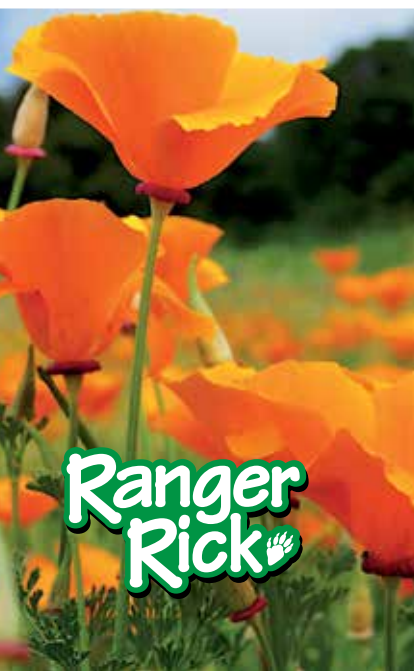




ASK SCARLETT

CAN BEING OUTSIDE HELP ME DE-STRESS?
AND MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT NATURE AND YOU



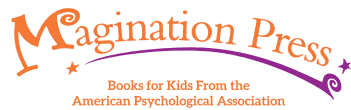
**Ranger
Rick**



BECKY BAINES

**ASK
SCARLETT**

For Ellie, Eva, and Daisy—*BB*



**CAN BEING OUTSIDE HELP ME DE-STRESS?
AND MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT NATURE AND YOU**

by BECKY BAINES

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Published by Magination Press in partnership with National Wildlife Federation
maginationpress.org and nwf.org

Distributed by Lerner Publisher Services
lernerbooks.com

Written by Becky Baines
Edited by Katie ten Hagen and Julie Spalding
Book design by Chris Gaugler
Produced by WonderLab Group, LLC
Printed by Versa Press, East Peoria, IL

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Baines, Rebecca, author.
Title: Ask Scarlett : can being outside help me de-stress? and more questions about nature and you / Rebecca Baines.
Other titles: can being outside help me de-stress? and more questions about nature and you
Description: Washington, DC : Magination Press, [2025] | Includes bibliographical references. | Summary: "In this guide, Scarlett explains why nature helps the brain, how it supports creativity, how it helps kids become planet protectors, and how being in nature and outside has healthy benefits for mind and body!"—Provided by publisher.
Identifiers: LCCN 2024038492 (print) | LCCN 2024038493 (ebook) | ISBN 9781433845246 (paperback) | ISBN 9781433845253 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Stress in children—Juvenile literature. | Stress (Psychology)—Prevention—Juvenile literature. | Stress management—Juvenile literature. | Nature—Psychological aspects—Juvenile literature.
Classification: LCC BF723.S75 B36 2025 (print) | LCC BF723.S75 (ebook) | DDC 155.91—dc23/eng/20241105
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024038492>
LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024038493>

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

MAGINATION PRESS • WASHINGTON, DC
AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION



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Introduction

Calling all curious kids, inquisitive critters, and anyone else who's just kind of nosy-by-nature...welcome to my book, *Ask Scarlett*, where readers just like you ask me, Scarlett Fox, all their burning questions about nature, animals, the weather, and more! But when I say more, I mean it. This isn't your average Q&A book. This one is all about you!

That's right! In the next five chapters, you'll discover tips and tricks, surprising science, even a health hack or two, all about ways nature affects your mind and body. Learn to sort fact from fiction as we explore everything from how volcanoes give your body a boost to how earthworms make your food tasty. Discover how waterfalls might give your brain a bump, why sunny weather might make you feel happy, why you sleep better in the middle of December, or what rainy weather has to do with good grades. Can a puppy or kitty help you study for a test? Can the color green really affect your mood? What is nature bathing, and why do so many people do it? Can nature really help you de-stress?

By the time you're done reading, you'll be a lean, mean, relaxing machine. So what are you waiting for? Turn the page! Let's get those paws dirty.



Act Natural



Can being
outside help me
de-stress?

There's no point in
beating around the
blackberry bush—
let's dive right into it!



Getting out in nature can be loads of fun, whether you're camping, climbing, playing sports, or roasting marshmallows over a fire. And having fun helps you feel relaxed and happy. But is there more to it than just fun and games? The answer is yes—and there's lots of science to back it up.

Scientists have discovered that stepping out into the sun for as little as 10 minutes a day can help your body and put your mind at ease. Connecting with nature can instantly boost your mood, make you feel calm, and help you feel less lonely, even if there's no one else around! This is partly because of the chemical effects that being outdoors has on your brain, but also the effects that it has on the rest of your body!

Being outside affects your **hormones**—the chemical messengers that tell your brain how to feel. When you walk through a forest or stroll on the beach, your levels of stress hormones go down, and your levels of feel-good hormones go up.

And, as weird as it sounds, you sleep better after you've spent time outdoors. You have the sun to thank for that! Studies show that regular exposure to daylight helps support your **circadian rhythm**, the natural cycle in your body that tells you when you should be awake and when you should be asleep. When it's time for lights out—you'll really be lights out! And a good night's sleep is super important for a healthy mind and body! Now if you'll excuse me...YAWN...I think it's time to curl up in my den.



SCREEN GETAWAY

Feeling frazzled? Try shaking up your routine! These days, people spend a lot of time stuck behind screens. Whether for fun—watching TV or playing games—or at school on a tablet or computer, it's hard to avoid! But it wasn't too long ago that this kind of screentime wasn't just a few taps away. In your parents' lifetime, the internet

was new technology, and in your grandparents', computers were the latest thing! Research shows that kids today are more stressed out than generations before them. Are screens to blame? Probably not entirely. But it never hurts to step outside for some refreshing fresh air!





Will going out in the heat help me get over my cold?

Runny nose got you down? Unfortunately, there's not much you can do for this one besides wait it out. Despite the popular belief that heat will help you "sweat out a cold," the truth is it's a little too late by the time you're already sick. But, being outside could help prevent you from getting a cold in the first place! That's because soaking up some sun gives you a healthy dose of vitamin D, which boosts your **immune system**—which keeps you healthy. Just don't forget your sunscreen!

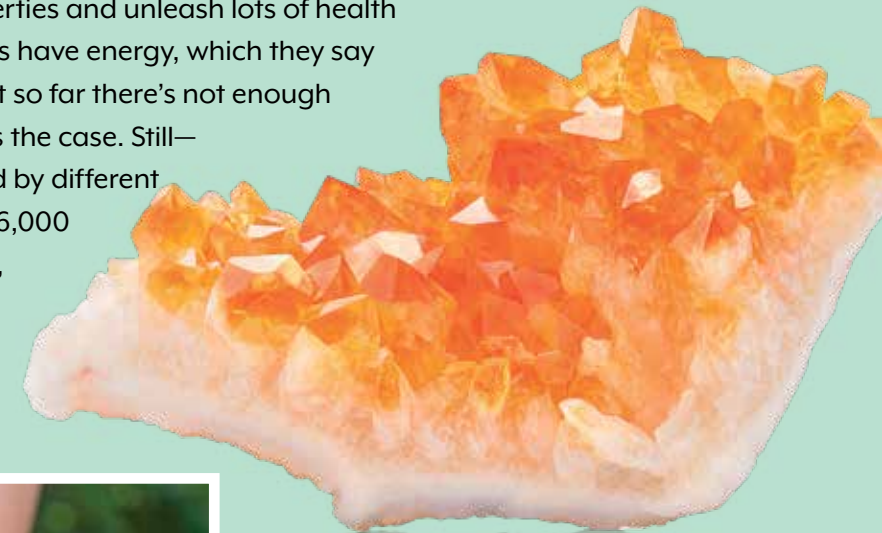


Is "fresh air" good for me?

The data is in—and it's a breath of fresh air! When you're indoors, especially in crowded spaces, there's a higher risk of breathing in **viruses** and other germs. These icky particles in the air have less chance of surviving outdoors where people are more spread out. But also, when you're outside, especially moving around, you usually breathe more deeply, from your diaphragm—the muscle that sits below your lungs. Inside, where you sit more, you tend to breathe shallowly, from the top of your lungs. And deeper breaths get more oxygen to your brain!

Can rocks heal me?

Lots of people believe that certain rocks and crystals can tap into your body's inner healing properties and unleash lots of health benefits. The idea is that crystals have energy, which they say can be transferred to people. But so far there's not enough scientific evidence to prove that is the case. Still—crystal healing has been practiced by different cultures all over the world for over 6,000 years! Whether or not it really helps, crystals are still awfully pretty to look at!



Why do people think walking barefoot on grass is good for them?

Another wild idea is called "grounding"—the practice of walking barefoot on the earth or in water to connect with the electrical charges of the planet. Want to know something even wilder? This one actually works! Scientists measured things like blood cell production and pain levels before and after people practiced grounding. The results show that grounding amps up production of white blood cells, which helps heal aching muscles and fight infections!

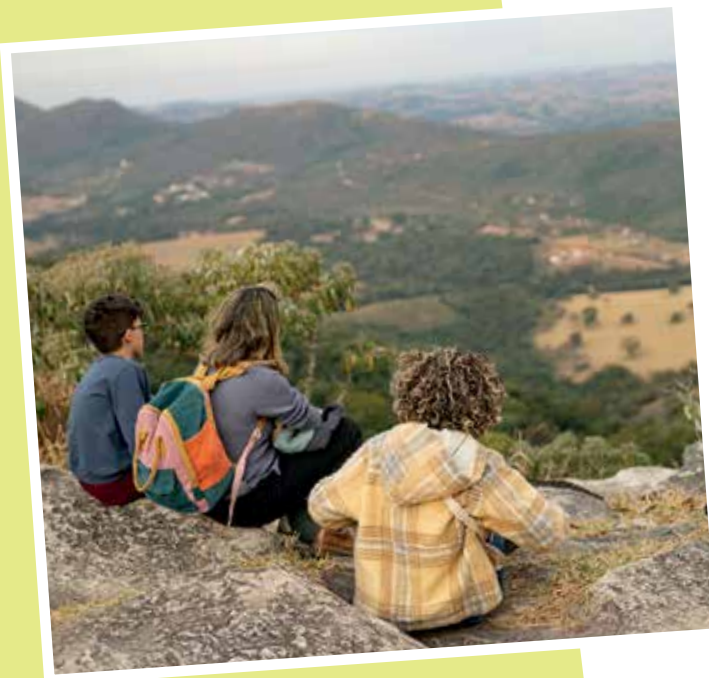


Why is the beach so relaxing?

Close your eyes and picture the last time you went to the beach. The warm sun on your skin. The fluffy sand under your toes. The crashing of the waves in the distance. You. Are. Getting. Very. Sleepy. Just kidding! But that's sometimes the effect the beach has on us! It's what experts call a meditative state—when your body is in full relaxation mode, your mind is clear. And there's an added bonus to that clear mind: you are open to new ideas, and your creativity is at an all-time high. So get out there and get to thinkin'!

Why is it hard to breathe when you climb a mountain?

Well for starters, climbing is hard work! But no—it's not your imagination. It is harder to breathe the higher you go. The air is thinner at higher elevations, which means it has less oxygen than lower elevations where most people are used to living. Oxygen is what we breathe, and when there's less of it, our brains get a little, well, fuzzy. You may feel light-headed and dizzy. Luckily, your body is one smart cookie. To make up for the lack of oxygen, your lungs start producing more red blood cells, which are responsible for delivering oxygen to the rest of your body. Your body eventually adjusts, and your oxygen levels return to normal.



Can nature make you nicer?

Being outside can really make you stop and enjoy the simple things in life: the sun on your face, the wind through your fur; and, of course, adorable woodland creatures like me! But those simple pleasures don't just make you feel better. They can help you develop

empathy. That's right: studies show that time spent basking in the wonders of the wild can make you a more caring friend to people, animals, and the planet. It's also due to the calming effects that nature has on us, allowing us to be present and live in the moment. And partly because of the happy chemicals (**endorphins**) released in our brains when we spend time running and playing outdoors. When we feel happy, present, and fulfilled, it's easier to focus less on ourselves and more on the needs of others.

TREE-TALK

What if I told you that trees are as alive as the baby rabbits that live in dens beneath them—just in a different kind of way? Trees, and all plants for that matter, are living organisms. For the most part, they are self-sufficient, making their own food through a process called photosynthesis, which converts water, sunlight, and carbon dioxide into energy to grow! But it's that very process that makes them so important for life on this planet. Trees provide us with oxygen to breathe, filter

the air so it's cleaner, help hold the planet together (literally) by preventing erosion, provide habitats for diverse wildlife... the list goes on and on.

And even though they may not be able to think and feel like critters can, they are a lot more complex than we once thought. Recent studies prove that they even use their vast root systems to communicate and “talk” to other trees!

Soft fur and wiggly noses? Maybe not. Important and in need of protection? Absolutely!

