

7 reasons why more outdoor time will make your kids better people, part 1

In today's technology-saturated world, kids are spending more time looking at the screen, not playing in the green. Kids don't easily see the benefits of outdoor play like parents do — we grew up in the days of playing outdoors every day. So the next time your child wants



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to power up the screen, nudge them to spend time outdoors soaking in nature and all she has to offer. Follow along as we help make the case for playing outside this summer and beyond!

Movement outside makes everything better, especially creativity. According to experts, free play improves everything from creativity to academic success. In his book "Vitamin N: The Essential Guide to a Nature-Rich Life," author Richard Louv references the Theory of Loose Parts, which suggests that the more things kids can manipulate, see, touch or feel, the more creative they become. Outdoor play is great for the imagination!

A healthy dose of sun exposure increases vitamin D and improves mood. Vitamin D in children actually helps strengthen bones and prevent both heart disease and diabetes. The best way for your child to absorb vitamin D is through limited exposure to the sun without sunscreen. Low levels of vitamin D can cause moodiness and other health concerns. Play in direct sunlight will do wonders for children's mental and physical health. Arrange a play date outdoors with friends and family to get the children outside soaking up the sun!

Kids who engage in outside free play are more successful in math and reading. School is out for the summer, so let's increase outside play time! Keep children in their school and day care routine and ensure they are spending a set amount of time outdoors. After lunch is a great time to burn energy. Play can be organized or free flowing, just like school outdoor time. The more they roam and engage their creativity, the better their test scores will be when school starts in the fall.

Encouraging kids to get super dirty makes them super healthy. Stronger immune systems are built through children's dirty play. According to the National Wildlife Federation, "When we let our kids play in the dirt, we're not only allowing them to explore the wonders around them, we are also exposing them to healthy bacteria, parasites and viruses that will inevitably create a much stronger immune system." Encourage children to get "down and dirty," play with their hands in the dirt, mud or whatever makes them happy. An outdoor scavenger hunt around the house or at a park will get the children close to nature.

(Abstracted by Julia Robison-Schultze, a BabyRead volunteer, from an April 2023 article by Janelle Connor in "BabyTalk.")

BABYREAD'S MISSION is to raise the literacy level in Oconee County by encouraging moms/caregivers to read daily to children from birth. This prepares children for success in school and in life. Readers read with moms/caregivers in person at town or school libraries. We have a COVID option. Questions? Contact Caren von Hippel, Ph.D., president, at babyread@charter.net or (864) 643-8083 or visit babyread.org.