/ our nature connection THE REDFORD CENTER x rei cooperative action fund

Community Discussion Guide

Watch Film Playlist

Our Nature Connection is a short film series spotlighting REI Cooperative Action Fund grantees whose work reinforces the belief that we are nature, inseparable and interdependent. Through these films, The Redford Center and REI Fund highlight communities deepening their connection to the natural world, revealing how time in nature restores health, well-being, and our sense of belonging on this planet.



The Nature Dose

Directed by Andrew Nadkarni, Produced by Maryam Mir
Production Company: By the Creek Productions
Nature and Health Alliance | Aug 6, 2026 | 11 minutes

The Nature Dose follows three visionary leaders weaving science, storytelling, and community action to spark a movement that ensures nature's healing power is accessible to all.

Boyz N The Wood: Resilience in the Redwoods

Directed & Produced by Faith Briggs Rose
Production Company: Mellifera Cine
Boyz N The Wood | Jun 18, 2026 | 11 minutes

Step by step and breath by breath, among the California redwood trees, a group of Black men come together to build community, heal, and bond with each other and the nature around them.





Marcus & Me: Connecting with Nature in Steel City

Directed & Produced by Dom & Nadia Gill
Production Company: Encompass Productions
Outdoor Inclusion Coalition | Jul 16, 2026 | 9 minutes

As part of the Outdoor Inclusion Coalition's climbing program, 'Big' Marcus Shoffner shows 'Little' Marcus the ropes and explores the climbing potential of Pittsburgh's industrial-era infrastructure. These often overlooked adventure playgrounds in the heart of the city provide a valuable connection to nature and the outdoors for numerous communities that surround them.



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The Nature Dose

Directed by Andrew Nadkarni
11min | Nature and Health Alliance

The Nature Dose is a reminder that being in nature is not a luxury or an escape, but an essential part of how we care for ourselves and our communities.

The Nature Dose, directed by Andrew Nadkarni, follows three visionary leaders using science, storytelling, and community action to explore one powerful idea: nature is essential to human health, and we should be acting accordingly. From doctors writing prescriptions for time outdoors and researchers using virtual reality to measure nature's effects on the brain, to grassroots organizers fighting to bring green space back to communities that need it most, The Nature Dose explores what happens when communities, scientists, and storytellers come together to make nature access a priority for healthy living.

Core Themes

Ten minutes outside every day.

- That's the "Nature Dose." Ten minutes in any green space improves mood, lowers blood pressure, and resets attention. Doing this as a daily habit is more impactful than fewer, longer days spent outside.

What we learn about science:

- Science connections are clearer when multiple perspectives and vantage points evaluate a theory.
- Lasting change happens when different ways of knowing are woven together: science, lived experience, and inherited knowledge.

What we learn about nature:

- Nature is essential to the health and well-being of people and communities, and a growing body of science increasingly confirms it.
- Green space has been systematically stripped from some communities, with measurable health consequences, and communities are organizing to reclaim it.







Discussion Questions

1. Ten minutes a day matters more than one long weekly hike. Where could ten minutes of nature fit into your routine, and what counts as "nature" where you live?

2. How would our society and our healthcare change if we treated time outside in green spaces as a health issue rather than a recreation activity?

3. Jennifer's mother watched Humboldt Parkway's trees, gardens, and neighborhood be replaced by an expressway: "It broke your heart. It broke up the neighborhood." What decisions shaped the green space or lack thereof in your own community, and who made those decisions?

4. Would you accept a "nature prescription" from your doctor? What would make it easy or hard to follow?

5. Nalini says disturbance "can have a generative power." Where have you seen regeneration after loss, in nature or community?

6. Who needs to be at the table to make nature access a priority where you live?

Take It Further

Bring the benefits of nature to wherever you are.

- Can't get outside? Research shows that even viewing images of natural environments activates the brain's restorative attention systems more than urban imagery. Try adding a nature photo to your classroom or meeting space. (Source: Nature and Health Alliance)

- Urban environments tax our attention. Natural sounds, birdsong, wind, water, do the opposite. Play ambient nature audio in your classroom, community center, or workspace and notice the difference. Need some outdoor views and sounds? Check out this "Breath of Fresh Air" playlist from REI.

Reclaim your health.

- **Remember, "The Nature Dose" is ten minutes a day in any green space,** a backyard, a small patch of grass, a community garden. Commit to it this week, and next week invite someone to join you!

- **Ask your doctor about a nature prescription.** Nature prescriptions are real, and they work. Some physicians are already writing them. Ask your doctor, clinic, or community health worker: "can time outside be part of my care plan?" Organizations like ParkRx America are training health providers to do exactly that. If your provider hasn't heard of it, share the idea. You might be the one who brings it to your community.

Map your neighborhood's green gaps → then do something about it.

- Where is green space missing near you? Where is it thriving? Tools like the Trust for Public Land's ParkScore can show you equity gaps in your city. Once you know what you're looking at, take it further:

- Ask your city's urban planning department if green infrastructure is part of their public health strategy — street trees, walkable green corridors, and urban nature are linked directly to cardiovascular health outcomes. Raise it at a town hall, in a letter to your council member, or at a neighborhood meeting: where is nature in our health strategy? (Source: Nature and Health Alliance)

The Nature Dose

Voices In The Film

> Nature is not just a nice-to-have; we need it for our mental health, our physical health, our social health." — **Jennifer Roberts**

> When you weave together the different colored, different threads, of different values with other people from other disciplines, you create this tapestry that is stronger, more beautiful, more useful than any of the individual threads alone." — **Nalini Nadkarni**



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Boyz N The Wood: Resilience in the Redwoods

Directed by Faith Briggs Rose
11min | Boyz N The Wood

Boyz N The Wood is a reminder that healing is not a solo act, it happens in community, in relationship, and in the embrace of the natural world.

Among the California redwoods, a group of Black men comes together with Boyz N The Wood to build community, heal, and bond with each other and the nature around them. Through brotherhood, breathwork, reflection, and shared time outdoors, the film reminds us that nature has always been home, a place to gather, heal, breathe, and belong.

Core Themes

- We heal in relationship and in community, not in isolation. Brotherhood itself is healing.
- Healing ripples outward: when Black men are supported, that care moves through families, friendships, and communities.
- Nature is a place of restoration and belonging. "We've always been outside, and outside is for us."
- Vulnerability is strength: space to be seen fully, without judgment.







Voices In The Film

> We've always been here. We've always been outside, and outside is for us, man. So like, let's get connected to it. When we are able, as Black men, to be more vulnerable and to feel more free — everyone benefits when Black men feel more free."

> You come out to the woods. All around us is life and death. Trees have died. There's growth coming out of the trees. And there's a metaphor there that sort of teaches us how to live. That's what the outside does for me."

Discussion Questions

1. The film shows healing happening together in circles, breathwork, and brotherhood. Why might healing in community work differently than healing alone?
2. Redwoods grow in circles, connected through a shared root system. What does that image reveal about the community these men are building?
3. "Healed men heal communities." What does that ripple effect look like in the families and neighborhoods you know?
4. One participant remembers being conditioned to believe the outdoors "was not for me." Where do messages like that come from, and how do they shape who feels welcome outside?
5. What would it take to create a space like this where you live? Does one exist that you or others can connect with?

Take It Further

- **Support groups like Boyz N The Wood directly.** Their retreats are free to participants. Supporting them is an investment that removes barriers such as: therapy, transportation, gear, meals, and brotherhood. Learn more or refer someone you know at boyznthewood.org.
- **Challenge the stigma in your community.** Seeking mental health care is still stigmatized in many communities. Start the conversation. Share your own experience. Use the language from the film: being vulnerable is not weakness. It is how we heal.
- **Create a space for community and healing where you live.** You don't need the redwoods. Gather a small group. Go outside. Build the habit of showing up for each other in nature. The Boyz N The Wood model of rest, nature, brotherhood, and tools for personal development is a replicable template any community can adapt.

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Marcus & Me: Connecting with Nature in Steel City

Directed by Dom & Nadia Gill
9min | Outdoor Inclusion Coalition

"Outside" is not somewhere else. It is already here, in every city, waiting to be claimed.

Marcus & Me, directed by Dom and Nadia Gill, follows Big Marcus and Little Marcus as they build confidence and community through climbing in the heart of Pittsburgh. As part of the Outdoor Inclusion Coalition, Big Marcus and Little Marcus participate as mentor and mentee in a program that breaks down barriers to outdoor recreation so it can be enjoyed in our own neighborhoods, nearby city parks, and surprising spaces throughout urban cities. Big Marcus shares his passion for climbing and finding space outdoors with Little Marcus. Together, they show how representation and access can shape the way young people see themselves and the world around them.







Core Themes

- **Outside is closer than you think.** Recreation already lives in the overlooked corners of the city.
- Mentorship across generations builds confidence, trust, and belonging in the outdoors.
- Representation matters: seeing people who look like you outdoors changes what feels possible.

Voices In The Film

> "It's important for kids to know there are inherently safe spaces outside where they can show up and be whatever they want to be. That's the amazing opportunity we have."

> "Nature becomes a lifelong gift, even in the middle of the city, something they can continue returning to throughout their lives."

Discussion Questions

1. The film's tagline is "Outside is closer than you think." What overlooked spaces in your own neighborhood could be places to play, climb, gather, or explore?

2. What does Big Marcus' example offer Little Marcus beyond climbing technique?

3. "I wanted to know that other people who looked like me were there too." Why does representation shape who chooses to spend time outside, and who creates more space for others?

4. What makes a public space truly welcoming, and what gets in the way?

5. The proposed Brilliant Line would turn old urban infrastructure into a community recreation hub. What could your community reclaim for outdoor recreation, and who would lead it?

Take It Further

- **Support Outdoor Inclusion.** Outdoor Inclusion Coalition is building the next generation of outdoor leaders in Pittsburgh and beyond. Find out if there's a similar program near you.
- **Find the outdoor space hiding in plain sight.** Pittsburgh has more than 170 parks. Your city probably has more than you think. Use the Trust for Public Land's ParkScore to discover what's nearby and what's missing, then share what you find with your neighbors.
- **Become a "Big Marcus."** You don't need to be an expert to bring a young person outside. Mentorship in outdoor spaces builds confidence, trust, and a sense of belonging that lasts a lifetime. Reach out to a youth program, school, or community center near you and ask how you can get involved.
- **Find your Community's Brilliant Line.** Pittsburgh is working to transform old industrial infrastructure into a community recreation corridor connecting neighborhoods that have long lacked access. Find out if your city has a similar project in the works and show up to support it. Follow the effort at brilliantpittsburgh.org.
- **Know the legacy you're part of.** Alma Illery was bringing Black and Brown communities outdoors in Pittsburgh in the 1940s and 50s. The history of Black outdoor leadership is long and deep. Explore organizations like Outdoor Afro and Latino Outdoors that are continuing that tradition today.
- **Represent.** If you're outside, you're part of what makes it possible for the next person to imagine themselves there too. Bring someone with you. Post about it. Spread the joy!