

Bringing back the joy of childhood



**Or why regular time outdoors
should be made a part
of children's education**

Kids Go Outdoor is a project of the Foundation for Child Development aimed at parents, primary schools, and preschool institutions. We encourage adults to take children on regular outdoor trips once a week to explore the world of nature regardless of the weather. Contact with nature will boost children's energy, the joy of social interactions, and curiosity about the world.

Why is it so important?

Children who spend a lot of time alone at home:

They lose contact with their milieu and find it difficult to build their own identity. Children build their identity and personality by interacting with others – adults and other children. These interactions must be based on genuine contact, in the spirit of freedom, attention, and care. Without trying out their ideas and actions in the real world, young children cannot build a true self-image or learn to solve problems.

Their brains develop less effectively. A child's brain develops through interactions. These interactions shape the architecture of the brain. Children who have no opportunities for interacting with others cannot properly develop their executive brain functions. These executive functions include impulse control, concentration, and remembering.

They spoil their eyesight. Even without looking at screens. They do not focus on far-away objects.

They do not move enough. A sedentary lifestyle deforms their spines and weakens their muscles.

They feel tired and bored. They do not enjoy education (especially online) and have no motivation to learn.

More and more they feel that **they won't have a happy and carefree childhood.**



It is essential for children to regularly spend time together in nature:

Because it builds up their physical resilience and mental strength

Children who play and learn in natural environments have a richer microflora – their digestive systems work better, and they are more immune to pathogens.



It is through supportive interactions that children can build the ability to adapt and develop despite continued stress, building up the resilience to face life's current and future challenges.



Because it is conducive to children's development and alleviates developmental problems

Children who play in a natural environment become more energetic and relaxed at the same time

They are more cautious and focused, their senses are sharper while the minds are calmer.

Those who cannot sit still can run around freely; those who are less vigorous can watch the world undisturbed.



Multiple research projects have confirmed the beneficial effect of nature on children

Children who have contact with nature (even if they just see it through the window) score higher on concentration and self-discipline tests. The greener the setting, the better the scores → **Wells, 2000; Taylor et al., 2002.**

Children who regularly play in natural environments have better motor skills, better coordination, balance, and agility, and are sick less often → **Grahn et al., 1997; Fjortoft & Sageie, 2001.**

Children with ADHD symptoms show better concentration after contact with nature → **Taylor et al., 2001.**

Children's play in natural environments is more diverse, imaginative, and creative, fostering children's language and collaborative skills → **Moore and Wong, 1997; Taylor, et al. 1998; Fjortoft, 2000.**

Exposure to natural environments improves children's cognitive development by increasing their awareness, reasoning, and observational skills → **Pyle, 2002.**

Nature reduces the effects of stress on children and allows them to cope with life's hardships. The greater the exposure to nature, the greater the benefits → **Wells & Evans, 2003.**

Children who play in diverse natural environments are much less likely to engage in negative peer interactions (such

as harassment or bullying) → **Malone & Tranter, 2003.**

Nature helps children develop powers of observation and creativity, as well as a sense of peace and being at one with the world → **Crain, 2001.**

Early experiences with the natural world have been positively linked with the development of imagination and the sense of wonder (Cobb, 1977; Louv, 1991). And wonder is an important motivator for life-long learning → **Wilson, 1997.**

Children who play in nature have more positive feelings about each other → **Moore, 1996.**

Natural environments stimulate social interaction between children → **Moore, 1986; Bixler et al. 2002.**

Natural environments stimulate children's independence and autonomy → **Bartlett, 1996.**

Play in outdoor environments stimulates all aspects of child development more readily than indoor environments → **Moore and Wong, 1997.**

An affinity to and love of nature, along with a positive environmental ethic, grow out of regular contact with and play in the natural world during early childhood. If children become disconnected from the natural world, the future generations may develop biophobia, and people will lose interest in nature and in protecting natural diversity → **Bunting & Cousins, 1985; Chawla, 1988; Wilson, 1993; Pyle, 1993; Chipeniuk, 1994; Sobel, 1996, 2002 and 2004; Hart, 1997; Wilson, 1997; Kals et al., 1999; Moore & Cosco, 2000; Fisman, 2001; Kellert, 2002; Bixler et al., 2002; Kals & Ittner, 2003; Schultz et al., 2004.**



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