is clear, and you should be sitting under it! If you live in the city, take a drive into the country at least one time this summer. The stars and moon are visual reminders of how massive the universe is. Looking up at a star-filled sky is a natural depiction of how light cannot exist without the darkness.

Stay cool
Keeping cool can help you control your health as well as mood swings and anger.

Try these tips to stay cool:
Although the sun is healthy, it requires moderation. Eat some of those fresh garden foods such as watermelon & cucumber to stabilize a hot body. Reduce or avoid spicy foods this time of year. Carry a spray bottle of water when outdoors or long road trips. A spritz on the skin can be refreshing. Remember, our lifestyle choices directly effect our overall physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. Being on vacation doesn’t mean taking a vacation from healthy choices!
Healthy Aging Training & Support (HATS) for Veterans & their Caregivers

Has your loved one experienced a change in his or her thinking abilities? Is he or she more forgetful, inattentive, or losing track of things? Do you find yourself providing additional support to help him or her manage daily tasks? Have you noticed a change in your own mood and activities because of these changes? If you answered “yes” to any of the above questions, the Healthy Aging Training & Support (HATS) class may be a good fit for you and your Veteran!

For some Veterans, cognitive problems interfere with activities of daily living. The Veteran may also experience symptoms of emotional distress (i.e., depression, PTSD, anxiety), either independent of or secondary to their cognitive problems, which can hinder living a fully functional life. When this occurs, a common reaction is to withdrawal from your activities and surroundings. Loved ones or close friends might in turn offer some assistance to help him or her manage daily tasks. With time, the added support can become stressful, affecting the relationship between the Veteran and care provider. Additionally, this dynamic may result in significant changes for the care provider including a loss of personal time, a shift in role identity, increased symptoms of depression, social withdrawal, and greater health concerns. For these reasons, we believe the HATS treatment is uniquely effective at providing support for these complex experiences and relationships.

HATS is a new group treatment offered at the Portland VA for Veterans with cognitive problems and their Caregivers. It is an 8-week group that meets for two hours each week, with a brief break in the middle. Veterans and Caregivers must be willing to attend together. The group focuses on topics related to cognitive difficulties (e.g., inattention, forgetfulness, trouble making decisions, etc.), problems with daily function (e.g., forgetting appointments or medications), communication breakdowns, relationship strain, caregiver stress, and social/emotional withdrawal. During this class, you will learn new strategies to improve your thinking abilities, increase your independence, strengthen your relationships and communication, engage in meaningful activities, and reduce emotional distress. Our next group will begin in September 2017! If you would like more information, or if you think you might want to participate, please call Dr. Megan Callahan at 503-220-8262, x50525.

Caregiver Testimonial:
“The class helped us evaluate our situation, identify what was meaningful to both of us, and communicate effectively to make changes for our future. It allowed us to move out of a stressful environment and bring us to a calmer and more comfortable environment. We continue to routinely use the strategies we learned from the class. We’re no longer in survivor mode; we’re thriving! My husband walks around with a big smile on his face!”