

KIDS ARE GETTING DISCONNECTED

Several studies and media stories note the increasing amount of time people of all ages watch television, play video games, and surf the internet. For example, look at how much time our young people are spending with electronics every day:

Average daily time 8-18-year-olds spent with media:	
TV	4 hours 29 minutes
Music/audio	2 hours 31 minutes
Computer	1 hour 29 minutes
Video games	1 hour 13 minutes
Print	1 hour 13 minutes
Movies	25 minutes

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation/The New York Times

The following quotes cite both the “good news” (the importance of the outdoors to children), and the “disconcerting news” (children and adults are losing their connection to the outdoors):

“Nearly half (49%) of today’s 3-to-5 year old children do not go outside daily to walk or play with either Mom or Dad.” (*Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 2012*)

“When children become truly engaged with the natural world at a young age, the experience is likely to stay with them in a powerful way—shaping their subsequent environmental path.” (*Wells and Lekies, 2006*)

“U.S. children today likely spend less time playing outdoors than any previous generation.” (*Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 2012*)

“If this [less interaction with nature] is the case, it is of enormous importance ... it has been found that environmentally responsible behavior results from direct contact with the environment and that people must be exposed to natural areas as children if they are to care about them as adults ... Moreover, as today's adult role

models spend less time in nature, this generation of children is also likely to follow suit.” (*Pergams and Zaradic, 2007*)

But this is not only a problem affecting our children and grandchildren. This is about all of us!

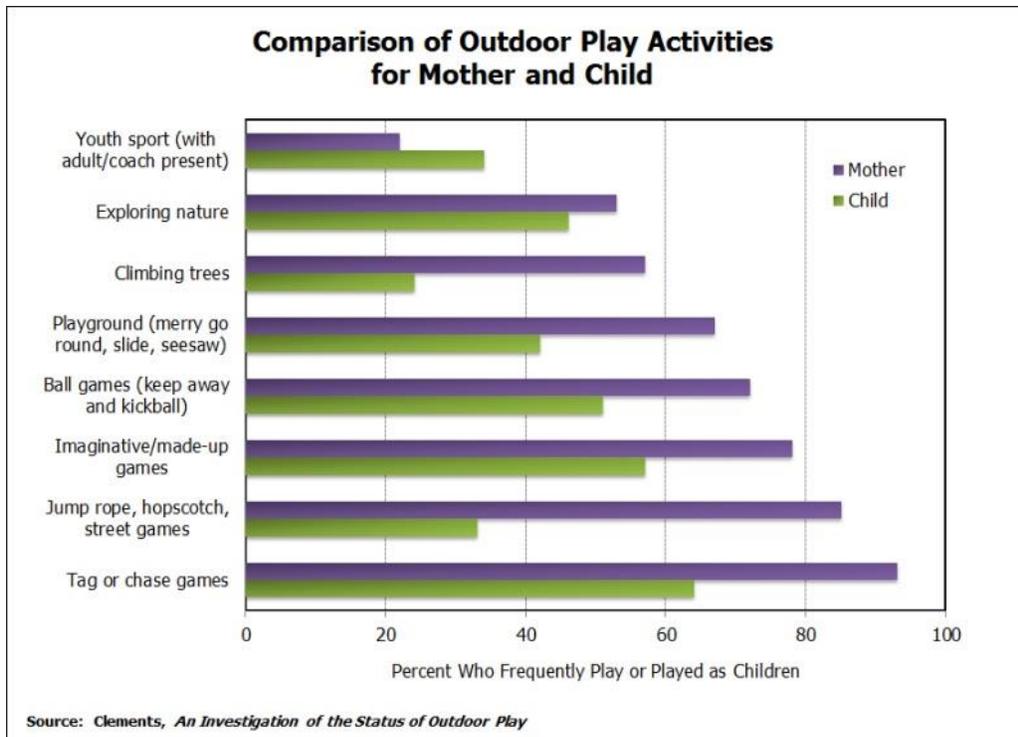
WORKING-AGED ADULTS ARE GETTING DISCONNECTED

Working-aged adults are also getting disconnected from the outdoors as we are consumed by our jobs. According to Dr. Trevor Hancock (University of Victoria School of Public Health and Social Policy), “the average North American now spends approximately 90 percent of the time indoors, 5 percent in cars, and only 5 percent outdoors.” U.S. workers are the “most productive,” but our success and wealth comes at a price. Harvard Economist Juliet Schor writes in her book *The Overworked American* that today “The average employed person is now on the job an additional 163 hours, or the equivalent of one month a year compared to figures for 1969.” Schor estimates that U.S. manufacturing employees work 320 hours more than their French or German counterparts. That’s two extra months of work per year!

We work more, but we are taking less leisure time to enjoy the fruit of our labors. Over half of U.S. workers get fewer than 15 days/year for vacation, whereas Swedish workers get 5 to 8 weeks of paid vacation/year, and German, French and British workers average 6 weeks of paid vacation/year. Extra time spent at work is draining, and comes at the expense of leisure activities such as camping, backpacking, or hiking that could be rejuvenating our bodies, minds and spirits.

PARENTS ARE GETTING DISCONNECTED

A 2004 study by Professor Rhonda Clements (Manhattanville College) compared the amount of play that kids are doing outdoors today to the amount their mothers did when they were kids. 70 percent of mothers reported that they played outside every day when they were their child’s age, while just 31 percent of their children do the same. Mothers also reported playing outside for longer stretches of time than their own kids do now. 85 percent agreed that today’s children play outdoors less often than children used to.



Prof. Clements' study further highlights that when kids play outdoors today, it is generally done in a much more structured and supervised manner. Organized sports with adult supervision are the only form of outdoor play that today's children do more than their mothers did.

In the face of these trends, who has the time, the inclination, and the energy to keep people connected to the forests, parks, and trails of Connecticut?

CFPA does!