

# Connecting with nature is literally at your feet

by Mark Pavilons

“Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.” – Albert Einstein

Well, Albert wasn't just a scientist, but a pretty wise man.

It seems this connection with nature – with the Earth and everything it contains – is a two-way street.

Khalil Gibran said the Earth itself “delights to feel your bare feet and the winds long to play with your hair.”

Research has confirmed what nature lovers have always known – connecting with nature is good for your health, and your soul. Research has also shown that walking barefoot – on the grass, ground or beach – provides our bodies with an abundant supply of antioxidant and free-radical busting electrons. It's natural energy that's all around us, if we know just how to plug in.

According to Dr. James Oschman, an energy medicine expert: “Our main hypothesis is that connecting the body to the Earth enables free electrons from the Earth's surface to spread over and into the body, where they can have antioxidant effects.”

So my friends, my advice – toss the shoes and sandals and go free!

I remember the days when the family ventured annually to the venerable Delawana Inn. While I brought plenty of socks, I don't think I wore a single pair the whole time I was there. Liberating.

Walking barefoot, given the fancy name of “grounding” or “earthing,” offers many benefits like reduced inflammation, improved sleep and even improved tissue and cell repair. It releases endorphins which can improve our mood, anxiety and even depression.

Some researchers believe that the Earth connects all living cells through a living matrix held together by electrical conductivity. This behaves similarly to antioxidants as an immune defence system that restores the body's natural immunity by connecting to the matrix.

We have roughly 8,000 nerves in our feet and if you've ever delved into reflexology, you will soon discover the feet are the gateway to well, everything.

I'm not going to get into all the details here, but we all know that being constricted in closed-toe shoes for most of our days has led to a multitude of current ailments. Our ancestors connected with the Earth for hundreds of thousands of years before footwear was invented.

Can a key to good health really be that simple?

We all require Qi (chee) to live and many Indigenous peoples have spoken about the Mother's healing power.

I recently heard that we North Americans spend roughly 93% of our lives indoors. That right there should sound alarm bells. Can you imagine spending only 7% of our lives outside, enjoying the Creator's bounty?

Of course, there are many who work outdoors and others who embrace nature every chance they get. They understand. They are likely the most “grounded” people of all.

I know I'm not alone when I say that every time I look at photos of cottage rentals or vacation ads, my thoughts turn to ditching the

flip-flops and getting dirty! I want to be in that photo, right in the middle of nature's beauty. I don't know if it's as much an escape, or the fact nature calls us.

For me, the deeper the better. I love the idea of visiting a cabin in the woods, remote island or even abandoned castle. Oh, the stories these could tell.

A revolution of sorts has been taking place in the scientific understanding of trees. Some studies confirm that trees are far more alert, social, sophisticated, and intelligent, than we thought. Trees of the same species are communal, and will often form alliances with trees of other species in what can be described as the 'wood-wide web.'

The fine, hair-like root tips of trees join together with microscopic fungal filaments to form this network. It appears to operate as a symbiotic relationship between trees and fungi. The fungi consume roughly 30 per cent of the sugar that trees photosynthesize from sunlight. The sugar is fuel for fungi, as they scavenge the soil for nitrogen, phosphorus and other mineral nutrients, which are then absorbed and consumed by the trees.

This resembles the neural networks in the brain and trees actually share information. They can also help one another defend against disease.

I had an inkling that nature was much more than a bunch of flora and fauna, but this is incredible.

This furthers the idea that all living things on our home world are connected in some way.

Indigenous Peoples have long known this and only recently have we 'westerners' begun to realize the splendor that is Turtle Island.

What took us so long?

Can we harvest the power of flora, too, as our toes dig into Mother Earth? Is the concept of life much more elaborate and intricately in tune than we ever thought? It makes me wonder about this universe of ours and creation itself.

Our odds 'yours and mine' of being here are literally astronomical. For you and I to have been born and lived, our family lineage would have to have been unbroken for thousands of years.

Our ancestors survived plagues, droughts, famine, war in order to continue the family lines.

For our planet to have emerged the way it did is also quite impressive.

'The possibility that intelligence is extremely rare and Earth 'lucked out' remains quite viable,' according to astronomer David Kipping.

If we are so lucky, we should never waste a second exploring this world.

William Shakespeare once wrote that 'one touch of nature makes the whole world kin.'

Indeed, Bill, indeed.