

Survey Says...

Results: Have You Ever Been Inspired By Nature?

A **big** thank you to all of you who were able to take part in my informal survey, *Have You Ever Been Inspired By Nature?* I'd like to share the highlights...

On the whole, the poll reflected an audience of individuals with a love for nature, in fact results show just over 90% of those who took the survey felt comfortable out in nature. The same percentage (just over 90%) “tuned into nature” on a daily basis, the remaining pollers were aware of nature in their lives on a weekly basis.

When asked, *what was the first thing to come to mind when you think of nature*, the responses fell into three categories. Many attributed **spiritual & peaceful connections** to nature like: *solitude, oneness, breathing, “being a part of it,” or, “the preciousness of every living being,” and God.* Other words carried a personal, **emotive response** as well, such as *quiet, calm, solace, peace, beauty, strength, and joy.* Still other descriptions touched more on the **ecological aspects** associated with nature like *open space, trees, animals, plants, rocks, green, and diversity.* Specific environments were also mentioned: *desert, sand dunes, mountains and lakes/streams.* Some responses did combine all three of these vital connections, particularly from individuals who also stated a lifelong, personal connection to nature and/or careers directly related to nature.

Of those surveyed, 86% said they have been creatively inspired by nature! Although one participant who checked “no” shared that they wished they were creatively inspired, but that the *“best I can do is take photos.”* I would reason that sounds like a perfectly creative way to express yourself! You don't have to be Ansel Adams to capture something that tells a story or simply moves you. In any capacity, it is a valuable way to fuel your memory, open up your creative visualization and thinking, and document a moment that was important to you at that time—creative expression in action!

Another participant stated that they couldn't really claim that nature inspired them to create anything, but that they did *“like to look at it and play in it.”* If you can easily relate to this, I encourage you to take note of how the rest of the day goes for you after playing around outside. The benefits of “nature play/outdoor play” were underestimated until recently where nature play has been shown to dramatically increase job and student performances! Perhaps experiences with nature infuses the mind with creative thought and increased problem solving skills you apply to your job or in your daily relationships.

Finally, **100% of those who felt creatively inspired by nature shared a variety of ways in which they expressed their connection to nature, creating the following nature inspired results:**

- programs and exhibitions
- writing/poetry
- drawing, painting, sculptural artforms
- music and singing
- meditation for problem solving and ideas
- energy and stimulation of the creative process
- teaching
- outdoor play (something of which the value of is overlooked all too often!)
- increased self-awareness
- photography
- gardening and landscaping
- exploration, observation

- activism
- design elements

What I found encouraging was how nature played such a significant role in the creative process for those who are already comfortable in nature, and how that creativity took on *many* forms! Imagine the affects on individuals willing to become more aware of the presence of nature in their lives, who were open to personal experiences in nature, thus allowing this alternative source of inspiration to boost their creative practice. Nature can be a fantastic tool for self-expression!

Where do you put yourself in relation to this information? Do you agree that nature can help fuel the creative process? What does nature evoke in you? How does this reflect your willingness to move beyond your comfort zone(s)?