



Get back to nature

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The healing power of nature is all around us, and we ignore it at our peril. Charmaine Yabsley gets top tips from green living experts on how to bring the outside in.
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1. Touch and be touched

“Connect with your body and also with the body of the earth,” says life coach Deborah Lange. “Walk barefoot, wherever possible, on grass, sand, rocks, and soil. And touch your own body – run your hands over your arms, legs, torso; give yourself a scalp and neck massage. Instead of a coffee break, take a nature break and stand or sit outside for 10 minutes, allowing yourself to simply breathe, listen, and notice birdsong, beetles, and the breeze. Be surprised and delighted at how your body tension eases, and clarity falls softly around you.”

2. Think laterally

“The more connected I am with nature, the happier, more inspired and productive I become,” says wellness coach Naomi Arnold. “However, as a mum and business owner, I can’t go bush- or beach-walking as often as I’d like. I actively seek ways to infuse nature in my life and work; for example, wearing an earthy-scented essential oil instead of perfume, keeping a vase of pretty weeds from my morning walk on my desk, and using bark and dried flowers to create art.”

3. Re-establish rhythm

“Avoid backlit devices – tablets, smartphones, laptops – for one hour before bed,” advises osteopath Claire Richardson. This artificial light stimulates our brains. Keep your bedroom as dark as possible and ensure the temperature is comfortable. I also suggest patients try a couple of drops of lavender essential oil on their pillow to help them drift off.”

4. Feed yourself

“Every bit of incidental exercise helps, so even if you’re tired and it’s late, cooking dinner means that you’re standing and active for at least 30 minutes, and probably eating healthier food than a cheese-laden takeaway,” adds Richardson.

5. Love local

“Growing your own produce ensures you’re not eating harmful chemicals, and it’s wonderful to earth yourself by digging and weeding,” says Emma Rein, director of Musq Cosmetics. “If you haven’t the space or inclination to grow your own food, visit your local farmers’ market, where you can find seasonal, organic produce and meet the people who actually grow what you eat.”

6. Discover green pockets

“If I can’t get out of town for a hiking weekend, I compromise by taking a short adventure,” says Neil Fahey, founder of Bushwalking Blog. “The

Meet our experts



Deborah Lange, life coach, www.deblange.com



Naomi Arnold, life and wellness coach, www.projectthehealthyhappy.me



Claire Richardson, osteopath, www.stkildaosteopathy.com.au



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Neil Fahey, founder, Bushwalking Blog, www.bushwalkingblog.com.au



Emily Holmes, wellness coach, www.conscious-foodie.com



The New Joneses, www.thenewjoneses.com



Keri Krieger, rock-acupuncturist, www.kerikrieger.com



Francois Razavet, chef, www.solarsprings.com.au



Clint Bauer, fitness coach, www.primalinfluence.com



Dr Jodi Richardson, Happier on Purpose, www.drjodirichardson.com.au



Heather Borkowski, sensory explorations guide, www.heatherborkowski.com

The beauty of exercising in nature is that your body, mind, and spirit are all engaged in the activity – something no gym program can offer.

suburbs hide more remnant bushland than you realise. Do a Google search, and explore walking or bike tracks, creeks and parks. At one stage, my nature deficit was so bad that I made a terrarium (complete with waterfall!) so that I could have a bit of bushland, right there in my kitchen.”

7. Be positive about the negative

“We feel refreshed after being outdoors because nature is highly charged with negative ions,” explains wellness coach Emily Holmes. “Negative ions relieve stress, increase immunity, and enhance vitality. Unfortunately, our bodies aren’t exposed to them enough, being surrounded by electronic devices and environmental pollutants which emit positive ions.”

8. Go raw

“Avoid processed foods and eat food as close to raw and in its natural form as possible,” say The New Joneses, who promote ‘keeping up with’ a stylish, sustainable lifestyle. “We advocate supporting sustainable food producing systems, buying from local, independent producers, and using composting and worm farms to send vital nutrients from food waste back into the soil.”

9. Look up

“You can easily lose connection with nature if you go from home to your car and to work, and then back again without ever setting foot on anything other than concrete,” says Keri Krieger, rock-acupuncturist. “Send a memo to yourself: Look UP! Even surrounded by skyscrapers, you are guaranteed to see crazy cloud shapes, a stunning sunset, and birds.”

10. Grow your own

“As a chef, I know how important it is to have fresh, flavourful ingredients,” says Francois Razavet of Solar Springs. “At Solar Springs, we have our own vegetable garden, and being able to pull produce right before we serve them to guests helps me feel connected, not just to nature, but to our region.”

11. Take it outside

“Instead of working out in the gym, do your routine in nature, with a twist,” says fitness coach Clint Bauer. “Find your closest patch of nature and adjust your training to it. For instance, if you’re near a creek, pick up rocks or branches and

carry them as you walk through and alongside the creek. If your workout spot is a beach, do some crawling and push-ups on the hard and soft sand, noting the difference.”

12. Come to your senses

“Spend time outside using your senses,” adds Bauer. “As you’re walking, ask yourself: What can I smell? What do I hear? What do I see? Not just nearby, but in the distance, too. Gaze off into the horizon, and let your imagination wander.”

13. See as a child

“Walking in nature with my children reminds me of the importance of finding mindful moments,” says Dr Jodi Richardson, of Happier on Purpose. “We play a game where we look for something ‘new, beautiful, or unseen’; and we take long, slow breaths in through our noses and then out – hah! – through our mouths, really smelling the air and sensing it giving our bodies energy. And if it’s raining, we taste the rain on our tongues!”

14. Take just 10

“Gift yourself a 10-minute sensory mini-adventure,” says Heather Borkowski, sensory explorations guide. “Get off your bus one stop early. Before setting out, set a conscious intention of what you want to notice. It can be whatever you want: weeds poking up from the footpath, red flowers, or different scents. Setting an intention brings your awareness out of your head and into your body, allowing you to notice things you would otherwise walk past unconsciously. As you walk, change your route to mix things up.”

15. Climb a tree

“Seriously – do it!” says yoga teacher Charlotte Dodson. “It’s exhilarating to sit on a branch and swing your feet, and look up through the leaves at the sky. Spending time in nature greatly improves the quality of your daily life. Take part in outdoor activities that make your heart sing. Feel the ground beneath you – the luscious soft grass or the delicate sand – and reach up your arms to the sun above, feel the breeze on your face. Breathe in the calm serenity and stillness of the natural world, and give yourself the opportunity to really experience the deep energy of our land.”

16. Do nothing

“Take time every day to just sit in nature and simply be,” says Karina Stewart, cofounder of Kamalaya Spa. “Even if it’s just for a few moments, it helps you to reconnect to yourself and to the life around you, and gratitude arises within you naturally as a result. I find mini-immersions in nature like this most supportive; I allow all of my senses to expand, as if I am literally soaking up the natural energy from my surroundings, grounding me firmly in the present moment and re-establishing a clear perspective.”

17. Collect and create

“Pack a simple art kit – glue, scissors, watercolours, brushes, blank paper,” says artist Nicola Newman. “Choose a natural location that inspires you and let your eyes be drawn to the small details – lichen, moss, feathers, pebbles, shells. Collect dried leaves or other items that speak to you, then begin by moving a couple of your found objects around on a blank page. Once you’re happy with the composition, glue them down, and then paint images or words that continue to tell the story.”

18. Support natural beauty

“When you use certified organic personal care and beauty products, you minimise your environmental footprint,” says Therese Kerr, founder of The Divine Company. “However, remember that ‘natural’ and ‘organic’ don’t always mean natural and organic. Only by checking the certification and ingredients list can you ensure such claims are legitimate. Real natural and organic products will never include sulphates, parabens, petrochemicals, or other non-naturally occurring chemicals, and they always carry the certified organic logo from ACO (Australian Certified Organic). Organic certification also ensures that the product was created without synthetic pesticides, herbicides, hormones, or antibiotics, reducing your exposure to chemicals, and also their impact on the environment.”

19. Add photographs

“Surround yourself with tranquil, balancing and harmonising interiors that are inspired by

nature,” says photographer Katische Haberfeld. “Be purposeful in your choice of paint colours – green is restful, soothing the emotions and healing the heart. And add lush photographs of rainforest and tropical plants.”

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20. Have a green screen

“An easy way to connect with nature in the workplace is to have a ‘green’-themed screensaver of plants or flowers,” says Alexandra Allen, founder of Workplaces of Wellbeing. “Put a plant on your desk, and have framed photographs of outdoor images nearby. Always try to take the time to take your shoes and stockings off and go barefoot in a nearby park at lunch-time. Some companies are even open to the idea of having a grass ‘mat’ available for employees to ground themselves!”

21. Book it in

“Designate and diarise big chunks of time out in nature, as well as daily incidental ‘top-ups,’” says mojo mentor Jo Brown. “And be mindful about your practice of connection: whether it’s a beach or bush walk, a swim, or a weekend escape to the mountains or a national park, do some of it in silence and intersperse it with moments of complete stillness and pause. This cultivates a deeper awareness and appreciation of the sensations around and within you. Getting nurtured by nature is a powerful elixir for releasing toxicity, and getting present. The American Institute of Biological Sciences has established that there are clear links between how much time we spend outside and our wellbeing.”

Meet our experts



Charlotte Dodson, yoga teacher, www.charlottedodson.tv



Karina Stewart, co-founder of Kamalaya Spa, www.kamalaya.com



Nicola Newman, artist, www.nicolanewman.com



Therese Kerr, founder, The Divine Company, www.divinebytheresekerr.com



Katische Haberfeld, photographer, www.katische.com



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