

This weekend, as you continue to shelter in place, **please remember that it is both allowed and advisable to GO OUTSIDE** (as long as you continue to follow social distancing guidelines and refrain from unnecessary travel). Staying cooped up inside all day, whether alone or with your loved ones, can increase stress and anxiety and dampen your mood.

On the other hand, feeling the breeze on your skin, soaking up the sun (with appropriate SPF protection), hearing the birds chirp, even feeling the grass beneath your feet can have significant healing effects. If you're interested, you can read more about the health benefits of nature here (3-min read):

<https://www.psychiatryadvisor.com/home/topics/mood-disorders/the-mental-health-benefits-of-nature-exposure/>

It's also important to remember how fortunate we are to be able to spend time in nature much more easily than most. While other parts of the country currently look like this:



(Note: these are real photos sent to me by loved ones this week)

We can be grateful to be living in a place with beautiful weather... here are a few photos taken in Gainesville over the past 24 hours:





So please take advantage of the opportunity to go for a walk or run, sit outside and read a book, color your driveway with sidewalk chalk, eat a “picnic” on your balcony or porch, ride your bike, and/or lay in the grass and look at the clouds. If you are working this weekend, try to take a 5-10 minute break outside if you can. The UF Health campus has multiple soothing outdoor spaces, including the reflecting pond, Wilmot Gardens, the patio outside the HMEB, the ARB courtyard. Check them out here (<https://ufhealth.org/uf-health-shands-hospital-patient-guide/gardens-and-outdoor-spaces>) and find a spot that works for you!

Finally, as a reminder, **if you are a UF healthcare worker who needs to fill gaps in your childcare or pet care, or if you need some occasional assistance with errands such as grocery shopping or meal prep, Gator Sitters (a volunteer group of UF medical, PA, dental, and graduate students) may be able to help.** No compensation is required. You can make a request for assistance here: <https://sites.google.com/view/gatorsitters>

Have a nice weekend and stay well!

Lisa J. Merlo, Ph.D., M.P.E.
(Legal Name = Lisa Merlo Greene)
Director of Wellness Programs, UF College of Medicine
Director of Research, Professionals Resource Network
Associate Professor of Psychiatry
University of Florida
Box 100256
Gainesville, FL 32611
352-294-4932
lmerlo@ufl.edu