



FAMILIES TACKLING TOUGH TIMES TOGETHER

Wellness Wednesday

What does science tell us are the health benefits of contact with nature? Both children and adults can gain benefits from spending time interacting with nature. For example, being out in nature for even a short, leisurely walk lowers heart rate, blood pressure, and decreases stress responses. Nature walkers also report more positive mood and lower anxiety. Taking a walk in a park, even in winter, results in better short-term memory and attention for both kids and adults and can improve concentration for children with ADHD.

Gratitude Walk

When the world feels out of control, or when you are going through a challenging time, taking a gratitude walk can help clear your mind and relieve stress. Make some time today to walk. Maybe it is a walk around the block, or maybe it is a walk to the corner, but take a few minutes to walk outside if possible. Walking is therapeutic in itself. If you are unable to walk on your own, can you take an assisted walk or stroll with help from a caregiver or loved one?

Live in a city? Find a local park, consider stepping outside on a break to sit near a fountain, or just hop off the bus a stop early and walk the last bit home.

While walking:

- What do you hear? What are the sounds around you? Do you hear birds, cars, or the neighbor's dog? Take it all in.
- What do you see? What colors are around you? What shapes do you see?
- What do you smell around you? Do you smell flowers? Are the smells pleasant? What does it smell like right after it rains?
- Notice what it feels like for your feet to touch the ground as you walk or if you stop to touch a tree or a flower with your hands. Are you walking with your shoes on or off? Is the surface you are walking on hard or soft?

Gratitude walks can be done alone, with a friend, a family member, or a caregiver. Research suggests that walking has various health benefits including improving one's overall sense of wellbeing and mood. Socially-distanced outdoor walking groups may also strengthen social connections. A gratitude walk is simply the act of walking with a calm, present and grateful state of mind.

Dimensions of Wellness Related to Gratitude Walks

- Physical
- Emotional
- Social (for group walks)
- Spiritual
- Environmental

