



Nature and Children

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In an age where technology is at the forefront of everyday living it is becoming harder and harder to not only get our children outside but to keep them there for longer than a few minutes at a time.

A theory by the name of Biophilia was proposed in the 1980's by Harvard University biologist Edward O. Wilson. This theorised that people are instinctively drawn towards our natural surroundings. When I look around me I am not sure how accurate this was as I see more children playing games from their couch, watching TV or playing on smart phones than spending time outdoors.

Richard Louv, author of the book [Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder](#), tells the story of interviewing a child who told him that he liked playing indoors more than outdoors "cause that's where all the electrical outlets are."

It doesn't end there, in that parents are becoming more and more fearful of allowing their children to play outside due to the possible risks and diseases that their children may encounter.

The challenge we are faced with is "where on earth to go?" With the expansion of suburbs and complexes, more and more of our natural areas are being swallowed up and made inaccessible. The harder it is to get somewhere they less inclined we are to try.

Footprints into ECD: Nature and children

Why is it important to go outside?

Despite the obvious health reasons, being fit and absorption of vitamin D, there are numerous other benefits of spending time in nature. Most studies will agree that children who play outside are happier, more attentive, less anxious and ready to learn.

It builds self-confidence and develops creativity.

It teaches responsibility.

Movement and fitness is improved.

It reduces stress and fatigue.

It encourages imagination and self-awareness.

Disappearing into a world of fantasy and imagination is easier when you are outside than sitting behind a screen that is dictating to you what your world needs to be.

Importance of teaching to care

Beyond playtime, fitness and imagination it is important that our children know the importance of our world and nature and how to care for it. There are a few simple ways you can do this.



Get, Grow, Recycle

1. Get outside, spend time together, collect sticks and leaves and compare them to other seasons and learn about what makes up our world.
2. Grow – plant a garden together. Whether it is flowers or vegetables, the important learning opportunity here is about the cycle of growth, the sense of achievement when they enjoy what they have grown and the opportunity they have to share it with others.
3. Recycle – start a compost pile, organise a cleanup, spend time working with your child to develop a beautiful outdoors environment that all of you can enjoy.

Spending time outside is often free and only costs you a bit of energy and imagination.

It is cheaper to have a picnic than it is to go to a restaurant and the benefits will far exceed your expectations.

