



GETTING OUT THERE: CAN I STILL GET OUT THERE DURING SAFER AT HOME?

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Staffers Claire and Heidi Voigt recently "Got Out There" by walking Cannon Beach, Oregon. Script Photo/ Heidi Voigt.

As panic sets in and more people begin to isolate and quarantine in their houses, The Script set out to find out if people can still be using parks and outdoor spaces or whether this violates the rules of the new stay at home order.

The benefits of fresh air are well documented, even during past pandemics. During the 1918-1919 outbreak of H1N1 "avian" flu, one Boston hospital that used open-air treatments showed a higher recovery of its patients according to Richard A. Hobday, Ph.D. and John W. Cason, Ph.D. in their article "The Open-Air Treatment of Pandemic Influenza."

This case study has been quoted widely in the media in support of getting outside, but it is important to note that Hobday and Cason believe the higher survival rates among these patients is contributed not only to higher levels of Vitamin D—which may have been helpful in fighting off the flu—and increased morale, but also simply to the increased ventilation when compared with other hospitals of the time.

Those looking for more recent guidance on outdoor activities can turn to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), which recently gave recommendations for how parents can help their children through the pandemic—though the advice applies to everyone.

According to the CDC, being outdoors is "great for physical and mental health. Take a walk with your child or go on a bike ride."

Counselors at Scholastica have echoed the CDC advice. When asked about ways to cope with feeling isolated or bored, the counselors said, "Enjoy your pets. Schedule time daily for self care. Get outside while maintaining physical distancing. Exercise as approved by your medical provider. Find one productive task to accomplish each day. Keep a sense of humor. An important way to think about our current environment is that we need to physically distance ourselves while maintaining social connection!"

While many encourage getting outside, people are urged to stay within their communities. According to National Geographic, even though the National Parks' system has waived all entrance fees and encouraged people to visit these spectacular locations, some areas are requesting that people stay away. South Eastern Utah, for example, has several largely-visited parks such as Arches, Zion, and Bryce Canyon, but the towns surrounding these popular sites are extremely small with very limited hospital beds. The officials in Utah have requested that, for now, people do not visit the area because their hospitals are already at max capacity. This news comes before the area has dealt with a COVID-19 outbreak.

Officials generally seem to agree: don't go on long trips or to crowded areas, but at this stage, if you are healthy, getting out there is still a positive thing you can do to maintain your physical and emotional health without putting yourself or others at risk.

If you are feeling under the weather at all, even if you don't have COVID-19 symptoms, it is best to stay home, the CDC says.

What remains important is social distancing—or keeping at least six feet between yourself and others. This is made simple by picking activities that won't put you in close contact with others. Maybe skip that trip to Target and go for a walk at a nearby park or on the waterfront. You can further reduce your contact with others by going at odd times—like in the middle of the work day—if you can. Luckily, the college schedule is suited to this type of scheduling.

For those who are still in Duluth, thescriptnews.com has plenty of articles called "Getting Out There" that feature outside activities. For those who have moved home and want to explore new places or trails, a quick Google search is a start. Hikers might want to check out AllTrails which shows nearby hiking and walking trails and lists their difficulty level.

So, what are you waiting for? Go ahead and Get Out There!

Due to social distancing and our desire to create a safer world, The Script is conducting all interviews virtually. Information in this article was obtained through a combination of email, phone, and/or video chat interviews.