

Ten Ways to Connect with Nature in Daily Life

This handout provides general tips for how to connect with nature wherever you are—even in the midst of a city—followed by suggestions linked to specific times of the day and common activities. It is excerpted from the book *Poems of Earth and Spirit: 70 Poems and 40 Practices to Deepen Your Connection with Nature* by Kai Siedenburg

PoemsofEarthandSpirit.com

OurNatureConnection.com

1. Start where you are.

Notice how the natural world is part of your everyday life, even in the midst of a city—in food, water, plants, animals, daily and seasonal cycles, your own body, and more. Simply bringing awareness to the presence of nature around you will strengthen your connection. Notice which aspects of nature you are instinctively drawn to, and find ways to say “yes” to them, even just for a few moments.

2. Go screen-free.

Take breaks from electronic devices, especially when you’re outside. Turn off or silence your device, put it away, or (better yet) leave it behind so you can unhook the electronic leash and be more fully present. Enjoy observing and exploring the world around you, tuning into the presence of plants, birds, clouds, and other natural beauty.

3. Go for the green and blue.

Look for opportunities to be near trees, plants, and water, and to notice and appreciate their company. Choose walking, biking, and driving routes with more green and blue. Eat some of your meals outside and/or near plants or water. Grow a garden or bring living plants into your home and work space. Gaze softly at green plants (indoors or out) for quick breaks, and venture out into green space for longer breaks.

4. Bring it outside.

Begin with something you already do, bring it out to a park or beautiful outdoor setting, and enhance your enjoyment and the health benefits. A few great options: exercise, meals, reading, writing, yoga, meditation, and sharing time with friends or family. Or simply step outside during the day, feel the sun or breeze on your skin, take in the sights and sounds, and notice what draws your attention in a pleasing way.

5. Bring the outside in.

Having nature images or natural treasures in your indoor environment or visualizing yourself in a peaceful outdoor setting will help you stay connected with nature and the special places you love. You’ll also receive some of the physical and mental health benefits of actually being in those places.

6. Move your body.

Your own body is a natural wonder. Movement is essential to keep it happy and healthy and to support your natural intelligence and vitality. Exercising outside quickly multiplies the benefits and motivates you to keep moving—even just a brief walk makes a difference. Find opportunities to move your body regularly, daily if possible—especially ones that take you outdoors or bring you joy.

7. Make friends.

Walk or bike around your neighborhood or sit quietly outside and meet your natural neighbors, observing them with friendly curiosity. You might be surprised to discover how many fascinating more-than-human neighbors you have. Notice if there are particular trees, animals, or natural places you feel drawn to. Find ways to communicate and tend your connection with them. They can become dear friends and powerful allies if you give them a chance.

8. Give thanks.

Every day, we receive many beautiful and useful gifts from the natural world, mostly without noticing. Look for opportunities to appreciate these gifts more, even just for a few moments. You might pause to give thanks for a meal, a sunset, or a lovely flower. Consider keeping a gratitude journal or writing a thank-you letter to the Earth or to a plant, animal, or place that is special to you. The more you feel and express your gratitude, the more it will nourish you.

9. Connect and conserve.

Your daily lifestyle choices can strengthen your connection with nature and protect it at the same time by getting you outside, using human and green power, and reducing resource consumption. A few examples: biking or walking rather than driving; using a clothesline instead of a dryer; eating local, seasonal, wild, and/or organic foods; gardening and growing some of your own food; and composting. Linking your daily actions with love for the Earth makes them more satisfying and meaningful.

10. Make it part of your day.

Integrating your nature connection practices with regular events or times of day makes them more doable and reminds you to do them. You might pause to greet a tree that you walk by on your way to work, visit your garden for a few minutes when you come home, or thank the plants and animals who made your dinner possible. Consider this an essential wellness practice to integrate into your day, like eating meals or brushing your teeth. A little bit of mindful nature connection, even in the midst of a city, can go a surprisingly long way.

Here are some examples of how to integrate nature connection with everyday life, based on the above tips:

In the early morning...

- Greet the day. Notice the sunrise, sky, and weather. Take a few deep breaths and perhaps give thanks or affirm your intentions for the day.
- Step outside, breathe in the air, and take in the sights and sounds. Notice if birds or other natural neighbors are out and about.
- If you have a garden, visit your plants and see what they're up to, and maybe water or tend them a bit.
- Go for a walk or exercise outdoors. You'll think and feel better during the day and sleep better at night.
- Do a nature meditation or visualization. You can use a recording or simply picture yourself in a peaceful, beautiful setting; tune into what you see, hear, and feel around you; and drink it in.
- If you're cultivating relationships with particular allies in the natural world, you can call them in, thank them for their gifts, and invite their support and guidance.

During the work day...

- Include living plants, natural objects, or nature images in your workspace, in places where you will see them regularly.
- Take actual breaks so you can return to your tasks with renewed energy, focus, and creativity—even micro-breaks make a difference. (Be aware: looking at a screen is not a real break!)
- For brief breaks, look up from your work or device and focus softly on something natural or beautiful—an indoor plant or nature image, or trees or clouds outside the window. If you've been sitting, stand up and stretch or move around.
- For longer breaks, walk or move your body; ideally in a setting with green plants, water, or other natural elements. Take meal breaks outside or near a window with a view when you can.

While you're walking outside...

- Turn off your device or leave it behind and notice your surroundings. Your walk will be safer, more enjoyable, and more revitalizing.
- Open your senses and awareness and explore the world around you. Look up, down, and all around. Notice and enjoy what's happening in the present moment—you may discover unexpected delights.
- Try on different routes to your usual spots—make it a mini-adventure!
- Tune into the presence of the natural world around you. Notice seasonal changes like the first spring blossoms or fall colors. Greet some of your natural neighbors—smile at a bird or say hello to a tree.
- Spot beauty, even in small things or unlikely places. Pause to appreciate a lovely flower, plant, or butterfly and let it nourish you.
- Marvel at everyday wonders of the world like plants growing, birds flying, and dewdrops making rainbows in the sun.

While you're driving or traveling...

- Choose routes with more plants, trees, or water, ideally without increasing your carbon footprint.
- Tune into the presence of nature when it's safe to do so. While you're at a red light or stuck in traffic, see if you can find something natural or beautiful to look at. (Give those median plants some love!)
- When you arrive somewhere, take in your surroundings, noticing the presence of the natural world.

At mealtimes...

- Before you enjoy a meal, pause to notice the food on your plate and the abundance it represents. As you eat, appreciate the flavors, textures, and aromas.
- Picture the plants, animals, and people who made your meal possible and send them some gratitude.
- Speak words of thanksgiving for your meal, your day, and your companions, or share a nature connection moment from your day.

Near the end of the day...

- Notice the sunset, the moon, and the night sky. Step or sit outside to observe them and feel the night air.
- Give thanks for some of the gifts you received from the Earth that day.
- Journal or share with a loved one about something you're grateful for, or a nature experience from your day.
- Do a nature meditation or visualization (see early morning tips).
- Read a few poems (perhaps from the book you are holding in your hands) or a story that invites you into the natural world.