

THE NATURE PRINCIPLE

Human Restoration and the End of Nature-Deficit Disorder

“The future will belong to the nature-smart – those individuals, families, businesses and political leaders who develop a deeper understanding of the transformative power of the natural world, and who balance the virtual with the real. The more high-tech we become, the more nature we need.”

— Richard Louv

Some Key Concepts

One day in Seattle, a woman literally grabbed my lapels and said, “Listen to me, *adults* have nature-deficit disorder, too.” She was right, of course. In 2005, in *Last Child in the Woods*, I introduced the term nature-deficit disorder, not as a medical diagnosis, but as a way to describe the growing gap between children and nature. After the book’s publication, I heard many adults speak with heartfelt emotion, even anger, about this separation, but also about their own sense of loss.



Most of us desire a fuller life. By its broadest interpretation, nature-deficit disorder is an atrophied awareness, a diminished ability to find meaning in the life that surrounds us, whatever form it takes. This shrinkage of our lives has a direct impact on our physical, mental and societal health. However, not only can nature-deficit disorder be reversed, but our lives can be vastly enriched through our relationship with nature.



As a species, we are most animated when our days and nights on Earth are touched by the natural world. We can find immeasurable joy in the birth of a child, a great work of art, or falling in love. But all of life is rooted in nature, and a separation from that wider world desensitizes and diminishes our bodies and spirits.

Reconnecting to nature, nearby and far, opens new doors to health, creativity and wonder. It is never too late.



The Nature Principle is an amalgam of converging theories and trends as well as a reconciliation with old truths. This Principle holds that a reconnection to the natural world is fundamental to human health, well-being, spirit and survival.

Primarily a statement of philosophy, the Principle is supported by a growing body of theoretical, anecdotal, and empirical research which describes the restorative power of nature – its impact on our senses and intelligence; on our physical, psychological and spiritual health; and on the bonds of family, friendship and the multi-species community. Illuminated by ideas and stories from good people I have met, this book asks:

What would our lives be like if our days and nights were as immersed in nature as they are today in electronics? How can each of us help create that life-enhancing world, not only in a hypothetical future, but right now for our families and for ourselves?



Seven overlapping precepts, based on the transformative powers of nature, can reshape our lives now and in the future. Together they form a singular force.

- The more high-tech our lives become, the more nature we need; the goal is to achieve **natural balance**
- The mind/body/nature connection, also called **Vitamin N** (for nature), will enhance physical and mental health.
- Utilizing both technology *and* nature experience will increase our intelligence, creative thinking and productivity, giving birth to **the hybrid mind**.
- **Human/nature social capital** will enrich and redefine community to include all living things.
- In the new **purposeful place**, natural history will be as important as human history to regional and personal identity.
- Through **biophilic design**, our homes, workplaces, neighborhoods and towns will not only conserve watts, but also produce human energy.
- In relationship with nature, an expanded ecological consciousness in **the high performance human** will conserve and *create* natural habitat – and new economic potential – where we live, learn, work and play.



Every day, our relationship with nature, or the lack of it, influences our lives. This has always been true. But in the 21st century, our survival – or thrival – will require a transformative framework for that relationship, a reunion of humans with the rest of nature.



Our sense of urgency grows. In 2008, for the first time in history, more than half of the world's population lived in towns and cities. The traditional ways that humans have experienced nature are vanishing, along with biodiversity.

At the same time, our culture's faith in technological immersion seems to have no limits, and we drift ever deeper into a sea of circuitry. We even hear talk of the "transhuman" or "posthuman" era in which people are optimally enhanced by technology, or of a "postbiological universe" where, as NASA's Steven Dick puts it, "the majority of intelligent life has evolved beyond flesh and blood intelligence...."

"The Nature Principle" is not an argument against these concepts or their proponents – at least not the ones who are devoted to the ethical use of technology to expand human capacities. But "The Nature Principle" does make the case that we're getting ahead of ourselves.

We have yet to fully realize, or even adequately study, the enhancement of human capacities through the power of nature.



Young, old, or in between, we can reap extraordinary benefits by connecting – or reconnecting – to nature. For the jaded and weary among us, the outdoor world can expand our senses and reignite a sense of awe and wonder not felt since we were children;

it can support better health, enhanced creativity, new careers and business opportunities, and act as a bonding agent for families and communities. Nature can help us feel fully alive.

The skeptic will say the nature prescription is at best problematic, given our quickening destruction of nature, and the skeptic will be right. This is why the Nature Principle is about conservation, but also about restoring nature while we restore ourselves; about creating *new* natural habitats where they once were or never were, in our homes, workplaces, neighborhoods, cities, suburbs, and farms. It's about the power of living in nature - not *with* it, but *in* it. The 21st Century will be the century of human restoration in the natural world.

Martin Luther King, Jr. often said that any movement – any culture – will fail if it cannot paint a picture of a world that people will want to go to. The first brush strokes are already visible.

“The Nature Principle” is about the people creating that world, in their daily lives and beyond, and about how you can, too.



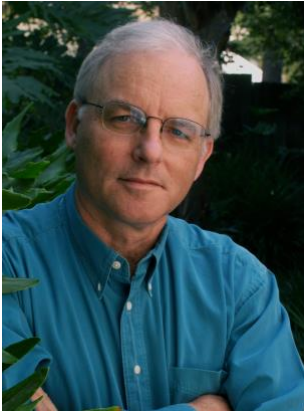
The natural world's benefits to our cognition and health will be irrelevant if we continue to destroy the nature around us. That destruction is assured without a human reconnection to nature.

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were as immersed in nature as they are today in electronics?
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RICHARD LOUV

Biography

DECEMBER, 2010



Richard Louv is a journalist and author of eight books about the connections between family, nature and community. His next book is “**THE NATURE PRINCIPLE: Human Restoration and the End of Nature-Deficit Disorder**” (May 2011, Algonquin), which offers a new vision of the future, in which our lives are as immersed in nature as they are in technology. This future, available to all of us right now, offers better psychological, physical and spiritual health for people of every age.

“**LAST CHILD IN THE WOODS: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder**” (Algonquin), translated into 9 languages and published in 13 countries, has stimulated an international conversation about the relationship between children and nature. Louv is also the chairman and co-founder of the Children & Nature Network (www.childrenandnature.org), an organization helping build the movement to connect today’s children and future generations to the natural world. Louv coined the term Nature-Deficit Disorder® which has become the defining phrase of this important issue.

In 2008, he was awarded the Audubon Medal, presented by the National Audubon Society. Prior recipients have included Rachel Carson, E. O. Wilson and President Jimmy Carter. Louv is also the recipient of the Cox Award for 2007, Clemson University’s highest honor, for “sustained achievement in public service” and has been a Clemson visiting professor. Among other awards, Louv is the recipient of the 2008 San Diego Zoological Society Conservation Medal, the 2008 George B. Rabb Conservation Medal from the Chicago Zoological Society, and the 2009 International Making Cities Livable Jane Jacobs Award. He also serves as Honorary Co-chairman, with artist Robert Bateman, of Canada’s national Children and Nature Alliance.

Louv has written for The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Times of London, and other major publications. He has appeared on many national TV shows, including NBC’s Today Show and Nightly News, CBS Evening News, ABC’s Good Morning America, and NPR’s Morning Edition, Fresh Air, and Talk of the Nation. Between 1984 and 2007 he was a columnist for The San Diego Union-Tribune and has been a columnist and member of the editorial advisory board for Parents magazine. Louv served as an advisor both to the Ford Foundation’s Leadership for a Changing World award program and to the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. He is on the board of directors of ecoAmerica and a member of the Citistates Group. He has appeared before the Domestic Policy Council in the White House as well as at major governmental and professional conferences, nationally and internationally, most recently as keynote speaker at the American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference.

He is married to Kathy Frederick Louv and the father of two young men, Jason, 29 and Matthew, 23. He would rather fish than write.