

Why Students Need to Nature Today More Than Ever

In 2017, the rising fever of victimhood, safe spaces, and social justice reached the campus of Evergreen College in Washington state. Its arrival launched married professors, Bret Weinstein and Heather Heying, onto the public stage as progressive individuals who disagreed with the mantra advanced by those aligned with them politically.

But the ability to disagree and buck societal trends is something Weinstein and Heying have been doing for quite some time. In a [recent article](#) for *The New York Times*, Heying describes her experiences leading young students on trips through exotic and dangerous places, such as jungles and coral reefs. These trips, she explains, were not a walk in the park; rather, they were first-hand experiences in risk-taking and separation from the comforts of modern life.

*“Over the course of several trips, I saw students rise to challenges in ways that they simply could not at home. I purposefully sought out field sites that were remote not just because nature is more interesting and intact in such places ... but **also because encountering nature in its least disturbed state often comes at the ‘cost’ of having no connection to the outside world. Far from the virtual eyes that document our every move, people are revealed, to themselves and to others.***

In the field, I watched students descend into their own darkness, depression gripping them, and I watched as they emerged from it, stronger and more grounded.”

What Heying describes is something we’ve lost. Sure, we’re trying to regain some of it by passing laws which let [kids roam free](#), but will such laws get to the root of the [adulthood](#)

[crisis](#) America is experiencing? In all likelihood, no.

Heying hints that part of the growing process is not simply taking risks and enduring obstacles. It also involves extracting oneself from the digital vortex for a time.

Let's face it: Few of us like this idea. It reveals our own technological habits, which often aren't pretty. But while it makes us uncomfortable, it's also essential if we want to raise young adults who think and understand the world in which they live. Author Rod Dreher explains this in his best-selling book, [The Benedict Option](#):

"Technology itself is a kind of liturgy that teaches us to frame our experiences in the world in certain ways and that, if we aren't careful, profoundly distorts our relationship to God, to other people, and to the material world – and even our self-understanding."

Dreher goes on to say that our refusal to occasionally extract ourselves from this pseudo-world we have constructed results in "a gradual inability to pay attention, to focus, and to think deeply."

A recent Harris Poll found that only one-third of Americans [report being happy](#). Could America's increasing inability to reason, think, and focus be behind such mass unhappiness? And would such problems be resolved if we were more willing to take the risk and disconnect ourselves once in a while from the pseudo-world we have created?

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