

## 30 minutes for 30 days challenge

**By Sarah Sobanski**

When I first read the provincial 30 minutes for 30 days challenge press release I thought it said Ontario ?grove?ment instead of government ? fitting, if you think about it.

The province has teamed up with Ontario Parks for August. It wants to challenge you to ?recharge your connection with nature while improving health and mental well-being.? According to the release the challenge stems from a David Suzuki Foundation project that encourages people to get outside for 30 minutes a day.

I am really excited about this because I have been looking for an excuse to get out to Algonquin Park all summer. Because of rain and commitments and whatever else I haven't been able to go. Maybe you feel the same ? like summer is slipping through your fingers.

You hear it all the time. Your eyes hurt from staring at a screen all day, your back hurts from lifting in a warehouse all day and then to put away the day's worries, people come home and sit in front of the TV or sit on the lake and have a beer and a smoke. Doing these things aren't the healthiest options, but they're what we know and they usually do the trick to unwind. Too much sitting around however, makes you restless.

According to Ontario Parks, ?studies show that being regularly immersed in nature can prevent shortsightedness, while listening to nature sounds can decrease stress, and the scent of fresh pine has been known to reduce depression and anxiety.?

There is something to be said about walking away from the screens that interrupt our lives every day ? or just getting away from anything average about the day in general. Going for a half hour walk after dinner can turn your mood around, or shake out your limbs so you feel fatigued physically to help you get to sleep ? as opposed to mentally, where you lie staring at the ceiling.

Bancroft has as many labourers as it does desk-jobbers however, and the last thing someone who's been running around all day wants to do, is add another chore on the clock before relax time.

I'm not sure when exactly it happens, but somewhere along the line we start putting exercise in the same category as work ? between little league to high school sports and working full time. Getting out and moving gets set at the bottom of the priority list and that's just not healthy.

?Time in nature is about getting outside and taking time to notice and connect with the sights and sounds around you? Time in nature can be as simple as turning off your electronics and finding the nearest green space. Even a small urban park can be beneficial if you relax and use your senses. Listen for bird songs, breathe fresh air and watch for local wildlife.?

Get out your calendar. Mark one day a week for an adventure. A trip to Algonquin Park or a trip to Silent Lake Park on Aug. 16 when park access for all Ontario Parks is free for the day ?to help reenergize and complete the last half of the 30x30 challenge.? For every other day, get outside. It's as easy as going for a saunter down the road, or leaning back in a kayak to see what you can see.

Maybe hit Millennium Park and toss a Frisbee around ? no one was ever intimidated by a Frisbee. Document how being in nature regularly makes you feel. See if it helps your moods or lifts your spirits ? I'm betting it will, but don't forget your umbrella.

You can sign up for the 30x30 challenge on the Ontario Parks website or share your experiences with others with #30x30challenge.

Be sure to share with us on our Facebook and Twitter pages as well: Bancroft This Week and

@BancroftTWeek.