



## From Melanie Salsbury: Walking Through Grief Program Coordinator

### A Walk in Nature

Over the past few years, I've had the privilege of strolling through the vast and beautiful landscape of Cave Hill Cemetery, both on my own and with those who are grieving. Lately, spring is beginning to appear in little bursts of buds and color around every corner. I

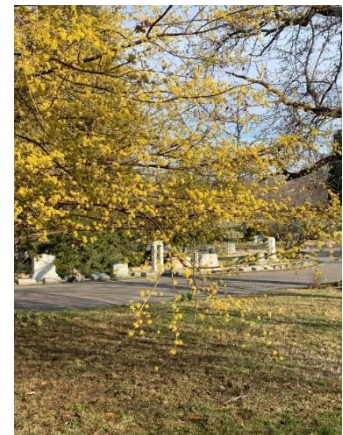


continue to be amazed and heartened by the comfort, awe, and joy nature provides without asking. One only must be in nature to feel more relaxed and clear-headed. Better yet, when we walk in nature with a companion or a group, there is the added gain of human connection and understanding.



The benefits of walking in nature and walking in general are many. From the research, science, and our routine visits with the family doctor, we know walking regularly can help us maintain a healthy body weight, strengthen our bones and muscles, and improve cardiovascular health. And walking in nature proves to be of even greater benefit than walking in an urban setting because of the positive effects on mental health. Walking in nature can help reduce negative or circular thoughts which can be common in the grieving mind. Clearly, putting one foot in front of the other is a good idea.

But there is an important less tangible benefit to walking in nature—the absence of judgement and expectation. In grief related theory and literature today, there's a great deal of well-intended discussion about how to grieve resiliently, how to make meaning from loss, or how to grow from grief. There may also be the pressure from concerned family or friends to clean out the closet of the deceased, or “move on” with life. It's not uncommon for a grieving person to wonder if they're doing it the right way. This is not surprising given the number of strategies and opinions available through society, literature, and social media. Nature does not judge us or ask or expect anything from us. The beauty of nature is there for all of us, under any circumstances.



Everyone grieves uniquely and many of the ideas mentioned above can prove to be helpful. But maybe there needs to be room for the idea that being resilient in grief looks like getting out of bed in the morning. Or growing from grief is being able remember and talk about

happy memories with the deceased, rather than starting a nonprofit or writing a novel. Maybe in grief, one of our greatest achievements is walking out into nature, breathing in the fresh air, and putting one foot in front of the other.

Source Material

<https://news.stanford.edu/2015/06/30/hiking-mental-health-063015/>

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<https://www.cavehillheritagefoundation.org/walkingthroughgrief/>