

Alex 0:00

Hi, and welcome to Seeing Climate Change. The podcast explores climate change the visual art, personal reflection, science and conversation. I'm Alex and as always, I'm joined with my co host Hannah.

Hannah 0:28

In this episode inspired by the William Benton Museum of Art's Seeing Climate Change exhibition, Dominique Spitzer explores the relationship between our mental health and spending time in nature. Take care of yourselves.

Dominique (for the rest of the episode) 0:41

Welcome to nurturing your nature. My name is Dominic Switzer. In today's episode, I will first go over the science behind nature and mental health, as climate change is no longer just an environmental issue, it's a mental health crisis as well.

1:03

The science behind nature and mental health. Nature's influence on our mental health has been a topic of increasing interest in recent years. Research is shedding light on the numerous ways in which our natural surroundings can positively affect our mind. To help us navigate this fascinating realm, we'll be diving into the science behind it all. So how exactly does nature impact our mental health, is a question that was asked by Dr. Roger Ulrich who conducted a stress study, where he instructed a group of mildly stressed participants to view sets of colorful slides. One group saw nature scenes with lots of vegetation and trees, while another group viewed city landscapes with little to no vegetation. Self readings a positive affect, including elation and affection were greater in those subjects that viewed the natural vegetative scenery. Negative feelings such as fear were lower in the nature groups as well. Additionally, urban viewers experienced increases in aggravation, anxiety, and feelings of sadness.

Some of you may be wondering, how exactly can you incorporate nature into your daily life, I thought it would be best to first introduce you to an initiative called I Thrive Naturally. I Thrive Naturally is a two week initiative organized by NatureRX at UConn to boost scientific understanding of the benefits of spending time outside and to promote the many ways to engage with nature on the UConn campus at Storrs. On this website, students can submit photos with short captions of how they experience nature. In this episode, I'll be reading to you some of the submissions that were posted onto NatureRX.

One of the submissions was posted by Arcadia, where they wrote, "this is a photo of a tree that although I had fallen still had boots in the ground, and continued to grow upwards of excited and fascinated me and remind me of how cool and resilient nature is."

The second submission was posted by Karina where they said, "I was sitting down to take a break and admire this pretty flower that I saw while hiking and this little baby came up to it and hung out with me for a few minutes. I don't know how to put this feeling into words, but it kind of made me realize that we are completely different beings with different goals and lives and

everything. We both stopped to rest with this flower for a few moments. It was a quiet magical moment."

The last submission that we'll be mentioning on this episode was posted by Samantha where they said, "this gorgeous pasture floor was hiding in the back of the greenhouse. And I would never seen it if I had not looked close enough. This interaction made me reflect on life and how fast days go by. If we'd like to take a second to stop and smell the roses, we can miss out on beautiful moments."

The art of noticing is something that everyone should take the time to learn because it's truly an amazing experience. Now that you have heard a voice other people have experienced and appreciate the nature, some practical ways you can do the same, or by taking a walk in a nearby park or biking instead of driving for short trips to immerse yourself in the natural surroundings. Also consider creating a home garden. Even if you have limited space. You can go a small garden on your balcony or window so long plants flowers or herbs can bring nature into your daily routine. You can even do something as simple as eating outdoors such as having a picnic, or you can have your breakfast lunch or dinner in your backyard on the balcony or on a nearby green space to enjoy your meals in a natural setting.

After hearing about the ways you can incorporate nature into your daily lives, you may be wondering, how exactly can you benefit from nature. Eco therapy has been shown to improve sleep and reduce stress, increase happiness and reduce negative emotion shunts promote positive emotions and social interactions such as calmness, joy, creativity, and facilitate concentration. It can even help generate a sense of meaning to life. Research done by the Mental Health Foundation has shown that especially during the COVID 19 pandemic, being outdoors in nature or just being in green spaces, such as parks how nearly half of the people in the UK to cope from stress, people interacting with nature made their stress levels go down and their well being rise exponentially. We have now come to the end of this episode on nurturing nature.

I hope you enjoyed listening and learning and incorporate what you have learned into your daily lives.

Hannah 5:50

Thank you for listening! Check out the show notes for more information about the topics covered in this episode and for a link to the William Benton Museum of Art's website.

Alex 5:58

The Benton is the official art museum for the state of Connecticut and admission is always free for all visitors. The museum is located on the University of Connecticut's Storrs campus and is open Tuesday through Friday from 10am to 4pm. And Saturday and Sunday from 1pm to 4pm. But make sure to check the website for updated hours before you arrive. We encourage you to visit!

Hannah 6:19

The scene climate change Podcast is a production of the fall 2023 cohort of the Digital Media and Design and History departments' course, "Collaborating with Cultural Institutions" taught by Professor Clarissa Ceglio. This podcast was produced in collaboration with the William Benton Museum of Art and with the support of WHUS radio. The series theme music was composed and performed by our own Alexander Filippides.

Alex 6:45

Before we sign off, we hope that you will check out the other episodes in this series. Thank you again and see you in the next episode.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>