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Nature, An ADHD Natural Treatment

By Jeannine Virtue

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by: **Jeannine Virtue**

My mother's warning; "You are going to rot your brain out..." still rings through my mind whenever I spend too much time in front of the television set.

I grew up in a time when mothers shooed their children out – rain, snow or shine – to get a breath of fresh air. Our television set tuned in to only four or five channels and those channels signed off at midnight. It would be years before cable television, satellite dish, VCRs and Nintendo would debut. Lazy summer days were spent riding bicycles for hours because there wasn't much of anything better to do.

This period of time was also a few decades before Ritalin and Attention Deficit would become commonplace terms.

I have long believed that inactive hours spent indoors has contributed to the increased incidence of Attention Deficit Disorder. A recent study, published in the September 2004 issue of the "American Journal of Public Health," validates that believe.

University of Illinois researchers studied nature as an ADHD natural treatment. This study showed that children with ADHD benefit from time outdoors enjoying nature with a significant reduction of ADHD symptoms.

Researchers of this nationwide recruited the parents of 322 boys and 84 girls, all diagnosed with ADHD, through ads in major newspapers and the Internet. Participants, ages 5 to 18, spent time in a variety of settings which varied from big cities to rural settings. Some activities were conducted indoors, others in outdoor places without much greenery such as parking lots and downtown areas and other activities were in "green" areas such as a tree-lined street, back yards or parks. The parents were interviewed and asked to report how their children performed after participating in a wide range of activities.

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The researchers found that symptoms were reduced most in green outdoor settings, even when the same activities were compared across different settings. Researchers believe that simply incorporating nature into a child's day could be widely effective in reducing ADHD symptoms.

Based on the results of this ADHD natural treatment study, researchers recommend that children with ADHD spend quality after-school hours and weekend time outdoors enjoying nature.

Study authors Frances E. Kuo and Andrea Faber Taylor suggested that daily doses of "green time" might supplement medications and behavioral approaches to ADHD if clinical trials and additional research confirm the value of nature as a natural treatment for ADHD.

The study findings indicate that exposure to ordinary natural settings in the course of common after-school and weekend activities may be widely effective in reducing attention deficit symptoms in children.

In each comparison (there were 56 in all), green outdoor activities received more positive ratings over the activities taking place in other settings. In 54 of the 56, the difference was significant, signaling that the findings were consistent.

Researchers said that exposing ADHD children to nature is an affordable, healthy method of controlling symptoms. Researchers also suggested that daily doses of "green time" can supplement medications and other traditional treatments of ADHD.

Simply using nature may offer a way to help manage ADHD symptoms that is readily available, doesn't have any stigma associated with it, doesn't cost anything, and doesn't have any side effects.

ADHD natural "green" treatment has endless possibilities, many of which might closely resemble childhoods from years long past.

Here are just a few ideas for increasing "green time":

- _ Play in a green yard or ball field at recess and after school.
- _ Take after-dinner walks.
- _ Make a scarecrow.
- _ Doing class work or homework outside or at a window with a relatively green view.
- _ Build a birdhouse.
- _ Grow an outdoor garden.
- _ Bike, ski, sled, inline skate...
- _ Visit a nature center.
- _ Choose a greener route for the walk to school.
- _ Participate in local nature clean-ups.
- _ Take up bird watching.
- _ Star gaze.

Jeannine Virtue is a freelance writer with a focus on issues relating to Attention Deficit Disorder. For research-based information about Attention Deficit Disorder, practical tips to help parents survive the task of raising Attention Deficit children and information about effective Ritalin alternatives, please visit

Understanding ADHD

By News Canada

(NC)—The behavioural disorder Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) has been recognized and treated since 1902. However, it is only in the last 20 years or so that research has demonstrated that it is a neurobiological disorder with far-reaching impact on children.

Originally it was believed that ADHD was a condition that children would eventually outgrow. We now understand that ADHD is not caused by poor parenting, poor teachers or schools, or family problems, but due to chemical differences in the brain. It is not surprising, therefore that as many as 60 per cent of children diagnosed with ADHD will continue to have symptoms into adulthood if not properly treated.

Despite increased awareness and identification of the disorder, many children are not provided with optimal treatment that provides continuous symptom relief. It is important to remember that ADHD is a disorder requiring treatment, not a set of behaviours requiring controls. Sub-optimal treatment can have serious consequences for children such as a lack of friends, accidental death, injury, sexually transmitted diseases, substance abuse, criminal activity, and causing marital difficulties for their parents.

Research indicates the greatest improvement in symptoms is seen with a combination of counselling and medical treatment. For many children and their families, ADHD diagnosis provides a welcome explanation for their difficulties and leads to appropriate treatment.

All medications currently approved to treat ADHD belong to a class called stimulants. A number of new investigational ADHD treatments offer great promise and in the future Canadians will have more choice in ADHD treatment.

For more information on ADHD it's important to speak with your doctor.

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