

Body-Mind Benefits of "Green Exercise"

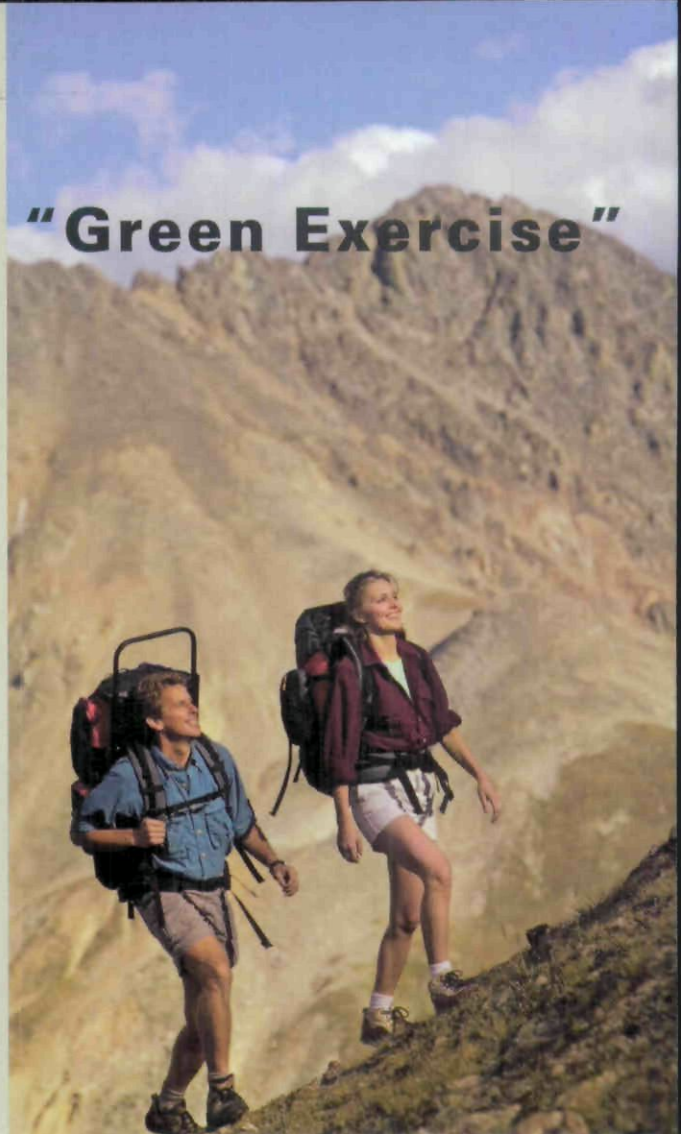
The trend toward environmentally friendly—or "green"—activities is impacting exercise. The term *green exercise* refers to physical activities that give participants the benefits not only of exercise but also of direct exposure to nature. A growing body of research shows that interacting with nature can positively impact our health and well-being; relieve stress; and promote concentration and clear thinking.

In the United Kingdom, the Countryside Recreation Network is recommending that outdoor recreational areas in both urban and rural settings be maintained or created to foster opportunities for green exercise. The organization also recommends that gyms and fitness centers improve the green aspects of their facilities. Mind, a leading nonprofit mental-health organization in the UK, is also advocating green exercise.

Original research conducted at the University of Essex identified four principal reasons why people enjoy green exercise:

1. **natural and social connections**—being with friends and family, bonding with pets, watching wildlife, evoking memories of happier times in the past (e.g., special outings), stimulating spiritual feelings
2. **sensory stimulation**—noting colors and sounds from nature's diversity, breathing fresh air, being exposed to weather, experiencing a sense of adventure/excitement/fun, enjoying an escape from pollution
3. **activity**—learning manual skills, achieving physically challenging tasks, enjoying the energy of physical activities
4. **escape from modern life**—having time to think and reflect/clear the head, getting away from pressures and stress, recharging batteries

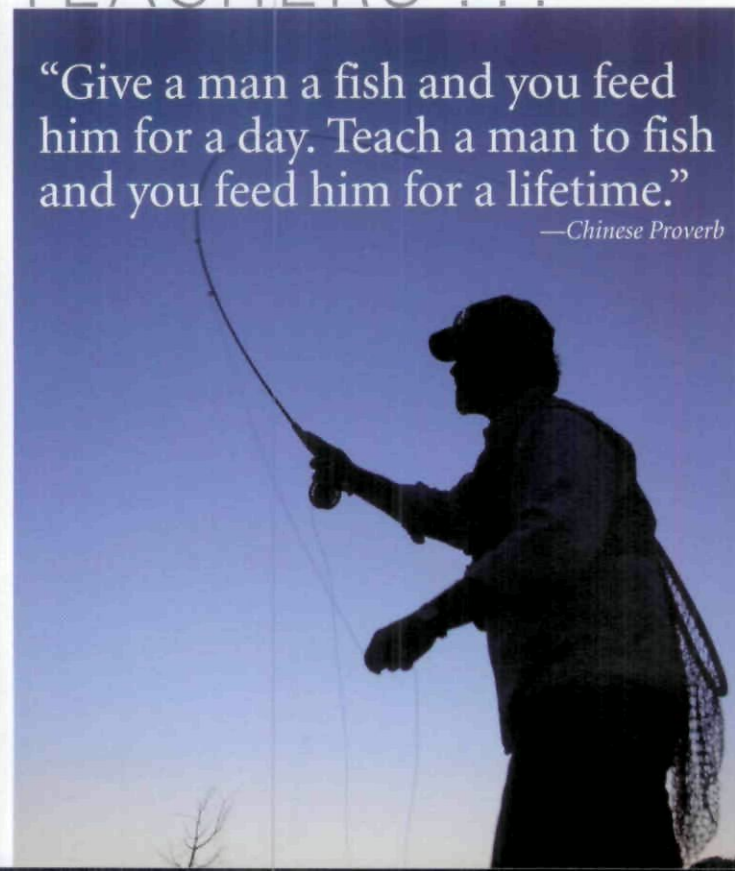
To learn more about green exercise, see www.countrysidecreation.org.uk or www.mind.org.uk.



TEACHERS ...

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime."

—Chinese Proverb



Question of the Month

As personal trainers develop programs at your facility, are they combining body-mind techniques with traditional fitness methods? How are such combination programs promoted and delivered? Alternatively, are trainers offering any body-mind or other programs in combination with "green activities"—for example, sunrise yoga or meditation walking?

Share your examples with editor Sandy Todd Webster, websters@ideafit.com.

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