

# “Friendship with the Earth”

Did you know that there is a new phenomenon in children called “Nature-Deficit Disorder? According to researchers, the lack of time children spend in nature is harming children’s physical and mental health and hampering their creativity.

We need to get our children up off the couch, away from their technology gadgets, and out in nature. God has created a beautiful world and we need to be teaching our children to enjoy it and to take care of His creation.

## What Can You Do?

There are many things that parents, guardians, and teachers can do to help children develop a love for nature. Here are a few:

### 1. Start Young.

If you love nature yourself, it is very easy to develop this love in your children. Expose them to the natural world from the time they are young. Encourage them to play in the garden. Let them pick up and observe leaves, flowers, rocks, etc. Point out and name trees, insects, birds, and animals to them. And, remind them of what a great God we have to create all of these things for us to enjoy.

### 2. Involve Them in Gardening.

A great way to help children connect to nature is to get them to help in gardening. This will bring them in touch with the soil and they will encounter different kinds of insects, worms, and other intriguing creatures. Caring for plants, and seeing



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them grow and develop, is a wonderful opportunity for them to know the cycle of creation first-hand. You can also help them set up a bird or butterfly feeder in the garden.

## 3. Take Them to Wildlife Sanctuaries and National Parks.

Make trips to the wildlife sanctuaries and national parks a regular part of their growing years. Plan regular picnics and outings to nature spots around your city. Introduce them to the joys of hiking. You can spend vacations visiting places where children can see wild animals in their natural environment.

## 4. Stir-up their Curiosity.

Encourage your children to observe things around them. Gift them with books or CDs about nature and wildlife. Take them to museums or libraries.

## 5. Gift Them a Hobby.

Enhance their enjoyment of nature by giving them magnifying lenses, a pair of binoculars, or a simple telescope. Encourage your children to observe things they see and record them. Teach them to take notes. Get them to make sketches of what they see. Give older children a simple camera, if they show an inclination for photography. Buy your children

field guides to the common animals, birds, insects, or trees in your area; identifying plants and animals they see during their trips will help increase their knowledge and make a fun activity into a life-long passion.



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## 6. Teach Them to Conserve.

As they grow older, teach children to value nature. Encourage them to adopt conservation practices. More importantly, practice them yourself. Explain to children how small things like using water carefully and keeping lights switched off when they do not need them can contribute towards conserving nature.



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## Why Children Need to Connect with Nature

- Being outdoors helps create a sense of wonder in children, which they can carry over to other aspects of their life.
- Being out in nature helps children to become more aware. Nature gives children the chance to engage all their senses of perception.
- Modern life is too regimented and deprives children of the opportunity of exploring and learning by themselves. In this context, the role of nature to stimulate their curiosity is even more important.
- According to researchers, the opportunity to explore nature helps children improve their attention span and learning capacity.
- Research has also proven that exposure to green outdoor settings helps to reduce symptoms of Attention Deficit Disorders in children.
- Outdoor activity offers children the opportunity of fresh air and exercise. Both are important to help children keep physically and mentally fit.
- Being in and enjoying nature is an important part of children's development.
- Ecological degradation is an unfortunate reality today. Nurturing a bond between children and nature is important to ensure that the coming generation grows up to value nature.
- Being out in nature nurtures a connection with God as Creator! This is the most important reason of all!



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Getting your children to cherish nature will not just help them become responsible citizens but will make them better custodians of our home planet, the Earth, and help them appreciate God, as Creator.

## References

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