

# Student Mental Health and Well-Being



## Newsletter



### Nature: How It Improves Mental Health



Breathing fresh air, feeling a warm breeze on your arm, seeing a beautiful flower blossom, petting a dog, watching a buzzing bee, or skipping through a forest. Have you ever stopped to consider that contact with nature may be as necessary for healthy child development as adequate sleep and good nutrition?

A growing body of research has shown that contact with nature offers many benefits. Nature can offer relief from stress and improve physical and emotional health. Research has shown that “life’s stressful events appear not to cause as much psychological distress in children who live in high nature conditions compared with children who live in low nature conditions.” Even a room with a view of nature can help protect children against stress.

Nature also fosters social interaction and teaches children about friendship. When exploring nature children are involved in a shared experience, which can then deepen friendships.

Being in nature allows for creative play. We should encourage children to detach from their electronics long enough so that their imagination can take over.

Nature also offers a place where you can

be alone. One student described her experience with nature as a place where she could clear her mind and gain perspective. When she was in nature she realized that “there were far larger things than herself, and it helped put problems into perspective.” Nature can act as an escape where problems don’t need immediate attention.

Research has also shown that nature can improve a child’s capacity to pay attention. In a time when electronic technology surrounds us it’s important to engage children in nature activities:

- View nature as an antidote to stress and go on a nature outing with your class
- Plant a small garden in your classroom
- Have children keep a nature journal visit [www.greenhour.org](http://www.greenhour.org)
- Take your class outside to read a book
- Green your schoolyard. Visit Evergreen [www.evergreen.ca/en](http://www.evergreen.ca/en)

Information obtained from Richard Louv;,  
“Last Child in the Woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder”

## Fostering The Family:

### The TCDSB Pastoral Plan 2015-18 “ Together With one Voice: Harmonizing Our Faith Through Family, Parish, and School” 2015 focuses on the FAMILY

As a family you can engage in nature experiences together:

- go camping, fishing, swimming, canoeing
- go on a nature walk
- dig in the garden
- hunt for bird nests
- collect leaves in the fall
- plant seeds for a vegetable garden
- adopt the “sunny day rule”. If it’s a beautiful day, go outside and play

### Lord, grant us Wisdom to Care for the Earth

*Lord, grant us the wisdom to care for the earth and till it. Help us to act now for the good of future generations and all your creatures. Help us to become instruments of a new creation, founded on the covenant of your love.*

*Amen.*

from The Cry of the Earth

## Mental Health Initiatives 2015-2016

- TCDSB Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy 2015-18 approved Jan. 14, 2016 <https://www.tcdsb.org/programs/services/specialeducation/mhs/pages/mental-health-strategy.aspx>
- Support for schools in developing a mentally healthy classroom. See Supporting Minds on the Ministry’s website and [edugains.ca](http://edugains.ca)
- Building partnerships with community agencies, families, and parishes
- SAFE TALK suicide awareness workshops for staff available via PAL
- Children’s mental health Awareness week May 1-6, 2016. Details soon

## Suggested Readings and Websites:

### Books:

*I Love Dirt!: 52 Activities to Help You and Your Kids Discover the Wonders of Nature* by Jennifer Ward

*Unplugged Play* by Bobbi Conner

*Keeping a Nature Journal* by Charles E. Roth and Clare Leslie

*Go Outside* by Nancy Blakey

*Last Child in the Woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder* by Richard Louv

### Websites

[www.takeachildoutside.org](http://www.takeachildoutside.org)

[www.cnaturenet.org](http://www.cnaturenet.org)

[www.greenhour.org](http://www.greenhour.org)

[www.evergreen.ca](http://www.evergreen.ca)

## A Laugh A Day...

"A day without  
laughter is a day  
wasted"

*Charlie Chaplin*



"I avoided the flu all winter...  
but spring fever finally got me."

Patricia Marra-Stapleton, Psychological Associate/Mental Health Lead

[patricia.marra-stapleton@tcdsb.org](mailto:patricia.marra-stapleton@tcdsb.org)

Marci Buhagiar, Psychologist

[marci.buhagiar@tcdsb.org](mailto:marci.buhagiar@tcdsb.org)