
LIVING WELL

Connecting to Our Nature | Grounding | Local Sourcing Food



From the Ground Up

Summer is here and for many this season is when nature more appealing and accessible. I often say that our language reflects what we think and feel and our language reflects how we think and feel. I recently discovered new words and terminology I didn't know existed. I learned there is a term to distinguish exercise outdoors from that inside, "Green exercise!" We have such affiliation for the regimented structure of gyms, treadmills, measuring performance and goal directed exercise that we now have to distinguish types of exercise? I also learned about "bio phobia"! Yes, you guessed it. It describes a fear of the natural world, fear of being outside. It appears from all accounts that this is on the rise. Our misguided need to feel certainty by structuring and over-scheduling our children and us is literally creating a nature phobia or sorts. By choosing to be between 4 walls we are depriving ourselves pleasure as well as the opportunity to develop natural instincts that are crucial to our health, growth and development. Our nature instincts are postulated to be genetically coded within our DNA. We are meant to be connected to nature. Sunlight, ticks, strangers or accident dangers keep us fearful of nature. So fearful that we are depriving our

children and ourselves. Play and time in nature develops skills of observation, exploration and discovery in children. It encourages positive social interactions. It improves agility, balance, coordination and overall fitness. It improves concentration and self-discipline. It instills a sense of peace, a positive regard for nature and a sense of wonder, which is key motivator for learning throughout our lives. It helps develop independence and autonomy. And that's just to name a few. You can't get all that from an app!



Whether we are parents or not we each have a child in our lives, the one inside that still loves to play, explore and discover. We can relive some of our childhood, or give ourselves what we feel we missed in part by being outdoors. We can feed our inner child's desire to play, that seed that was planted in us all long ago.

As adults we can embrace nature with a knowing that research backs our need to be outside. In the outdoors we get more exercise, which defuses stress, improves self-esteem and mood. Moderate cardiovascular exercise (60 min 3 x per week or 35 min 5 x per week) is as effective as antidepressants for mild to moderate depression. "Green exercise" lowers the blood pressure and helps prevent heart disease and cancer. Outside, our vitamin D levels rise. A growing number of studies are demonstrating benefits for this vitamin's role in mood, bone health, heart health and prevention of some cancers. Research suggests that people who spend more time outdoors experience less pain, take less medications and heal faster.



There seems to be no question that rocks, trees and earth beat paper, scissors and screen time. Our ground, our earth needs us and we need it. Positive experiences of being outdoors nurtures positive regard and respect for nature something that our earth requires of us in order to ensure we are invested in taking better care of it which in turn is a gift to ourselves and generations to come. This earth is truly our common ground. From sea to sun, fields to flies, may you enjoy this summer from the ground up! **Love Dr. Maria Patriquin Ivanov M.D. CCFP, owner of Living Well Integrative Health Center**





Home Grown

The memories I have of my childhood summers are of time spent at our cottage, days at the beach, running around with my sisters and friends, picking wild blueberries in the woods next to the cottage and eating fresh vegetables from my grandparent's garden. They had an amazing garden! My grandparents are no longer with us but some of my family's fondest memories are of their vegetable garden and how there is nothing better than eating fresh vegetables right out of the garden. They just taste better! We grew up in a small town and my grandparents had plenty of space for a large garden but you don't need a lot of space to build a garden. Community and urban farms are popping up all over the city. Others are building small garden boxes in their backyard, planters on a balcony and even growing vegetables such as lettuce and herbs inside their home or apartment. If growing isn't your thing there are plenty of options for buying local produce and local food in the Halifax area. Some Farmers' Markets in Metro Halifax include the Halifax Seaport Farmers' Market, Historic Farmers' Market, Halifax Forum Farmer's Market, Alderney Landing Farmers' Market, Hammonds Plains Farmers' Market, and the Partners for Care Farmers' Market (VG site). Other ways to eat local produce and support local farmers are joining a Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) farm and receive seasonal produce directly from the farm or buying from local businesses that support local food producers such as the Local Source Market on Agricola Street. Our larger supermarkets have local seasonal produce this time of year but it is important to check the signage and labels on the produce to determine if it is local. It's easy this time of year to find local produce with the number of location in our city to buy local or if you grow your own I encourage everyone to eat up! **-Erin MacCrae, Registered Dietician**

Renewing our friendship with earth

Notice the language we use to describe level-headed, realistic, accessible people: “down to earth,” “feet on the ground,” “earthy,” and “grounded.” Humans developed to walk and sit and live between earth and sky. Connecting to earth is an important part of natural strength. What does that mean at the beginning of the twentieth century?

Well, the same things it always has. With clients, I encourage that we balance the realm of rapid thinking, creativity and heightened emotion, with grounding. Here are a few easy techniques:

Literally feeling our feet on the earth, touching, tapping or even stamping them, brings us into the reality of the present moment, of being who we are where we are. This is often a relief from our headiness and speed.

*Sitting or lying down, feel gravity pulling our weight toward the centre of the earth. Let go our resistance to gravity and feel confidence in the steady earth **supporting** us.*

Walking, while looking ahead, but bringing our attention again and again to the soles of our feet meeting the ground.

Standing or sitting, we can feel our roots going down deep into the earth, like a strong living tree.

There is much support now for long distance barefoot walking and running, but even just a few steps on the grass can bring us into this primordial relationship with the earth again. Gardening, working with clay, or gathering stones can do the same.

When you have a moment, just sitting down on the ground under a tree puts us there – a place of presence, quietude, and natural power. Renewing our friendship with earth will reap deep rewards. **-Pamela Rubin, Certified Counsellor**





Ground yourself with a foot massage!

We so often forget about our feet and how much wear and tear we put them through every single day. Our feet aren't usually a regular part of our massage but even sparing a few minutes for each foot could have a tremendous relaxing and grounding effect for your whole being. Even better, why not try the reflexology massage, an hour of undivided attention that will be sure to leave you feeling grounded!

Reflexology massage is based on the scientific principle that every organ in the body is reflected in certain reflexes on the feet. By massaging the reflex areas on the feet we release energy congestion built up within the body. With an increase of this energy flow and circulation you will feel an over-all well being, enabling the body to function efficiently. Reflexology is a completely safe and natural aid in restoring the body's healthy balance.

-Jeannie Mundle, Registered Massage Therapist

Daily Grounding Exercise

Begin by standing with bare feet firmly planted on the ground, preferably outside on the grass. Feel as though roots are extending from the soles of your feet into the earth. Bring your awareness to each body part beginning at your feet and systematically work your way up to the crown of your head. Take deep breaths while doing this, feeling your nervous system begin to reset itself and a sense of calm wash over you. *Julie d'Entremont, DO(MP), RMT Osteopathy and Massage Therapy*

Robin Stamm our physiotherapist is presently away, walking on foreign lands, and looks forward to returning more grounded than when she left!

How to ground yourself

“Grounding” is a method, technique or tool that can help you connect to the present moment. Grounding can help in managing and coping with overwhelming emotions, intense anxiety, feeling triggered, dissociative states and PTSD symptoms. It can help you focus if you are merely feeling daydreamy, lost or stuck. In the physical world we know a ground wire safely draws energy away from a current. Grounding in the emotional sphere draws energy out of intense memories, emotions, tension or anxiety and establishes a sense of **comfort, calm, focus and safety**. The following are a few of the sensory, cognitive, verbal and soothing grounding techniques that have been shared between participants in the mindfulness groups at Living Well.

really **paying attention** to the in and out of my breathing

checking what I feel with my five **senses**

I count my **breaths**

I say to myself as I breathe, “Im breathing in the calm and breathing out pain”

pushing my feet into the ground or the floor

squishing sand or mud with my toes

pay attention to **my body, feeling** my clothes against my skin, my weight in the chair, my feet on the ground, all the places something of me touches something outside of me

stretching

walking slowly

opening the door and allowing the **breeze** to caress my cheek

colouring a picture paying special attention to the colours and the lines

saying one word over and over again to myself like “**curious**”, “**yes**”, “**open**” or “**okay**”

rubbing the special pendant around my neck

I touch a smooth **beach rock** I found that I carry in my pocket

cuddling up to my pet

placing a hand on my **heart or belly**

naming the things I see around me

describing an object in front of me in great detail as if its the first time I’ve seen it

playing I spy

touching my bare feet

reading something inspiring and grounded in what i think is a universal truth

looking at a picture of a time that was happy, calm and strong for me and reminding myself that’s me the me that’s here now too

listening to a song I really like loudly and singing along

I **imagine** I’m a rooted tree and the feelings are like Halifax weather. They might make my branches sway and maybe I’ll lose some leaves but I remain rooted. The weather always changes.



2176 Windsor Street, Halifax N.S.
phone (902) 406-1500 fax (902)406-1505
www.livingwellihc.ca for news, services,
providers and programming

