



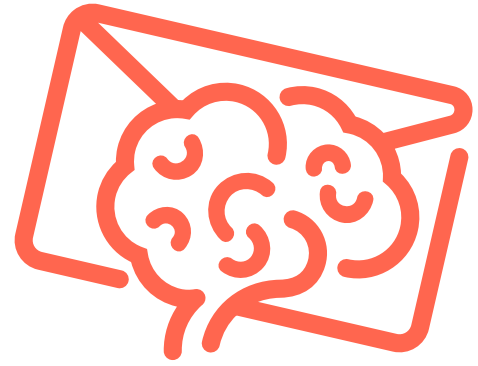
“What are the benefits of nature on brain health?”

ÉRIC

49 years old, Roberval (Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean)



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Mother Nature nurtures the brain

The science is in! Nature appears to have a positive impact on brain health. Spending time in natural environments (forests, parks, gardens, etc.) **may improve attention, working memory,** and other cognitive functions, in addition to **reducing mental fatigue.**

Could doctors soon be prescribing walks in the woods to prevent brain aging? The idea may not be as far-fetched as it sounds. Doctors in Canada can now prescribe national park passes to patients suffering from anxiety or depression. In Japan, the practice of “forest bathing” (*shinrin-yoku*) is becoming increasingly popular as a **stress relief method.** Many researchers have studied this phenomenon and observed significant benefits among the Japanese.

Should we literally be hugging trees?

According to one unconventional theory, simply wrapping your arms around a tree is enough to enhance your well-being. Interesting... though there is no proof to support it! One thing is for sure: **contact with nature is extremely effective at reducing anxiety** and improving one’s mood. It’s associated with decreased levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, in the body.

Numerous studies describe the relaxing effects of nature; some have even found that it alleviates depression. Furthermore, the more prolonged the contact, the greater the benefits.

Contact with nature also improves cardiovascular health (decrease in heart rate and blood pressure).

MORE GREEN = LESS LONELY?

This concept has not been widely studied, but some research indeed suggests that it holds true. According to a Dutch study involving 10,089 participants, people who live in an area with few green spaces feel lonelier than those who live in a more natural environment.⁰¹ To be continued!

01. [Maas et coll \(2009\)](#). Cited in [Les bienfaits de la nature sur la santé globale](#), a report produced for Sépaq by the EPIC Centre at the Montreal Heart Institute (2021).