



# Bridging Nature, Mind and Body to Support Emotional Resilience

Presented By  
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Dr. Carrie Jarosinski is a registered nurse, wellness coach, educator, inspirational speaker, and author of Reclaim Your Story: Renew Your Health and Wellness through the Power of Storytelling and the Nursing Assistant textbook series. She loves to actively engage with others to facilitate a transformative and personalized wellness experience. Her years of personal and professional experience in healthcare, education, and wellness have laid the foundation from which she can support others to succeed in their journey to sustainable behavior change.

She lives in Wisconsin with her two furry companions, Winn and Xena. She likes to hike, explore, meet new people, laugh, and continuously build upon her pollinator garden in her free time.

## Learning Objectives

- Connect the concepts of environmental determinants, environmental wellbeing and emotional resilience
- Align environmental wellbeing to the different dimensions of wellness
- Explore environmental interventions to support individual and community wellbeing and resilience

## Resilience



## Resilience is a skill that must be nurtured with intentionality



## Environmental Determinants and Environmental Wellbeing

- Built environment, policy, systems
- Access to:
  - Clean water for recreation and drinking
  - Pollution (light, noise, water, air) free areas both indoors and outdoors
  - Resources to limit climate change impacts
- Pleasant and clean indoor and outdoor environment
- Connection with nature
- Resource stewardship
- Sustainable lifestyle
- Community beautification
- Activities to support personal and community connection to environment

## Let's talk about the numbers – connection to the outdoors

- The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 13–32% of the global disease burden is attributable to these environmental determinants
- The average child in America between the ages of 6 - 17 spends just 7 minutes a day in unstructured outdoor time
- Children ages 8-12 in the United States spend 4-6 hours a day watching or using screens, and teens spend up to 9 hours (2020)
- Gen X (39 percent) are more likely than adults overall (33 percent) to spend more than an hour outdoors daily
- Gen Z (9 percent) are more likely than adults overall (4 percent) to NOT go outside during the day

## Numbers continued - disparities

- 1 in 3 people have little to no easy access to green spaces or other ways of enjoying time outside (nature gap, green gap, outdoor equity gap)
- 74% of people who identify as Black, Indigenous and other people of color live in a census tract that is considered nature deprived
- Approximately 40% of Black Americans participated in outdoor recreation in 2022, compared with 57% of white Americans
- Lowest-income neighborhoods have 41% less tree cover than communities of higher income and, regardless of income, neighborhoods of color have 33% less cover (resulting in heat islands, worse air pollution, less green space)
- 1 in 4 adults in the U.S. live with a disability that impacts their ability to access or enjoy time outside
- LGBTQ+ community is 9% more likely to feel unwelcome in the outdoors

## Numbers continued – emotional wellbeing concerns

- Over 40 million adults in the U.S. (19.1%) have an anxiety disorder
- 32.3% of adults reported either symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder (2023)
- Half (50%) of adults ages 18-24 reported anxiety and depression symptoms in 2023
- 20% of people living in large cities report “a lot of loneliness” the previous day
- Living in urban areas has been associated with increased risk for mental disorders, including anxiety, depression and schizophrenia (2021)
- MRIs have identified changes in the brain - current city living was associated with increased amygdala activity, and urban upbringing is associated with a region that regulates the amygdala, stress and negative affect

## Case study



## Disconnection to Nature - Risks



- Poor sleep
- Increased stress and irritability
- Increased anxiety and depression
- Low vitamin D
- Less joy
- Decreased resilience
- “Nature deficit disorder”
- Poorer “pro-environment” attitudes and behaviors (determinant impact)

## Benefits of connecting with Mother Nature - building resilience

- A balm for our brains
- Promote self-control behaviors
- Improved cognition
- Improved attention and focus
- Improved working memory
- Better cognitive flexibility
- Increased happiness
- Decreased feelings of loneliness
- Increased rates of self-reported wellbeing
- Positive affect
- Greater eudemonic well-being
- Existential benefits
- Increase in generous behaviors
- Decrease in mental distress
- Reduced crime and violence



## Interventions

- So, what can we do?
  - Individual level (wellness)
  - Community level (determinants)



“**I**MAGINE A WORLD in which all children grow up with a deep understanding of the life around them. Where obesity is reduced through nature play. Where anti-depressants and pharmaceuticals are prescribed less and nature prescribed more. Where every school has a natural play space. Where children experience the joy of being in nature before they learn of its loss, where they can lie in the grass on a hillside for hours and watch clouds become the faces of the future. Where every child and every adult has a human *right* to a connection to the natural world, and shares the responsibility for caring for it.”

— Richard Louv, founding chairman, Children & Nature Network, author of *‘Last Child in the Woods’* and *‘The Nature Principle’*

children & nature  
NETWORK

[www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org)

## Individual Wellness

- Decrease tech and increase vitamin N for yourself and your loved ones (social fitness)
- Enjoy local green space
- Prescribed nature
- Nature breaks/sensory scavenger hunt
- Garden – indoor and outdoor
- Be an anti-grasser
- Walk or ride your bike
- Walking meetings
- Forest bathe/blue bathe/nature bathe
- Nature journal
- Friluftsliv



“The more high tech we become, the more nature we need.”

— Richard Louv

## Strengthening determinants

- Join an environmental organization
- Advocate for bike lanes
- Participate in community planning initiatives and referendums, run for local boards and committees
- Support tree equity programming in under-resourced communities
- Vote for pro-environment local, state, and national candidates
- Secure sustained funding for the Outdoors Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) program via the Outdoors for All Act – message your support to your congresspeople

## Strengthening determinants

- Address the Nature Gap/Green Gap/Outdoor Equity Gap through awareness, funding, partnerships and advocacy
- Transition school yards to green spaces
- Commit to the [ten-minute walk challenge](#) in your community
- Know your [tree equity](#) score
- Ensure parks are accessible and ADA compliant
- Connect trails & help maintain existing trails



## Supporting holistic wellbeing



- Environmental interventions at the individual level and the community level impact all dimensions of wellness to support holistic wellbeing.
- Get outside – build resilience

## In closing



Nature is supposed to be a 'great equalizer' whose services are free, universal and accessible to all humans without discrimination (Center for American Progress)



## With much gratitude!

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