



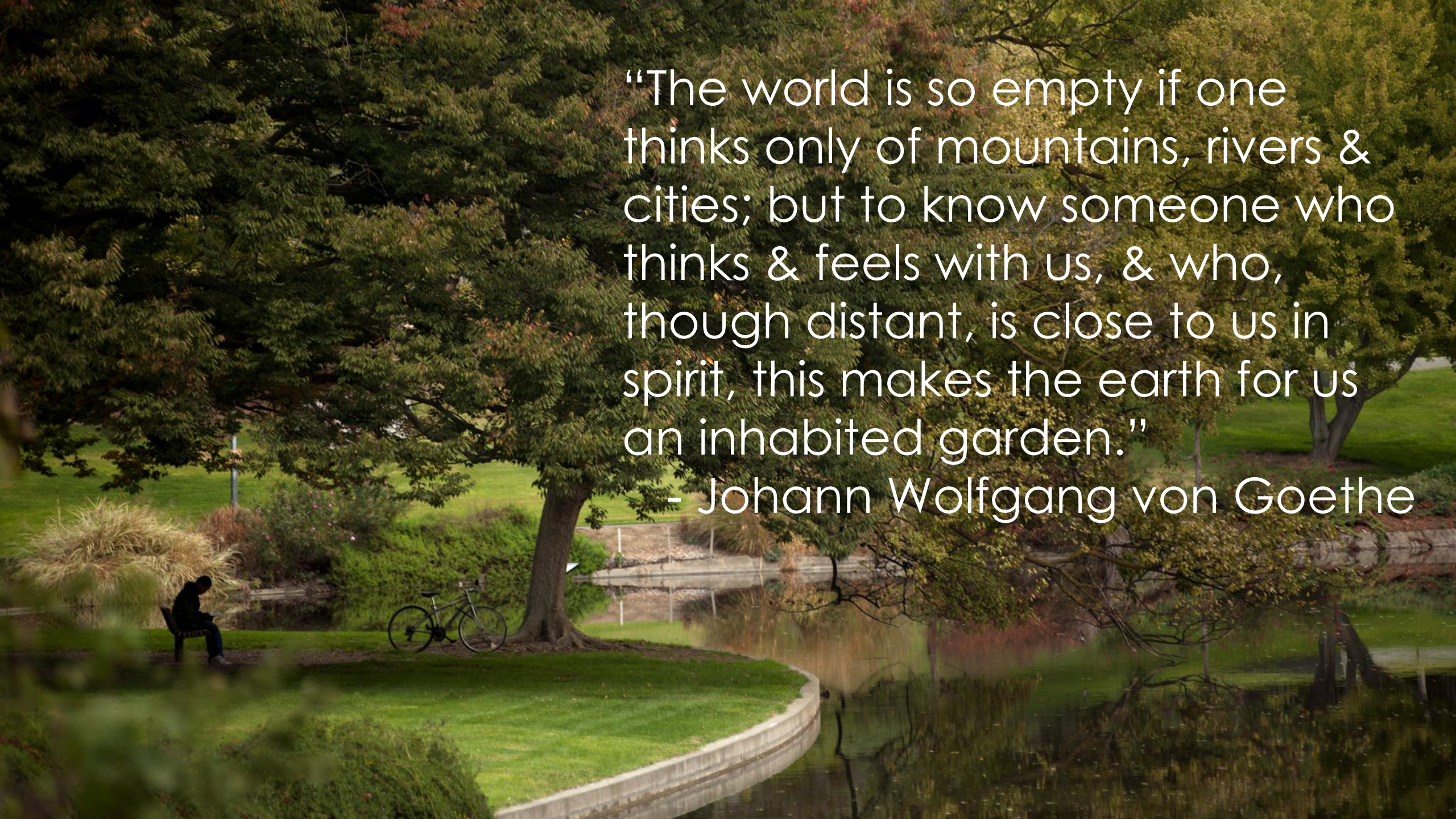
Nature Rx: Community is Natural

Nature Rx—(Re)Connecting Humans with
their Native Habitats

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A photograph of a park scene. In the foreground, a person is sitting on a bench on the left, looking down. A bicycle is parked on the grass next to a large, leafy tree. In the background, there is a pond with a concrete curb, and more trees and greenery. The scene is captured in a soft, natural light.

“The world is so empty if one thinks only of mountains, rivers & cities; but to know someone who thinks & feels with us, & who, though distant, is close to us in spirit, this makes the earth for us an inhabited garden.”
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

A photograph of a forest path. The path is a light-colored concrete or stone walkway that curves through a dense forest. The trees are tall and slender, with thick, textured bark, likely redwoods or sequoias. The ground is covered in green ferns and other low-lying vegetation. The lighting is soft, suggesting a shaded forest environment. In the bottom left corner, the text "Why Community?" is written in a white, sans-serif font.

Why Community?



In speaking to the importance of nature to humans, we must not fail to nature of humans that we are social animals



- Nature is profoundly integral to the human experience
- We evolved in an environment that we no longer live in
- When reconnecting with our natural habitats we must remember that we always did so in groups

Community is Natural



Human Connection is at the Heart of Wellbeing



Loneliness

A person wearing a dark jacket and jeans stands on a grassy bank next to a body of water. They are holding a yellow and white umbrella. The person is looking up at a large tree with vibrant green leaves that hangs over the water. The background is a dense forest of green trees.

- Nearly 50% of Americans are lonely
- 1 in 10 adults reports having no close friends (number has tripled since 1985)
- Affects Gen Z the most (highest score on the loneliness scale - 48.3)
 - Millennials - 45.3
 - Gen X - 45.1
 - Baby-boomers - 42.4
 - Greatest Generation (72+) - 38.6

Loneliness

- Decreases sense of well-being
- Increases fight or flight signaling
- Increases inflammation
- Increases depressive symptoms
- Decreases immune response
- Increases the risk of heart disease by 29%
- Increases the risk of stroke by 32%
- Increases the risk of mortality by 26% (about the same as obesity)
- Amounts to a comparable risk factor as smoking 15 cigarettes/day



Making the Case: Nature and People



“The evidence is out there: people who do ‘green’ volunteer work stay healthier and happier over time than people who do other kinds of volunteer work... One study in Alameda, California, found that retirees who do “environmental” work were half as likely as non-volunteers to show depressive symptoms after twenty years, while people who did other forms of volunteering only had their risk lowered by 10 percent.”

Excerpt from: Montgomery, Charles. *Happy City: Transforming our Lives Through Urban Design* (2013). Anchor Canada.



Making the Case: Nature and People

UC DAVIS



**ARBORETUM AND
PUBLIC GARDEN**

*Our purpose - to
inspire human
potential to help
communities and
environments
thrive*



Learning by Leading – Environmental Stewardship



“I think that I benefitted greatly from the tranquil moments of observation and contemplation in between the completion of tasks....I feel that those almost meditative moments of work and observation also allowed me to be a more balanced and dynamic student both inside and outside of the classroom.”

– Waterway Stewardship student intern



Learning by Leading – Environmental Education, Outreach & Lifelong Learning





Nature Rx Freshman Seminar

I was inspired, and frankly, still am. I want to see more, to do more, to feel more of which I know is a deeper connection to this planet. There's something primal about humans and Earth working—even simply existing, in harmony. Something we've lost. This class reminded me of that. There are small things to do to regain that connection."

– Nature Rx Student

Nature Rx Staff and Faculty



Volunteers

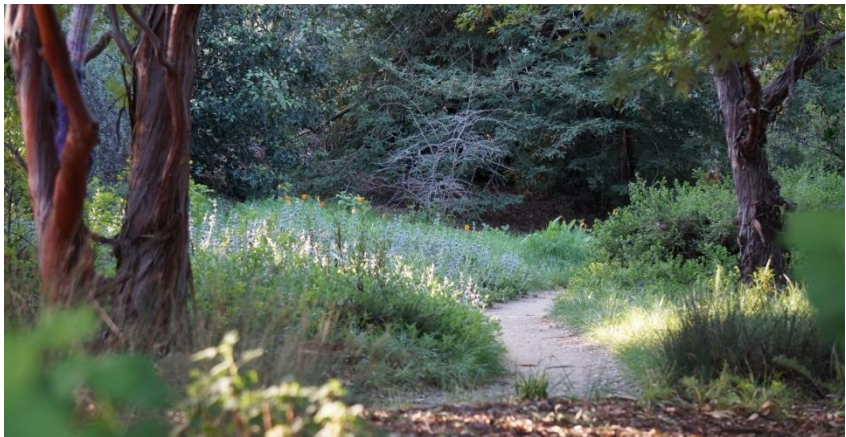
Volunteering:

- Instills a sense of purpose
- Develops emotional stability
- Improves depression, PTSD, low self-esteem, OCD
- Fosters connection to others
- Improves social functioning
- Reduces stress
- Improves wellbeing
- Has both individual health benefits as well as social benefits
- Greater functional ability
- Lower rates of depression
- Provides sense of purpose and life satisfaction



Key Elements

- Nature



Key Elements

- Nature
- Meaningful Experiences



Key Elements

- Nature
- Meaningful Experiences
- Reflection



Key Elements

- Nature
- Meaningful Experiences
- Reflection
- Reciprocity





Conclusion

- We are social creatures by nature
- Every member of a group has an essential role to play
- Concept of 'individuality' is a modern one
- Humans thrive when part of a community



Thank you!