



## Go wild to clear your mind...

### When did you last spend several days surrounded by nature?

According to David Strayer\*, a cognitive psychologist, spending at least three days immersed in nature results in the ‘three-day effect’, which is like having your mental windscreen cleaned and your senses recalibrated. Not only do you lose some of the sense of urgency that seems to come with the cares of life, spending time in the great outdoors is a great way to share quality time with your family.

### Slow down and stop the busy work

Strayer says that when you slow down, stop the busy work and immerse yourself in nature that you feel restored and your mental performance improves too. He’s proved his theory by testing creative problem solving in people after three days of hiking in the wilderness – it went up by 50%! He says that after two or three days of slowing down we give our tired brains a rest and our capacity for thinking improves. Lower levels of stress hormones, slower heart rate and feeling calmer are additional benefits. Strayer also says that many of our large scale public health concerns, obesity, depression and near sightedness are all correlated to spending more time indoors. Surely that’s reason enough to get outside more often.

### It's time to get started

So what can you do about immersing yourself and your family in nature? Like many things, it’s about getting started and building up to bigger expeditions. If it’s been awhile since you stepped outside, start with a 15 minute walk in the park, along a creek or at the beach. If you possibly can, take half a day and organise a family picnic or ride your bikes into the country. Doing that already? Then, it’s time to plan a weekend and go bush. You don’t need all the latest gear. Keeping it simple gives everyone more opportunity to be creative and more time to play. The outdoors is an incredible source of beauty and provides the perfect opportunity to introduce bird watching or some other age appropriate activity with the kids. Enjoy a long weekend in nature to get your three days of immersion and experience the improved mental performance it will bring. No technology, routine or deadlines...just imagine how good that’s going to feel!

\*National Geographic, January 2016 <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2016/01/call-to-wild-text>

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- ✓ After three days immersed in nature you experience measurable physiological changes
- ✓ You can create wonderful memories camping or hiking and save money too
- ✓ Get close to nature and do your overstressed brain a favour

*“Look deep into nature and then you will understand everything better.”*

Albert Einstein

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