

Chapter 5

The Healing and Grounding Potential of Biophilia

ABSTRACT

Love of nature involves going out into nature and building a beneficial relationship with other living things. Often this results in a person suddenly feeling grounded, centered, focused, and assured. Forest therapy is one way to find this sense of belonging and solace, but isolation and loneliness can still pervade even the most sacred of spaces. The authors posit that what all living things need is to feel important to one another. Sadly, the civilized world does not often grant that regard. Still, a silent companion calls from the wild to come home; this chapter is about several ways to answer that call and get back both one's regard for nature and one's own self-regard. Biophilia is a proven way through the pathless woods of depression, a trail unmarked by the signposts of civilization—where wildflowers with high hopes of loveliness still grow.

INTRODUCTION

Grounded vs. Centered

Upon first glance, the phrase, *being grounded in Nature* appears to be redundant and in dire need of editing; however, Dr. Diana Raab (2017) differentiated between being *grounded* versus being *centered*, and further proposed the possibility of individuals being both grounded *and* centered. A

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sense of calm appears to be associated with the two terms, but they are not synonymous although they do often tend to accompany each other. Being *grounded* is defined as having the ability to remain completely aware and conscious within the present time, or it is defined as practicing *mindfulness* where “what-ifs” are rarely entertained. The author, Michael Daniels (2005), describes *groundedness* as the sense of being completely embodied and whole within oneself that is accompanied by feelings of harmony, clarity, and ‘rightness.’ A person who is grounded has total control of his or her mental and emotional state where he or she is not easily impacted by others, their ideas, comments, etc. which allows inconsequential mishaps to roll off his or her back like water rolls off of a duck, so there is much less of an inclination to become reactive or overwhelmed by something or someone. In the event that there is a situation where a typically grounded individual does feel “off balance,” there are several strategies that can be used to re-establish the grounded *status quo*:

- Focusing one’s attention on breathing; meditating while walking
- Playing instrumental music without the distraction of words
- Practicing reflective listening
- Sipping a hot beverage, such as tea, being aware of its warmth and taste
- Engaging in multi-sensory awareness, which can become an entry in a journal to reinforce the experience
- Giving non-human family members one’s full and undivided attention to show them love and appreciation

In contrast, being *centered* is defined as having a reference point which can be a place to which an individual can return when life becomes especially challenging and stressful. The center to which an individual *must* return can be represented by the medicine wheel that is often referenced in Native American culture where each of the four directions representing the physical world is joined in the center of the wheel. The north direction represents the mind while the south direction represents the heart; the east direction represents the spirit, and the west direction represents the body, so to maintain a sense of balance or well-being in body, mind, and spirit, all four directions must be in sync. Focused breathing is a strategy that enables an individual to return or his or her center just as it facilitates returning to groundedness (Raab, 2017), but in addition, Roshi (2017) also suggested three of the tenets related

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