



Playing outdoors is a great way to reduce stress for children and parents alike. Using our senses to smell, touch, taste and listen in nature helps us be more present and mindful. In many cultures, feeling our connection with the natural world supports resilience, healing and our overall mental well-being. And getting everyone outside can be a great way to change a cranky mood!

Here are some ways you can use nature play to help relieve stress:

- Watch fish swimming or birds flying.
- Do a [nature scavenger hunt](#) or a nature walk.
- Grow and tend a garden outside or in planters with your child. Attract interesting bugs to watch. Gardening is known to have calming benefits.
- Do an art activity outside for a change in scenery. Use sidewalk chalk.
- Blow bubbles outside. This has the built-in bonus of requiring deep breathing, a known way to relieve stress.
- Invite your child to take a few slow breaths, and then have them use their senses one at a time to identify one thing they can:
 - *see* • *hear*
 - *feel* • *smell*
- Ask your child to:
 - find something that feels soft or prickly
 - find something that smells good or bad
 - listen carefully and raise their hand when they hear a bird song, or when they feel a breeze on their cheek

Taking safe risks outdoors (e.g., hugging a tree while lifting their feet off the ground, rolling down a small grassy hill, or jumping off a swing before it stops moving) will support your child's physical development and confidence.

Not everyone has access to open green spaces, but parents can find creative ways to bring nature inside and experience some of the same benefits.



To learn more about ways to play with nature, and the benefits, see:

- Child and Nature Alliance of Canada, [Five Nature Connection Activities to Deepen Your Relationship with the Living World](#)
- Heart-Mind Online, [Nature Art: 10 Activities for Creativity and Calm](#)
- OutsidePlay.ca, [Benefits of Play](#) and [Play Space](#)