

NATURE IS MY FAMILY'S...



RESET *Increase Patience and Focus*

Just 20 min outside recharges the brain's "battery," increasing patience and improving communication.

Researchers studied mothers and daughters spending time together in natural spaces. Families noticed improved communication and that they got along better. (Izenstark & Ebata)

Nature Walk: Take a short walk together in the evening. Make it a game to see who can see the most birds, or greet the most neighbors - make it your own!



TEAM-BUILDER *Build Trust*

"Challenging recreation, no matter the level of intensity, can improve parent-adolescent communication." (Huff & Widmer)

"Challenging" outdoor recreation - activities like hiking a new trail or learning to fish - shift the family dynamic. This leads to more open talking and higher levels of trust. If you want your teen to talk to you, get them moving side-by-side on a trail.



Scrambling: Scrambling means using your hands to navigate over boulders on the trail. Try beginner-friendly trails with light scrambling. Only experienced adventurers should attempt steep trails with challenging scrambling sections.



MUSE *Inspire Wonder*

Children who spend 5 -10 hrs a week in nature develop a strong sense of "Awe." (Wieren & Kellert)

"Awe" helps us feel like we are part of a bigger world, leading to greater feelings of purpose and less "me-centered" thinking.



Nature Mindfulness: Find a comfortable spot to sit outside. Focus on what you see. Then, direct your attention to each of your other senses (touch, smell, etc.). Can you name three things you observe with each sense? Try this activity during different seasons, and notice what changes and what stays the same.



CO-AUTHOR *Make Memories*

Families need two types of fun: "Core" (predictable daily play) and "Balance" (out-of-the-ordinary adventure). (Townsend, Van Puymbroeck, & Zabriskie)

Out-of-the-ordinary adventures, like camping or exploring a Utah canyon, are what families remember most. The stories you tell about "that time it rained while we were hiking" become the glue that holds your family identity together.

State Parks: Find your local state park and plan a visit - there are 46 throughout Utah, many with Jr. Ranger programs. Who knows? You might just build some family memories that you'll tell stories about for years to come!



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DISCONNECT *Be Present*

The physical absence of screens changes how parents and children speak to each other. (Pomfret & Varley)

Without digital distractions, families enter a state of "Joint Visual Attention". When you look at a hawk or a unique rock together, you are "co-experiencing." Nature physically "forces" this focus because there are no walls or screens to hide behind.

Watch for wildlife: At your local park, trail, or in your own backyard, seek out a spot to sit still and wait for squirrels, rabbits, deer, or butterflies to emerge. Try checking out binoculars from your local library!



SAFE ZONE *Relax and Open Up*

Firelight physically lowers our defenses and makes us more tolerant and kind to one another. (Lynn)

Blood pressure decreases when viewing a fire with sound. The multisensory experience (flickering light, crackling sound) triggers a relaxation response.



Let's build a fire (*safely, and with adult supervision*): Learn to cook a simple meal over a campfire, outdoor grill, or portable stove. You can try foil packets with veggies or meat, s'mores, or hot dogs for a classic campfire experience. *Yum!*



LOOKING FOR MORE WAYS TO SPEND TIME TOGETHER OUTSIDE?

Check out Utah's Every Kid Outdoors Adventure Challenge!

Scan to learn more or visit www.recreation.utah.gov/eko

SCIENCE SHOWS THAT TIME TOGETHER IN NATURE HELPS FAMILIES GET ALONG BETTER, TALK MORE, AND BUILD TRUST.

Utah's Every Kid Outdoors (EKO) Initiative, part of the Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation, uses evidence-based research to inform the Adventure Challenge, which empowers Utahns to get outside.



SOURCES

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