



## Reclaim Your Vitality by Going into Nature

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Being in nature reminds us that vitality involves creativity and change. In the woods or on a beach, you become aware that nature is continually reinventing and renewing itself. As you think about where your life has become boring or deadening, you might want to reclaim your vitality by going into nature. In natural outdoor spaces, you can experience a shift in your energy and perspective. You might find yourself identifying ways to live with a greater sense of freedom, adventure, and fulfillment.

To take a revitalizing break from your routine, pick a spot in nature where you can spend at least a half an hour uninterrupted, simply observing the natural world. You might want to sit by the edge of an ocean, lake, or river, take a walk in the woods experiencing "forest bathing" (or *shinrin-yoku*, as the Japanese call it) as you immerse yourself in the experience of the world of animals, plants, wind, and sky. If there's no way for you to get outdoors due to a medical or health condition, try to find a spot where you can look out into a natural area through a window. You might want have a notebook and pen with you in case you feel inspired to write about what you're thinking, feeling, and observing while in this space.

Set an intention to learn from nature how you can experience greater vitality. You might even ask nature directly to, "Please help me to feel more enlivened."

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Then, keeping your eyes open, focus on the sights, sounds, and smells all around you. Some of these sensations may be quite subtle, but if you are quiet and willing to pay attention, you can pick up on them. If you see an animal or an insect such as a moth or butterfly, watch its movements.

Take time to look at each plant or tree. Notice what's on the ground. Is there water nearby in a puddle or in the sky in the form of a cloud? Observe it.

Open yourself to any messages from nature that come to you as an inner knowing, some words, a metaphor, or a synchronicity—a meaningful coincidence. What can you learn from the sound of a bird calling as it perches in a tree before taking flight? What do you make of a bird taking flight just as a cloud covers the sun? It may mean nothing, but it may be a synchronicity—a meaningful coincidence. Pay attention to how you feel and what you sense as you have this experience in nature.

You might want to compose a poem about what you're observing. Here's one that nature inspired me to write:

#### **Waves**

*The lake's waves roiled  
blue and mud-brown intermingled  
inexorably moving into shore  
and then again, again, again.  
Where does the water come from,  
and whence does it return?  
Does it learn from each visitation to the shore,  
or does it flow mindlessly?*

*The lake smiles at the question.  
"Look at me," she says.  
"I repeat my dance of life with exquisite variation.  
The sun, the moon, the wind, stars and earth are my  
partners,  
subtly moving with me,  
changing and being changed."*

*The conductor enjoys the dance and orchestration,  
never knowing for sure the actual composition.  
The birds and other animals move to the music, being fed  
and feeding.*

*Humans find their place by dancing  
or are swept away by the music of life and submerged.*

*Fish know how to be in the water.*

Your poem might rhyme or it might not. It might be a haiku, with five syllables in the first line, seven in the next, and five in the third and last line. If you don't feel like composing a poem, you might want to draw a picture or come up with a melody inspired by your natural surroundings.

After at least fifteen minutes in nature, check in with yourself. Do you have a different perspective on your life? Are problems that seemed too burdensome now somewhat relativized, helping you to feel more hopeful about working through them? You might want to write your answers in a notebook or journal.

As you think about what you just experienced, you might realize that something changed in your surroundings. Think about how you responded to those changes? Did you resent them at first and then come to accept them? Did anything unexpected happen, and if so, what was it? How did you feel about that event or the lack of anything unusual occurring while you sat there?

Maybe your time in nature made you feel bored or restless. If so, ask yourself, "What lesson does my boredom [or restlessness] have for me?" and wait for an answer. Then imagine your boredom or restlessness is standing in front of you. Ask it, "What do I need to let go of to feel a greater sense of vitality?" and "What do I need to bring in to feel a greater sense of vitality?" You might need to exchange a habit, feeling, thought, or belief for something that makes you feel more excited about your life. You can also ask nature these questions about lessons, giving up something, and bringing in something else. Being bored or fidgety in nature is an experience worth pondering.

I believe nature observes us as we observe it and has many lessons to teach us. If you're feeling that you've been robotically going through life lately, check in with nature to see if it can help you reclaim your vitality and perhaps learn something about yourself.

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