

# Kris Abrams: Ten reasons you feel so good in nature

*By Kris Abrams*

Earth, rivers, mountains and trees! Frozen snowscapes, babbling brooks and growing gardens! If you spend time in nature, you've probably noticed that you feel happier out there than in here.

But why? What is it about nature and our relationship to it that brings us so much joy?

I've been asking this question for some years now. I've studied ecopsychology, wilderness therapy, and ecotherapy. In my private psychotherapy practice, I work with clients in nature and bear witness to their experiences. And personally, I spend as much time as I can outdoors. Putting all of this together, here are my top 10 reasons why we feel so good in nature:

10) Nature reminds you that there is nothing wrong with you.

When you're in nature, you're not looking at TV, magazines, or mirrors. You're focused on what you're doing or the setting around you.

Nature displays and embraces incredible diversity. There are fat trees and skinny ones, short ones and tall ones. There is no racism, sexism, classism, or homophobia. If you see a lone pink flower within a clump of yellow ones, you don't think "How wrong! That flower is different!" You think: "How beautiful!"

9) Time slows down.

Clocks and schedules teach us to abandon the natural rhythms of our bodies and conform to a frantic schedule rooted in our economic system. Nature models a healthier pace of life. Trees and plants grow s-l-o-w-l-y. Deer graze calmly. Rabbits and squirrels scamper about, but that is their natural pace. In fact, everyone moves according to their natural rhythm, and you begin to do the same.

8) Nature models harmony and balance.

More! More! More! We should make more money, buy more things, eat more scrumptious food. Right?

Not according to Nature. Trees grow to a height that reflects the nutrients and water immediately available. Squirrels store the right amount of food to get them through the

winter. Quietly witnessing this balance and harmony is like salve in the wound of overconsumption.

7) You surrender comfort and control.

Our culture propagates the idea that we should strive to make life as pleasurable as possible. No myth has made us unhappier as a people. We simply can't be pleased or comfortable all the time. We can't control everything. Trying to achieve this leads to a meaningless life that kills the soul.

In Nature, you can't stop it from raining. You can't set a thermostat to 70 degrees. You awake from the dream and realize how little control you really have. You remember that hardship and lack of control are part of life. Accepting this not only makes it possible to weather the discomfort, but also to experience the joy of being alive underneath it all.

6) Nature reminds you of death so you can appreciate your life and its natural cycles.

In the U.S., we do everything we can to avoid the knowledge that we, and everyone we love, are going to die. But in nature, you encounter death all the time. See that dead tree over there? Behold! It's nursing young plants to life. When we come face to face with death, we value our own lives more, the present moment more, and experience surges of joy.

5) As the noise of our crazy culture fades, your mind calms and you experience silence and stillness. What a relief! Enough said.

4) You behold the beauty of nature.

How is such majesty possible? The strength of that mountain! The miracle of a single flower, infused with sunlight! You feel awe and joy and are whole again.

3) You remember that you are connected to all living things.

You feel that you belong to this Earth. You are made of the same substance. You are nature.

2) You remember who you truly are.

You feel comfortable in your own skin. You remember the inner you that is the true you.

1) You experience the Divine.

Whether you call it God or Earth Mother or by another name, nature helps you to connect with this powerful, loving presence. You might feel loved and supported; you might receive insight and wisdom. Nature brings you closer to your own spirit and to Spirit.

These are the reasons why I believe we're so happy in the natural world. So just because it's cold outside and we're entering the darkest days of winter, don't forget to bundle up, get out, and connect with Nature. You'll be happier for it!

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