



## Healthy Trees, Healthy Me

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Planting trees improves the natural beauty of an area and positively impacts the health of the people around them. According to an interview on USA Weekend of Richard Louv, author of the best-selling book “Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder,” Louv believes being outdoors and playing in the woods makes children healthier. Louv has found that stress is reduced, attention is focused, and social and emotional development is enhanced.

Trees go through a process called photosynthesis, like all other plants. According to the DNR (Department of Natural Resources), during this process, trees absorb carbon dioxide and other air pollutants and release fresh oxygen. The reduction of air pollution means healthier air inhaled.

The Georgia Forestry Commission reports asthma and allergies, which many children and adults suffer from, are the result of inhaling pollen and other particles in the air. Trees play a role in reducing these plaguing respiratory problems. By using the tiny “hairs” on tree leaves and the coarse texture of bark, trees catch these particles. During a rain storm, these particles are washed off the tree and deposited on the ground. This reduces the amount of airborne particles.

Studies by the Georgia Forestry Commission have found a correlation between the number of trees in a community and the physical activity of the surrounding people. “People are more inclined to get outdoors and exercise when their surroundings are greener. Logically, greater physical activity leads to fewer cases of obesity, which in turn may help reduce other health problems such as heart disease and diabetes.” They have also found that “Post-operative hospital stays are shortened when patients have a view of trees and open spaces.”

Louv and the Georgia Forestry Commission agree that trees and other natural surroundings help children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Studies by the Georgia Forestry Commission have shown “children, in particular, are better able to concentrate, complete tasks, and follow directions after playing in natural settings.” Green outdoors serve as an outlet for stress, allowing children to clear their mind and prepare them for focusing on schoolwork or other activities.



Healthy trees create a healthier environment both physiologically and psychologically, making healthier people.