

WELLNESS CONNECTION

LIVE WELL. WORK WELL.

JULY 2020

HEALTHY HARMONY - Nature is Good for You



Photo Credit: Jacqueline Billhymer

By Jackie Billhymer

Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you.

~ Frank Lloyd Wright

When we talk about wellness, eating right, exercising and finding ways to reduce stress (yoga, for example) are all common ways to be a happy, healthier you. We are advised to get enough nutrients such as vitamins D, C, A, B-12, magnesium, iron, calcium...the list goes on. While it is important to meet your recommended daily allowance, you should also get a daily dose of nature.

Countless studies support the health and mental benefits of the great outdoors. The National Park Service's [Healthy Park Healthy People](#) cites evidence that parks have a direct correlation to improved health and wellbeing. Spending time in nature is shown to improve concentration, memory, heart health, reduce attention fatigue (hello, Zoom meetings!), and so much more. As little as five minutes walking in nature can improve your mood and reduce stress.

A perfect summertime activity to get out and enjoy nature is camping. Whether you are camping with a tent in your backyard or with all the amenities of home in a campground on the lake, camping in Illinois is easy. Illinois has numerous [parks](#) where camping is available. My family and I took our hybrid camper to [Starved Rock State Park](#) in LaSalle County last October [see picture above]. I was surprised that it is only a little over an hour straight north of Bloomington. There are plenty of trails and the scenery is magnificent.

We took this weekend adventure in the middle of the busiest six-week period of work that I have ever had. At first, I was reluctant to go away for the weekend. How could I? I had so much to do! My husband was insistent that it was what our family needed. Waking up to birds chirping and stepping outside to fresh morning air was the perfect start to each day we were there. We had the best time, and he was right (but please don't tell him I said that).

Camping is just one example of something fun to try this summer. We are lucky to have many nature parks right here in our area – Lake of the Woods in Mahomet, Homer Lake, Kickapoo State Recreation Area in Oakwood and one of my favorites, Allerton Park in Monticello. Or, go a little further! Make sure to check out the national and state park resources in this month's interview. The websites provide great information about planning a visit to one of our extraordinary parks.

Whatever you do this summer, try to incorporate activities in nature and [let us know](#) if you experience an improvement in your health and wellbeing!

