

Ask an Expert – Celebrate Park and Recreation Month by Spending Time Outdoors

Emma Parkhurst

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Research shows that spending time in nature promotes physical and emotional health. Since July is National Park and Recreation Month, consider celebrating it by spending more time outdoors. Whether you take a break outside during the workday, visit a park in the evening or hike a nature trail on the weekend, the benefits are numerous. And when time outside is paired with activity, mental and physical health improve more than when compared to doing indoor activities. So – take it outside!

Benefits of spending time in nature include a decrease in high blood pressure, anxiety, negative thinking and lowered levels of depression and stress. Studies also show that outside time is associated with better cognitive development, and spending time in parks generally translates to being more physically active.

The takeaway? Getting active in the great outdoors can do wonders for overall well-being. Consider these ideas to include more outside time in your day.

* At work: Be intentional with breaks. Whether you pencil in regular breaks once every two hours or take advantage of any downtime, head outside for a brain boost. Recruit a coworker and do a lap around your building, pop in your headphones and explore a nearby neighborhood, or take your lunch to the park.

* At home: Add outdoor time to routines. Many of us have morning or evening routines that help us get through the week. Look at your routines to see where you can add

some outside time. Go on a family walk after dinner, spend time in your garden or practice a mindful exercise outside.

* Want something new? Join a Park RX Utah contest for an outdoor opportunity. Do you already spend time outside, but you're looking for something new? Visit [Park RX Utah](#) to participate in a contest designed to get you outside, or check out their Outdoor Opportunities calendar to find an event near you.

Still looking for more ideas? Check out this article by Eva Timothy, USU Extension assistant professor, [Improving Health Through Time Spent in Nature](#).

By: Emma Parkhurst, Utah State University Extension assistant professor – health and wellness, Emma.Parkhurst@usu.edu