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How are those New Year's resolutions going? 3 ways forests can help



Sustainable Forestry Initiative
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If your resolve is already waning, you're in good company. According to one study by the University of Scranton, only eight percent of us see our resolutions through to the end of the year. Additional research by the university shows that blaming yourself for falling short doesn't help, and neither does wishful thinking. What does help is changing your behavior, and the whole world is here to help. Look no further than your nearest forest.

1. Take a Small Step

You've likely heard this quote from ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Changing a habit does, too.

If one of your resolutions is to get more exercise, you can begin by locating a local forest and learning what it offers in terms of recreation. Plan a time to tackle the shortest hiking trail and work your way up to more activity.

If one of your resolutions is to bust stress, plan a time to visit the forest to meditate or practice relaxation techniques. Simply spending time in a forest (often called forest-bathing) can reduce stress, too.

2. Find Strength in Numbers

The American Psychological Association recommends talking about your resolutions with friends and family and teaming up with those who have the same goals. Find a buddy for regular walks, hikes or bikes in a forest convenient to you both. Combine a resolution to exercise more with a resolution to make more time for family. Instead of planning a pizza or movie night, try a healthy forest picnic. Instead of planning a beach trip, try boating or fishing close to home.

3. Connect With Your Community

A little investigating can go a long way in finding new opportunities to help a forest help you keep your New Year's resolutions. Look for tree planting events to keep you active. Check out environmental exhibits and seminars to learn something new. Many aboriginal communities also offer workshops in arts, crafts and culture.

Get the kids involved in youth outreach programs, too. Just one example is Project Leaning Tree (PLT). PLT is an award-winning environmental education program that provides teachers, parents and community leaders with curriculum and materials for students from preschool to Grade 12. PLT has trained 700,000 educators to help students learn how to think about complex environmental issues since 1976. You can access PLT materials directly here:

- Free family activities to blend with a walk in the woods
- Family activities in the forest, local park, your own backyard or inside on a rainy day
- Comprehensive printed guide to more than 30 nature activities for families (\$16.95)

Encouraging children to spend time outside in nature can improve their creativity and imagination, classroom performance and academic achievement, as well as their overall health and fitness.

In 2017, PLT became part of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) to expand its reach and impact. SFI is an independent, non-profit organization that provides supply chain assurances, produces conservation outcomes and supports education and community engagement.

To learn more about forests, how they can help you, and how you can help them at the same time, visit sfiprogram.org. (And be sure to count that toward your New Year's resolutions.)



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