

## SENIOR SCAPE: Nature and Your Health

By Christina Doyle

Well, the end of summer is not so far off! If you haven't already discovered what is all the excitement about being outside, then please read on.

Not only in my own family but in countless others, people have discovered the health benefits of just being outside. Yes, outside on your balcony, outside in the park, outside in your backyard or even if you are agile, out into the forest. Many of these individuals that I have spoken to have shared their anxieties and the depression they feel through life's challenges and have the antidote for all of this, through being in the presence of nature itself.

There is something so beautiful, so life-giving in being outside.

Often people who say that being outside with nature helps them feel that they have more energy, they feel happier and enjoy a greater sense of purpose and meaning in their lives.

I know this sounds impossible, but being outside for any length of time is good for you.

When one is outside, individuals seem to behave in a more environmentally sustainable way. No matter what you are going through, and all of us are going through something.

Literally taking in the lush scents of natural surroundings?lake air, flowers, fresh dirt, dewy grass?jump-starts the body's limbic system, a.k.a. the brain's key emotional center.

It regulates the fight-or-flight response and is involved in the expression of emotions and memory formation and retrieval.

When you breathe air close to nature, you're also more likely to inhale phytoncides, essential oils released from plants and trees, such as oak and pine, that promote the function of natural killer cells in the body (which are key to the immune system) and are being studied as a cancer treatment. Nature exposure also lowers our risk of cardiovascular disease, improves our immune system, increases self-esteem and encourages social connections. A recent study found that nature can even speed up healing.

We could definitely learn something from the Indigenous peoples in Canada and their cultural ways of living in harmony with nature and respecting what our natural habitat has to offer.

It is not just vacations such as camping or fishing trips that can be therapeutic. Don't worry if you are not one of these individuals, the key is spending even a short period of time with nature results in the same significant physical and psychological health benefits. Not only can fresh air and natural scenery have a positive impact on adults, outdoor activities for children can also improve the overall quality of kids' lives.

With increased exposure to natural sunlight, incidents of seasonal affective disorder decrease diminish. When individuals are exposed to natural sunlight, the vitamin D in their skin helps to elevate their moods as well. So, dear readers ?hit the road Jack! I sincerely hope this article convinces you to be as much outside as possible each day.

I have just turned to my spouse and see the benefits he has had as well, lower blood pressure, strong heart, loss of weight and a renewed sense of energy and life. It doesn't get better than that. By the way, don't forget your camera and maybe you can capture a little nature on your film and bring it home with you. Take care of yourselves and remember, every day is a gift, so make the most of your time and enjoy all what God has to offer.

Have a wonderful August and see you in September!

### HAPPENINGS AT THE SENIORS CENTRE

THE EVERGREEN CHOIR has a new Director, Dan Lenz. The Choir starts rehearsals on Wednesday, September 12 at 1:45 pm for picking up their music and they start singing at 2 pm. The rehearsals finish each Wednesday at 3:30 pm. For those of you who have been considering joining a choir, this is a perfect opportunity. You will meet Dan on September 12. No experience is necessary. You don't have to audition. You just have to enjoy singing. You will make new friends and feel wonderful at the end of each rehearsal.

SHINING CHARLEVOIX, MAGNIFICENT MONT TREMBLANT AND QUAINT QUEBEC CITY this is how the poster for the planned trip to the Province of Quebec reads. If you are interested, the trip takes place September 16 to 22 and costs \$1699 per person for two sharing a room, and \$2299 for a single room. The person to contact regarding this trip at the Seniors Centre is Andrew Bailey at 905-727-3123 extension 3611.