



# Welcome!

We're excited to host the first ever **30x30 Nature Heals** initiative — an invitation to (re)connect with nature every day for 30 minutes over 30 days during the month of October. The 30x30 is a collaboration between the University of Minnesota's Center for Spirituality & Healing, the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Boynton Health Services, and the Weisman Art Museum. I would like to personally invite you and your students to the 30x30 because nature connects us all, regardless of your focus area. Faculty interested in health science, life science and/or social science will all find messages of value.

We're becoming increasingly disconnected from the natural world. The cost of our high-tech, indoor lives shows up on campus: high stress, depression and higher rates of anxiety. Over the last decade, evidence supports what most of us know intuitively: nature is good for our health and wellbeing. Nature is affordable, equitable, accessible, and a practical form of health promotion. Being regularly immersed in a rich green natural setting can relieve stress, increase memory performance, boost creativity, enhance attention span, and improve sleep. This is a big pay-off for a small investment of time in nature.

Bottom line, we want 30x30 Nature Heals to be integrated on campus so we may all experience the benefits of nature together. This 30x30 Academic Toolkit offers tips and recommendations on how to effectively engage your students in the initiative. Find out more at: <http://umnnatureheals30x30.com/>

If you have any questions I'd love to hear from you! Feel free to contact me at: [larso095@umn.edu](mailto:larso095@umn.edu)

See you outside!

*Jeannie*

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# About 30x30 Nature Heals

## *What is the 30x30 Nature Heals initiative?*

Nature Heals 30×30 is a month-long event that encourages you to spend 30 minutes in nature each day during the month of October. The University of Minnesota's Nature Heals 30×30 is part of a larger public awareness project with a

***forum, symposium, and research roundtable that all explore the healing powers of nature.***

Learn more about these events at [z.umn.edu/NatureHeals](https://z.umn.edu/NatureHeals)

## *How can my class register?*

Visit our website and fill out a quick form — [umnNatureHeals30x30.com](https://umnNatureHeals30x30.com)

## *Where can we find nearby nature?*

Nature isn't a destination — it's literally outside your classroom. Green space is as close as the tree-lined sidewalks or landscaped edges. Green nature is often a short diversion from your daily route to and from class. The birds, bees, and other critters are always nearby. You just have to take time to watch and listen.

## *What counts as “time in nature”?*

Time in nature is about getting outside and connecting with the non-human world around you. Time in nature includes: green spaces in neighborhood, plants in office/home, sounds of birds, fresh air, etc. Time in nature is not always the same as being outside — most urban areas aren't very green or calming. But the good news is that campus green spaces are beneficial if you relax and pay attention to nature. We recommend putting your electronic devices away so you can use all your sense to listen for bird songs, breathe fresh air, and watch for campus wildlife.

## *Can you give us some ideas for spending 30 minutes in nature on campus?*

- Integrate nature breaks into your study habits.
- Host a walking class.
- Grab a blanket and invite students for an outside lecture.
- Assign time in nature as part of course requirements.
- Encourage small group projects to focus how being in nature contributes to human health and wellbeing.
- Provide opportunities for comminute-based nature experiences as part of class project.

# What's inside the 30x30 Academic Toolkit?

## *Program details and engagement tips*

This booklet provides information about the 30x30, along with recommendations for successfully engaging your classroom.



## *Sample engagement timeline*

There is no single way to host the 30x30 Nature Challenge, so feel free to make it your own! We've provided a sample timeline with ideas to engage your students and build excitement leading up to the event in October.



## *Interesting facts and inspiration*

Use the facts and tweets at the end of this guide to inspire your students and raise awareness of how we all benefit from spending time in nature.



## *30x30 team competition template*

Light-hearted competition can be a great motivator! We've provided a simple team competition that will increase participation and coursework engagement.



## *Keeping the nature habit going!*

Our hope is that the 30x30 supports the University of Minnesota in cultivating lifelong nature habits. We've provided some tips to help you, students, and colleagues stay connected with nature throughout the year.

Feel free to send us your ideas!



# Tips for success

Implementing 30x30 Nature Heals in your classroom and/or Moodle Platform can be easier than you think. Here are suggestions on how to help your students get on board:

- ***Build a team of internal champions.*** Ask a few colleagues to join you in leading the 30x30 Nature Heals in your department—working together will be half the fun! Champions can put up posters, share student insights and initiate communications with others on campus.
- ***Organize a student competition.*** Make it fun and give extra credit to students that log the most “green time”. Check out the student competition template at the end of this toolkit.
- ***Go beyond the classroom.*** Encourage participating students to involve families and friends and share stories through their personal networks. Time in nature not only creates happier, healthier classrooms, it fosters stronger relationships at work and home.
- ***Remember that cultivating a new habit takes time.*** Communicate with your students regularly, provide incentives, and encourage them to spend time in nature as a means towards self care and stress management.
- ***Keep your communications positive and fun.*** The 30x30 isn't meant to be an extra to-do list task. Join the 30x30 Facebook page where student members can share their experiences in nature. Be a role model for your students and share your nature stories too!
- ***Share the benefits.*** Talk to your students, colleagues, and staff about 30x30 Nature Heals. Encourage them to get involved and reap the green rewards!



We'd love to hear about how your classroom is doing. Please send us your stories or photos at [csh@umn.edu](mailto:csh@umn.edu) — your students could be featured on our website and through social media!



# *Ideas for engaging your students*

Getting your students outside doesn't have to involve abandoning your lesson plans. Here are a few simple ways to slip nature time into your class schedule.

## *Take reading time outside*

Sometimes the easiest way to increase time in nature is to take what we normally do inside and do it outside! Host your class outside on the grass or under a tree.

## *Green Exercise*

Take your students outside for a walk during breaks or walk to a destination in nature for class itself.

## *Use nature as your classroom*

Nature makes a great backdrop for topics in science and an excellent subject for art. It can inspire poems and is full of mathematical patterns to study!

## *Nature and Art walk*

Assign students to take a walk looking for interesting natural objects. Afterward, have them arrange their objects in a pattern, then snap a photo. Display their art on 30x30 Facebook page.

## *Imagining biodiversity*

Take your students outside and ask them to imagine what they would have seen before the campus was developed. What kinds of plants and natural resources would have been there? What animals might have called it home? Ask the students to close their eyes and picture it in detail, including smells and sounds. Start a conversation about how students might help restore this biodiversity. Once they've got a vision, students can use art, poetry or essay to illustrate the biodiversity that might have once existed.

## *Sit spot*

A sit spot is a simple 'non-doing' activity to encourage students to observe nature and connect with their campus surroundings. Find a natural area and ask students to find a quiet spot to sit and observe quietly using all their senses for five or ten minutes to start. Make the sit spot a regular part of class time and see what happens!



# Sample Internal Engagement Plan

Every course is different, so feel free to customize the 30x30 Nature Heals to suit your classroom culture and student needs. We've provided a sample calendar of events you can use to build engagement.

## September

### September 21 — Start building buzz

- Start planting seeds early. Reflect on your course culture and craft communications in a way that resonates with students.
- Send an email announcing that your class is participating in the 30x30 Nature Heals.

#### Teaser communications

- Choose one or two of the nature and wellbeing facts provided in this toolkit and share with your students. Whether by email or in class session, try to create interest in the 30x30 by raising awareness of how nature can foster personal well-being, better social interactions and reduced stress from academic life.

#### Research Participation Reminder

- Send a reminder email to all students and include the 30x30 research participation link:  
<https://redcap.ahc.umn.edu/surveys/?s=H85nxS67eP>

### September 30 — Heart of the Beast Puppet and 30x30 Kick Off Event!

- Notify students the Heart of the Beast Puppets will be at Weisman Art Museum between 12:30 - 2:30 strolling campus encouraging students/staff to register for 30x30 Nature Heals.

## October

### October 1 — The 30x30 Nature Heals officially begins

- Host your class outside to talk about the benefits of spending time in nature for health and wellbeing.

### October 5-30 — Daily events and activities at base-camp

- Encourage students to attend any one of the daily activities being held at “base-camp” located on the Weisman Art Museum plaza.
- Share tips, photos and stories on Face Book

### October 30 — Last day of the Challenge

- Join the final celebrations at 30x30 base-camp with Kevin Kling, s'mores, pumpkin decorating and scarecrow decorating contest.

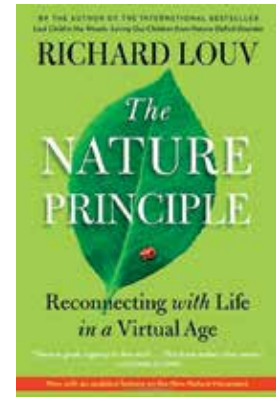
### October 31 — Follow-up survey

- All registered students will receive an email asking them to complete the closing survey for the 30x30.



# Interesting facts about nature and your health

To support academic engagement, we've compiled some interesting facts and statistics about how human health and wellbeing are connected to time in nature. Use these to spark interest in the program and inspire your students to get outside every day. The 30x30 Nature Heals Facebook page is a great place to share tips and facts. Your students can also learn more about the mental and physical benefits of connecting with nature by reading *Your Brain on Nature* by Eva Selhub and Alan Logan.



## Short Shares:

- Stressed? Take a nature break. Green time reduces stress.
- Distracted? One hour in nature can boost attention span by 20 percent.
- Four days away from electronic devices can increase creativity 50 percent.
- Just two minutes in nature can reduce stress and blood pressure.
- Feeling tense? Just two minutes in nature can reduce muscle tension.
- One hour in nature can improve memory and attention span by 20 percent.
- Feeling forgetful? One hour in nature can improve memory by 20 percent.
- More than two days in nature can boost cancer fighting white blood cells by 50 percent.
- Gardening reduces the stress hormone cortisol.

## Tweets:

- Stressed? Take a nature break. Green time reduces stress. #NatureHeals
- Distracted? 1hr in nature can boost attention span by 20%. #NatureHeals
- 4 days away from electronic devices can increase creativity 50%. #NatureHeals
- Just 2 minutes in nature can reduce stress and blood pressure. #NatureHeals
- Feeling tense? Just 2 minutes in nature can reduce muscle tension. #NatureHeals
- 1 hour in nature can improve memory and attention span by 20%. #NatureHeals
- Feeling forgetful? 1 hour in nature can improve memory by 20%. #NatureHeals
- 2+days in nature can boost cancer-fighting white blood cells by 50%. #NatureHeals
- Avg student sits for 9.3 hours a day. #NatureHeals
- Inactivity causes 5.3 million deaths per year. #NatureHeals
- Gardening reduces stress-hormone cortisol. #NatureHeals

# 30x30 *Nature Heals Factoids*

## *Nature makes better students*

Students who spend time in nature aren't just less stressed—they're more creative, have sharper memories and attention spans, and even have better social relationships!

## *A little dirt improves your health*

Making direct contact with soil, through gardening or otherwise, has been shown to improve mood, reduce anxiety and facilitate learning.

## *Plants in the workplace reduce stress*

Having plants in the workplace can reduce feelings of anger, anxiety, and fatigue by about 40 per cent over a three month period and reduce stress levels by 50 per cent.

## *The cost of information overload at work*

Do you ever have those days when you feel as if your brain might explode? When we get distracted and overloaded with information, we're less happy. Information overload breeds insensitivity and rapid-fire judgment of others. Give your brain a break. Nature immersion is restorative — it buffers the stress of information overload and gives us a chance to decompress and reflect. Your friends and professors will thank you!

## *Drawing the line between home and work*

Sometimes it's hard to know when school ends and our home life begins. Our wireless devices keep us connected 24/7. Did you know that 75 percent of people aged 18-to-44 check email while on vacation? Free yourself! Step outside and leave your cell phone behind.

## *The effects of daily hassles*

Trauma and major life changes aren't the only sources of stress. Researchers have been studying the effects of chronic low-grade stress as well. Daily hassles like assignment deadlines and conflict with professors produce negative feelings like annoyance, agitation, anxiety, frustration and worry. It is estimated that an average North American adult has at least 50 brief stress response episodes per day. What our brains need to combat these daily hassles is a shot of positivity. And nature can play an important role.

## *Nature — a vaccine for road rage*

About one third of North Americans admit they have experienced road rage. One study showed that the amount of vegetation along a highway can mitigate driver frustration. Try taking the scenic route!

## *Take a bath in nature*

Shinrin-Yoku is the Japanese practice of forest bathing. Spending time in a forest setting can help you sleep better, reduce stress levels and increase feelings of vigor and liveliness.

## *Gardening — one part relaxant, one part energizer*

Not only is gardening great exercise, it reduces stress and lifts our mood. In a study published in the Journal of Health Psychology, gardening reduced the stress hormone cortisol significantly more than reading did. Dig up a patch of dirt in your backyard or volunteer for a school or local community garden.





*30x30 Nature Heals Factoids >*

### *Green your exercise routine*

Outdoor exercise makes us feel better. Compared with running on an indoor treadmill, running through a forest improves our mood and lowers fatigue and tension. The most valuable exercise environment in terms of elevating our mood and self-esteem is a combination of green and water. Why not take a walk or bike ride in nature this evening?

### *Narcissists are no friends of nature*

Empathy is essential to helping behavior. Although technology has made the world more “connected,” it has not translated into a more caring world. In North America, scores of empathic concern have dropped dramatically over the past three decades. One study showed that people with a narcissistic view were more likely to cut down a hypothetical forest out of greed, forgoing long-term sustainability gains. Why not meet a friend at your local park and connect face to face while enjoying nature?

### *Nature — an acoustical paradise*

The sounds of the natural world are a soothing antidote to the cacophony of noises that plague the urban dweller. Birds singing, wind whistling through the trees, a gurgling stream — these sounds can reduce stress and help us relax.

### *Sunlight increases productivity*

Employees without windows in their work environment have been found to be more anxious, hostile and depressed than their colleagues on windowed floors. Increasing natural light within the workplace has been linked to improved productivity and worker contentment.

### *Get a better night's sleep*

Humans evolved to respond to the daily rhythms of the sun. Natural light enhances our mental performance and darkness increases our desire to sleep. Light bulbs and electronic screens adversely affect melatonin production, a hormone that helps us sleep. Power down tonight, do some stargazing and get a good night's sleep.

### *Start a nature-based diet and feel more Alive*

Eating a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, fish, nuts, seeds and whole grains has been shown to increase feelings of alertness and contentment. It's time to cut out the staples of the modern Western diet — refined sugar, processed flour, soft drinks and processed food — and reconnect nutritionally to nature.

### *Green neighborhoods are healthy neighborhoods*

Viewing nature scenes reduces stress levels and can support good health. If you live within a three kilometer radius of a significant amount of green space, you are less likely to experience the negative health impacts of stress. Green neighborhoods can provide a much needed stress buffer and provide a calm respite within the urban environment.



*Keep the nature habit going!*

*The 30x30 Nature Heals is meant to be a fun event. But ultimately we hope everyone keeps the nature habit and spends time outside every day.*

- Students can mindfully search out experiences in nature. Put away the smartphone and look for wildlife along the campus corridors.
- Bring nature home—create a native ecosystem in your living space so you can enjoy more green time and less screen time.
- Incorporate natural elements inside and engage in community greening projects outside.
- Students should encourage green break time from the daily grind of academics.

Our hope is that the 30x30 Nature Challenge supports the University of Minnesota in cultivating nature habits that last lifelong. See you outside!



## Resources:

**State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan** (SCORP) is Minnesota's outdoor recreation policy plan. It gives outdoor recreation decision-makers and managers a focused set of priorities and suggested actions to guide them as they make decisions about outdoor recreation.

— [www.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/reports/scorp](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/reports/scorp)

**Map of Minnesota State Parks** — [www.dnr.state.mn.us/state\\_parks/map.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/map.html)

**Master Naturalist Program** is to promote awareness, understanding, and stewardship of Minnesota's natural environment by developing a corps of well-informed citizens dedicated to conservation education and service within their communities.

— [www.minnesotamasternaturalist.org](http://www.minnesotamasternaturalist.org)

**Master Gardener Program** is meant to share best practices in gardening with people in their community that promote healthy landscapes, healthy foods, and healthy lives. Master Gardeners have completed a university-taught core course and contributed a certain number of hours to teaching research-based horticulture practices in their communities.

— [www.extension.umn.edu/garden/master-gardener/about](http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/master-gardener/about)

**Explore Minnesota** — [www.exploreminnesota.com](http://www.exploreminnesota.com)

**Twin Cities Outdoor Recreation** list of parks and outdoor recreation in the St. Paul and Minneapolis area — [www.exploreminnesota.com/things-to-do](http://www.exploreminnesota.com/things-to-do)

**Research on Connecting with Nature**

— [www.worldforumfoundation.org/working-groups/nature/environmental-action-kit/research](http://www.worldforumfoundation.org/working-groups/nature/environmental-action-kit/research)

**Nature Find** a free online tool for finding nature places and events near you. — [www.naturefind.com](http://www.naturefind.com)

**Children and Nature Network Research Center**

— [www.childrenandnature.org/learn/research-resources](http://www.childrenandnature.org/learn/research-resources)