



## June 2023 News and Notes

### Making Time for the Here and Now

By Robin Joy Berenson, PhD, LMFT

So much of our world these days is on the other side of the screen. Whether computer, smart phone, or tablet, we get our work done, stay in touch, keep up with the news *out there*. What happened to the pleasure of being here now?

**Get outside!** What can be more restorative than time out of doors? Longer daylight hours and warm weather offer multiple opportunities to enjoy time outside. Schedule after-dinner walks, spend Sunday mornings in the garden, or go hiking into the forest, up to the ridge, along a coastal trail. Plan picnic outings. For suggestions on where to go, visit <https://www.marincountyparks.org/depts/pk/divisions/open-space>

The health benefits of getting out into nature are well-known. Some are easy to perceive: More energy, improved mood, less stress (including lower blood pressure) and better sleep. Some may be less apparent: Better concentration, improved short-term memory, and greater creativity. Health care professionals have noted for years that patients experience faster recovery from surgery or illness when exposed to a garden or other natural setting.

**Indulge your creativity:** For many of us, the hands-on act of making is supremely satisfying. Why not give yourself the occasional morning, afternoon, or weekend to let your imagination play?



- Pull out a notebook and pen to jot a memory, write a poem or a short story, rewrite a fairy tale, or record your thoughts and feelings.
- Bring out the paints, pastels, the paper, or collage materials to see what emerges.
- In the kitchen, recreate your favorite dishes, best pastries; give yourself time for the bread to rise. Dare a recipe you've never tried.
- Enjoy the quiet rhythms of knitting, quilting, spinning, or weaving.
- Whether you are the musician or the dancer, holding the instrument in your hands, or moving your body, music brings another dimension into our lives.

**Make Time to Reconnect:** Since the pandemic began, so many events, meetings, and visits, personal and professional, have moved online. It may have been a while since you had the chance to spend relaxed time – in person – with some of the special people in your life.

*The Good Life*, a book documenting the results of a major study on human behavior, reports: “Good relationships lead to health and happiness. The trick is that those relationships must be nurtured.”<sup>1</sup> Isolation and loneliness, on the other hand, can lead to poor health outcomes, as U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek H. Murthy has warned.

Do yourself and your friends a favor and make a point of reaching out, making a date to get together. Bring them along on your outdoor excursion, or invite them for a day of creative play.

## Community Institute for Psychotherapy

1330 Lincoln Ave #201, San Rafael, CA 94901-2141  
Phone (415) 459-5999 Fax (415) 459-5602 [www.cipmarin.org](http://www.cipmarin.org)

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/01/harvard-happiness-study-relationships/672753/>