

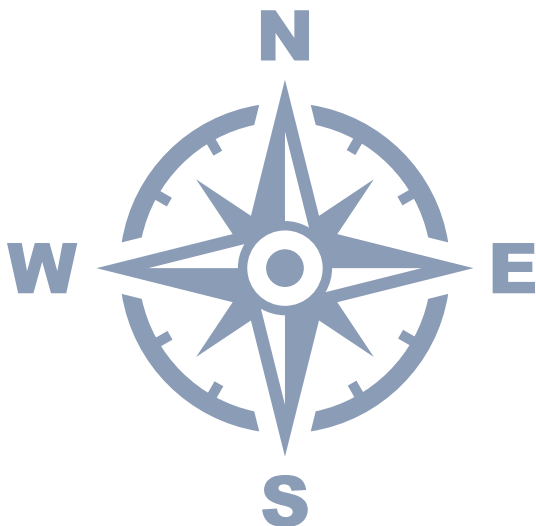


# Map your life outdoors

A nature time planner for  
active military members,  
veterans, and their families.



DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL RESOURCES



Special thanks to and credit for booklet content and ideas from:  
Anderson A. R. (2022). The great outdoors: Engaging with nature for  
mental health. Department of Veterans Affairs South Central MIRECC,  
Houston, TX.

# Why time in nature is important

Time in nature is scientifically proven to make us healthier and happier. It supports better immune functioning, better attention, relaxation, mental well-being, and reduced blood pressure. For active military members and veterans, it can help to manage stress, recover from painful past experiences, and succeed as civilians. You don't have to camp in the wilderness for weeks to experience these benefits. Even frequent, brief nature time can be a powerful tool for improving your health and well-being.





## Your experiences with nature

Think about what motivates you to get outdoors and why. Consider the following three questions then write your answers in the space provided.



**1** What nature activities do you engage in during the week? Activities can occur in a variety of places (e.g., parks, yards, forests, gardens, etc.).

**2** How would you describe your relationship to nature?

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**3** How has your attitude toward nature changed over your life?

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## Identify your outdoor activities

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The next step is to create a plan for engaging with nature more. Focus on activities that require nature in some way (e.g., not court or field sports).

- First, create a list of nature activities you want to do and will enjoy. Try to think of at least three activities.
- Consider how challenging it may be for you to participate in each of these activities. Make sure you have an activity for at least two challenge levels.
- Then think about what you might need to participate: transportation, equipment, instruction, money, social support, or more information.





Write or draw your answers in the table.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Challenge Level</b> Easy/Medium/Hard	<b>Resources and Support Needed</b>

# Plan your outdoor activities

## Easy activities

Select 1-2 activities from the “easy” category that you can do each week. For each activity, write a goal that is specific, you can commit to, and that you really want to do. See example below.

Activity Goal	Location	Day/Time
<i>20-minute walk with my neighbor</i>	<i>Path near river</i>	<i>Friday evenings</i>

## More challenging activities

Select 1-2 activities from the “medium” or “hard” categories that you can plan for in the next 3-6 months. See example below.

Activity Goal	Location	Day/Time
<i>Use an all-terrain track chair</i>	<i>Crow Wing State Park</i>	<i>June 18</i>



## Reflection

Take a moment to reflect on your plan to make sure it aligns with your motivation and values.

**How motivated are you to reach your nature time goals?**

1          2          3          4          5

(1= Not motivated at all, 5=Very motivated)

**How important is it for you to reach your nature time goals?**

1          2          3          4          5

(1=Not at all important, 5=The most important thing for me right now)

If you answered 2 or less for either question, what would help increase your response(s)?

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## Staying committed and problem solving

Here are some suggestions for sticking to your plan and getting help if you need it.

- Focus on completing easier activities first.
- Change your goal to make it more achievable. Opt for a 15-minute walk instead of a 30-minute one.
- Invite friends or family to join you for support and motivation.
- Use reminders (written or on a phone) to help prompt you to do your activity.
- Schedule check-ins with trusted family or friends to stay on track.
- Reach out to VA staff or clinicians to get guidance on moving forward. Health and Wellness Coaches or Recreation Therapists are great people to help you with these goals.



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## Resources

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- Call 988 if you or a loved one is experiencing a mental health crisis.
- Mental health resources at the VA  
[va.gov/health-care/health-needs-conditions/mental-health](https://va.gov/health-care/health-needs-conditions/mental-health).
- Whole Health resources at the VA  
[va.gov/wholehealth](https://va.gov/wholehealth).
- View the full “Great Outdoors Veteran Guide” online for more research, resources, and information on this topic.  
[mirecc.va.gov/MIRECC/VISN16/docs/the-great-outdoors-veteran-guide.pdf](https://mirecc.va.gov/MIRECC/VISN16/docs/the-great-outdoors-veteran-guide.pdf).

### Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

- All-Terrain Track Chairs  
[mndnr.gov/state\\_parks/track-chairs.html](https://mndnr.gov/state_parks/track-chairs.html).
- Permits and Licenses for People with Disabilities  
[mndnr.gov/licenses/special/index.html](https://mndnr.gov/licenses/special/index.html).
- Accessible Outdoors  
[mndnr.gov/accessible\\_outdoors/index.html](https://mndnr.gov/accessible_outdoors/index.html).
- Benefits for Military Personnel and Veterans  
[mndnr.gov/licenses/military/index.html](https://mndnr.gov/licenses/military/index.html).

## Share your feedback

Please tell us about  
your experience  
using this nature  
time planner!



[forms.office.com/g/mjab6bJHGx](https://forms.office.com/g/mjab6bJHGx)



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