**What is Nature Deficit Disorder?

"I like to play indoors better 'cause that's where all the electrical outlets are," reports a fourth-grader. Never before in history have children been so plugged in—and so out of touch with the natural world.**

**A lack of routine contact with nature may result in stunted academic and developmental growth. This unwanted side-effect of the electronic age is called Nature Deficit Disorder (NDD). The term was coined by author Richard Louv in his book *Last Child in the Woods* in order to explain how our societal disconnect with nature is affecting today's children. Louv says we have entered a new era of suburban sprawl that restricts outdoor play, in conjunction with a plugged-in culture that draws kids indoors. But, as Louv presents in his book, the agrarian, nature-oriented existence hard-wired into human brains isn’t quite ready for the overstimulating environment we’ve carved out for ourselves. Some children adapt. Those who don’t develop the symptoms of NDD, which include attention problems, obesity, anxiety, and depression.

Louv says while nature shouldn't be seen as the magic bullet to cure all ailments, parents should see the woods, streams, fields and canyons around their home as a type of therapy to keep kids focused, confident, healthy, and balanced. “Kids learn better when they get outside. It's a way to truly help our kids learn in *all* areas of education,” he says. Studies also show links between nature and behavior: kids with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) thrive when put in routine contact with nature in documented test cases. Louv says this is especially relevant when taking into account the number of kids treated for ADHD with drugs such as Ritalin. “We have to begin to question how many pharmaceuticals we are putting into our kids,” Louv says. “We have to start looking at nature therapy.”**

**Since 2005, when *Last Child in the Woods* hit the shelves, several studies have been published backing up the importance of the child-nature reunion. The American Institutes for Research conducted a study of the impact of a weeklong residential outdoor education program on at risk youth. Students involved in the program experienced a 27 percent increase in their mastery of science concepts, better problem solving skills, enhanced self esteem, and improved behavior in comparison with the control group stuck in the classroom.**

**Nature-deficit disorder is not a medical condition; it is a description of the human costs of alienation from nature. This alienation damages children and shapes adults, families, and communities. There are solutions, though, and they’re right in our own backyards.

*-Education.com, “What is Nature Deficit Disorder”***

**NATURE DEFICIT DISORDER SURVEY**

1. On an average weekday, how much time do you spend inside vs. outside?

2. On an average weekend day, how much time inside vs. outside?

3. When was the last time you spend more than an hour outside willingly?

4. How much time, on a daily basis, do you devote to looking at screens?

5. How often do you travel in cars vs. walking or on a bike?

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**BASED ON THESE RESULTS,**
a. Do you feel you have some degree of Nature Deficit Disorder?

b. How about your friends, parents/guardians, and others?