

Suggested Activities

- ❖ Gardening
- ❖ Collect Bugs
- ❖ Swim
- ❖ Walk or Hike
- ❖ Camp
- ❖ Nature-Based Art
- ❖ Imaginary Play
- ❖ Geo-Caching
- ❖ Collecting "Artifacts"
- ❖ Treasure Hunts
- ❖ Pairing Objects/Concepts with Words
- ❖ Learn Together: Experiments
- ❖ Rest Together
- ❖ Experience All of Your Senses
- ❖ Get a Pet



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**Therapeutic Support
Deaf+Autism Experiences**

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Parenting is Stressful

Along with the typical stressors of parenting (changes in sleep patterns, schedules, financial commitments, time commitments, etc.), parenting a unique child poses additional stressors, which may include:

Grief	Educational Choices	Intervention Coordination
Various Emotional Responses:	Fear, Anxiety, Confusion	Overwhelm, Guilt, Shame
Lack of (or Mixed) Information	Disruption in Attachment	Additional Time Constraints
Social Strains	Over-Protection and Hovering	Resentment and Burn-Out



“Nurturing parent-child interactions... provide the foundation for healthy brain development, emotional health, positive social relationships, and an optimal developmental trajectory.”
 -Hanson & Lynch (2013)

Nature: Combat Stress & Enhance Relationship

Multiple forms of nature exposure and nature immersion have been shown to have positive impacts on our physical, cognitive, and mental health. Results include:

- ❖ Reduction in stress hormones (i.e. cortisol)
- ❖ Increase in neurotransmitters associated with empathy, pleasure, and attachment (i.e. oxytocin, serotonin)
- ❖ Calming of nervous system as measured by reduced heart rates, lowered blood pressure, decreased muscle tension, and reduced skin conductivity (sweating)
- ❖ Improvement of cognitive functioning (i.e. memory, attention span)
- ❖ Improvement in immune system functioning
- ❖ Increase in academic performance (i.e. standardized science scores, vocabulary)

Nature can help:

- ✓ Reduce Parent stress
- ✓ Parent-child relationship and bonding
- ✓ Enhance parental cognitions, aiding in problem-solving and decision-making
- ✓ Child language development
- ✓ Child physical development
- ✓ Emotional and physical restoration

Nature Promotes Family Well-Being

Perhaps one of the most valuable aspects of nature exposure for parents of unique children, is the way in which nature supports resiliency and inspires hope.

“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature -- the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.”

-Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

