GOOD DECISIONS - The Benefits of the Great Outdoors

**By Christina A. Worthington**

Recognizing that the weather is getting warmer, June serves as Great Outdoors Month and also is the national month for camping! While traditional camping is not everyone’s cup of tea, it has benefits that you can take advantage of.

**Learn a new skill.** The learning possibilities are endless when it comes to the great outdoors. Explore nature by learning to identify species of wildlife or plants and trees. Lie on your back looking up at the stars to see how many constellations you can identify. Try sharpening your survival skills by building a fire, pitching a tent, or fishing. Whatever your interests are, you are likely to find an adventure you will enjoy in the wilderness.

**Improve your health.** Health benefits may be the first thing you thought of when beginning to read this article. That is probably because the health benefits of camping are plentiful! Camping can be physically demanding if you are setting up a campsite or participating in activities like hiking, swimming, or biking. But it can also be a vacation for your mind. Exposure to natural environments is linked to lower stress levels and a decrease in depressive thoughts.
Take time to unplug. It is no secret that we live in a society consumed by technology and media. While those things come with convenience, they also become exhausting and time-consuming. It is not uncommon to lose cell phone reception or Wi-Fi when enjoying the outdoors. Take advantage of this quiet time to get lost in your favorite novel, draw in a sketchbook, or meditate. Sometimes you just need to be offline and off the grid.

Maybe you prefer an RV over a pop-up tent, or an air mattress over a sleeping bag. Whichever type of camper you are, I can promise you will feel a sense of restoration and environmental connectedness after spending time in the wilderness!