

How To Calm Quarantine Frustrations While Remote Working

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The types of news outlets, TV shows, movies, magazines, and newspapers we consume on a regular basis frame our perspective and impact our mental health and well-being. Long-standing research shows that chronic TV watchers and news followers have elevated fears because the events they observe start to seem as if they are happening outside their front door. And once we consume too much chronic, negative, and catastrophic information, we can't put the toothpaste back in the tube. It stays in our minds, forming a template for how we think, feel, and respond to seismic events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, scientists have found an antidote: watching nature documentaries.

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Scientists have amassed a body of research that shows exposure to natural green spaces such as parks, woodlands, mountains, and beaches has healing properties on your mental and physical health and well-being. It reduces anxiety and rumination and improves depression. Living in greener urban areas is linked to lower incidences of heart disease, obesity, diabetes, asthma, mental distress, and mortality rates. The decades-old Japanese practice of forest bathing or *shinrin-yoku* (which means "taking in the forest") is believed to provide stress reduction, relaxation, and deeper insights into life. Scientists have discovered that forest bathing lowers cortisol and depression in adults and boosts the activity of killer cells that fight off infection and cancer.

A groundbreaking 2019 study in *Scientific Reports* found that spending a minimum of two hours a week in parks, woodlands, or beaches promotes physical and mental health and well-being and gives you a bigger perspective of your life circumstances. In the study, those who spent 120 minutes per week had better health and higher psychological well-being than the ones who didn't spend any weekly time in nature or those who spent less than 120 minutes per week. The lead author, Mathew White, reported that it doesn't matter how the 120 minutes are achieved. It can be done in one block or spread out over the entire week to get the benefit. It doesn't seem to matter what activity you're involved in, either, as long as you're outdoors: sailing, biking, kayaking, walking or tennis.

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American journalist Richard Louv coined the term "nature-deficit disorder" to describe the human costs of living disproportionately indoors alienated from nature. Hence, the importance of connecting with nature and letting it transport and calm you—infuse you with mental clarity to replace the stress and recharge your batteries. Studies show that simply viewing an aspect of nature from an office window is restorative. Patients with a view of nature from their hospital window heal quicker than patients without a nature view. Studies also show that bringing nature indoors does the trick. If you live in an urban area, you can bring in potted green plants, fresh flowers, or a terrarium. And research shows that a tabletop trickling waterfall, an aquarium, fishbowl, or a CD with nature sounds contain stress-relieving and restorative properties.

One of the most recent studies indicates that you can get nature's benefits without even leaving your sofa, that simply watching a nature documentary reduces anxiety and raises your mood. Psychologist Dacher Keltner of the University of California, Berkeley collaborated on a study with the BBC Worldwide. The study, known as [The Real Happiness Project](#), was a joint effort between Keltner and the British Broadcast Company's (BBC) in-house research team. The study included over 7,500 nationally represented participants from numerous countries who watched footage from *Planet Earth 2*. Scientists used cutting-edge facial mapping technology to measure emotional responses to the nature videos before and after participants viewed them. Results showed substantial decreases in stress, nervousness, anxiety, fear, stress, and fatigue and significant increases in relaxation, contentment, excitement, enthusiasm, joy, and awe.

All the nature studies conducted to date demonstrate that access to nature—both outdoors in natural settings and indoors through filmed footage, paintings, and photographs—can help people manage the stress and anxiety of modern life, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.