

## Reconnect With the Natural World

*I feel overwhelmed by so much bad stuff going on in the world. People seem full of hate and so uncaring about the environment. I am 17, and my mom said I should write to you for some insight into creating a hopeful outlook. I want a good future. Do you think it's possible?*

I am sincerely sorry you are struggling. I had similar feelings at your age and sometimes still do. It can be hard not to focus on all the negative noise. But I've found ways to shift feelings of hopelessness and experience genuine joy, and I know you can, too.

It is important to recognize and share what is weighing on your heart. You started this by talking with your mom and writing to me. I suggest going even deeper with a trusted friend, counselor or spiritual practitioner. In that safe, open, vulnerable place, ask God out loud for Its loving, creative energy to enter your depression and transform it. This conscious invitation will change you.

There are undeniably scary things happening in the world. But there are even more beautiful, miraculous and good things. Those can be harder to see because they don't make the news and aren't found on our phones.

Stop fixating on "the bad stuff." Put your electronics in a drawer and go outside. Take off your shoes, sit against a tree and reconnect with the natural world. Pay attention to simple enjoyable things: a flower, a bird, a great song or your favorite food. Write down 25 things you love and add to that list daily.

A great future is ahead of you, and it starts by realizing the part of you hurting for people and the planet is the part that can make a difference. Accept your caring heart and let it guide you to new thoughts and actions. Every choice affects the universal web of energy. Even the smallest things uplift it. So be kind and loving, behave sustainably, write a nice note to someone. Go ahead and love life and yourself. Both are precious gifts worth cherishing. ✿



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