

# Green Exercise

*(Creating a Better You Part 6)*

It seems like being green is the new in thing, but what is Green Exercise? When I saw this phrase I was drawn in, I had to know how we were applying being green to exercise. I was wondering if there was something we were supposed to be using to cut down the CO2 in our exhalation. As I approached this subject I was brimming with skepticism, imagine my surprise when I discovered a very pleasing concept, one that I believe can help each of us create a better you.

According to Wikipedia, Green exercise refers to physical exercise undertaken in relatively natural environments. Translation: exercising in nature. This does not have to be vigorous exercise, it can be a gentle walk or standing in nature and breathing deep. More intensive forms of exercise also count; you can climb a mountain, go for a hike, or run a marathon. We all know that clean, unpolluted nature can be good for you, and that exercise is good for you, but here's what I found exciting in studying this new concept of green exercise: it has been found that improvement in mental health is shown almost immediately (in five minutes or less) upon participating in green exercise. The Green Exercise Team from University of Essex has been studying this concept for the last seven years. They have found that, "Contact with green spaces and nature improves psychological health by reducing stress levels, enhancing mood and self-esteem and offering a restorative environment which enables people to relax, unwind and recharge their batteries." (From the website [www.greenexercise.org](http://www.greenexercise.org)).

They have also discovered that, "Outdoor activity has a positive effect on long-term memory and cognitive development is influenced by free play and exploration. The need for engaging children with nature at an early age is clear." In other words, green exercise helps us keep our minds clear, assists in keeping our memories sharp, and helps us keep our minds ready for problem solving. Wow! That's a lot just for a walk outside to get the mail!

One of the participants on the Green Exercise Team said, "I love the park, feeding the ducks, interacting with people. I love life and the beautiful majestic trees, which allow you to escape the pollution of cars. If your mind's healthy, so is your body." This is something we teach that I think is often overlooked. When you're working with essential oils to restore health to the body we often find that we hit a wall and can't make any more progress until... we remember that we need to add in the emotional oils. The body cannot heal itself if the mind (emotion) is not being addressed as well.

Along with green exercise you will find the term green gym. This refers to programs of green exercise that usually involve an organized group(s) who go out and do volunteer environmental work. This work can be restorative in nature (cleaning up an area), horticultural (participating in a community garden), or other activities, as long as they are designed to provide physical exercise while experiencing natural environments. To me it is far more appealing to think of going to the gym as going out and working in the community garden sponsored by Be Young than going to the local gym, closing myself indoors, and trying to figure out how to make an exercise machine work. I was reading in the local paper the other day about the numerous activities that the Boy Scouts have been participating in and are planning as they celebrate their 100 year anniversary, many of these activities are green exercise and most also qualify as green gyms. It kind of gives one warm fuzzies to think about it.

According to [www.greenexercise.org](http://www.greenexercise.org) their studies have found that green exercise "improves psychological well being by enhancing mood and self-esteem whilst reducing feelings of anger, confusion, depression and tension." It

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also provides a “generation of physical health benefits by reducing blood pressure and burning calories” and provides “facilitation of social networking and connectivity.” That last part means you talk to other people while you’re out in nature or participating in a green gym. Their findings have also shown that while all types of people benefit from green exercise, “vulnerable, ill, disaffected and disadvantaged (people) seem to benefit more.” So, here we have something that is free for everyone (even those in prison are allowed time outside to exercise) and improves mental and physical health while being something simple enough that even those who are in the worst of health can do. If you can be moved, you can be taken outside even if it’s just for a few moments, remember, it took five minutes or less for people to experience an improvement in mental health. There are those who are unable to leave their hospital rooms, but I remember a talk given by Dana Clay Young in which he was describing how an entire hillside in France, filled with blooming lavender plants could be brought to mind by just opening a bottle of Be Young Lavender essential oil and enjoying the aroma. By using essential oils we can bring nature to those who are unable to leave their hospital rooms.

The next time you go outside I want you to remember that you are participating in green exercise, breathe a little deeper, swing your arms a little wider, and notice the increase in your mental health. The next time you go outside with your kids to work in your garden, remember, you’re participating in a green gym, no membership required. Stop and realize that you are making a difference for yourself, for those you are with, and for the planet. Now, go out and create a better you!

To order, for class information, or if you have questions contact:

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