



Ponder the Quotes

What would happen if you sat in nature and chose a tree, or leaf, or flower, or bird, or the sky and simply contemplated it?

What might it teach you?

How might it change you?

Nature and Childhood

Toward the beginning of the podcast, the conversation focused on early love of, and for, nature (in childhood).

Describe the role nature played in your own childhood. Did time in nature shape you? If so, how? How do you think your childhood experience of nature continues to shape your life today?



The Soft Fascination with Nature that Brings Contemplation and Calm

Around minute 17:00, the conversation turns to the way in which our participation in, and with, nature opens us to contemplation and calm. If there are two life-dynamics we desperately need more of, it's contemplation and calm.

- What is contemplation? The word itself comes from the Latin *contemplatio* meaning "the act of looking at," and *contemplari* meaning "to gaze attentively, observe," or "to mark out a space for observation." It also has as a root the Latin *templum*, meaning "piece of ground consecrated for reverence and awe (like a temple). Nature is the ultimate temple where we can contemplate life in its varieties. It also enables us to calm our senses and the endless rumination that overtakes us moment to moment.
- What is calm? The condition of equanimity and peace - in body and mind - no matter the environment or circumstances.

Nature provides us the most unique space possible for both contemplation and calm. Consider the cited research below that reveals what humans have intuitively known for centuries:

Slow movements such as the ripples of water or clouds moving across the sky place effortless demands on our working memory but enough to distract us from spiraling rumination, self-blame and hopelessness. Researchers call this capacity to hold our attention the "soft fascination" of nature.

Entering this state of effortless attention can occur in a variety of ways—walking in the woods, hiking along a trail in a totally natural environment, or sitting by a stream watching water tumble over rocks. It seems that the experience of being in nature is transformative in and of itself—it can cause a person's emotional state to be uplifted and mental balance to be restored. Being in nature is truly refreshing in a very deep, meaningful way.

<https://cortescurrents.ca/being-in-nature-is-good-for-us/>

Time in Nature to Calm and Contemplate

If you are able, go outside, do so now (even if you are with your group). Take five or ten minutes to contemplate the nature around you. Or use it as a time of meditation. You can take it all of nature in, or focus your attention on a tree or bird or other element of nature. Simply take in the soft fascination of nature and let it speak to you. Become one with nature, because you ARE nature. You are not separate from nature. You are a part of nature. Feel the spiritual energy that Goodall called God. *Even if most of your surroundings are "man made" find some element of nature to focus on.*

After this time in nature, come back as a group and talk about what happened. What did you sense? What were the moments in nature like? Did you feel a calm? Did you contemplate a part of nature? Did you feel an energy or not? How did these moments affect you?



One Thing In Nature This Week

Reflect individually, or discuss as a group, what one activity you can do this week to experience the calming power of nature.

