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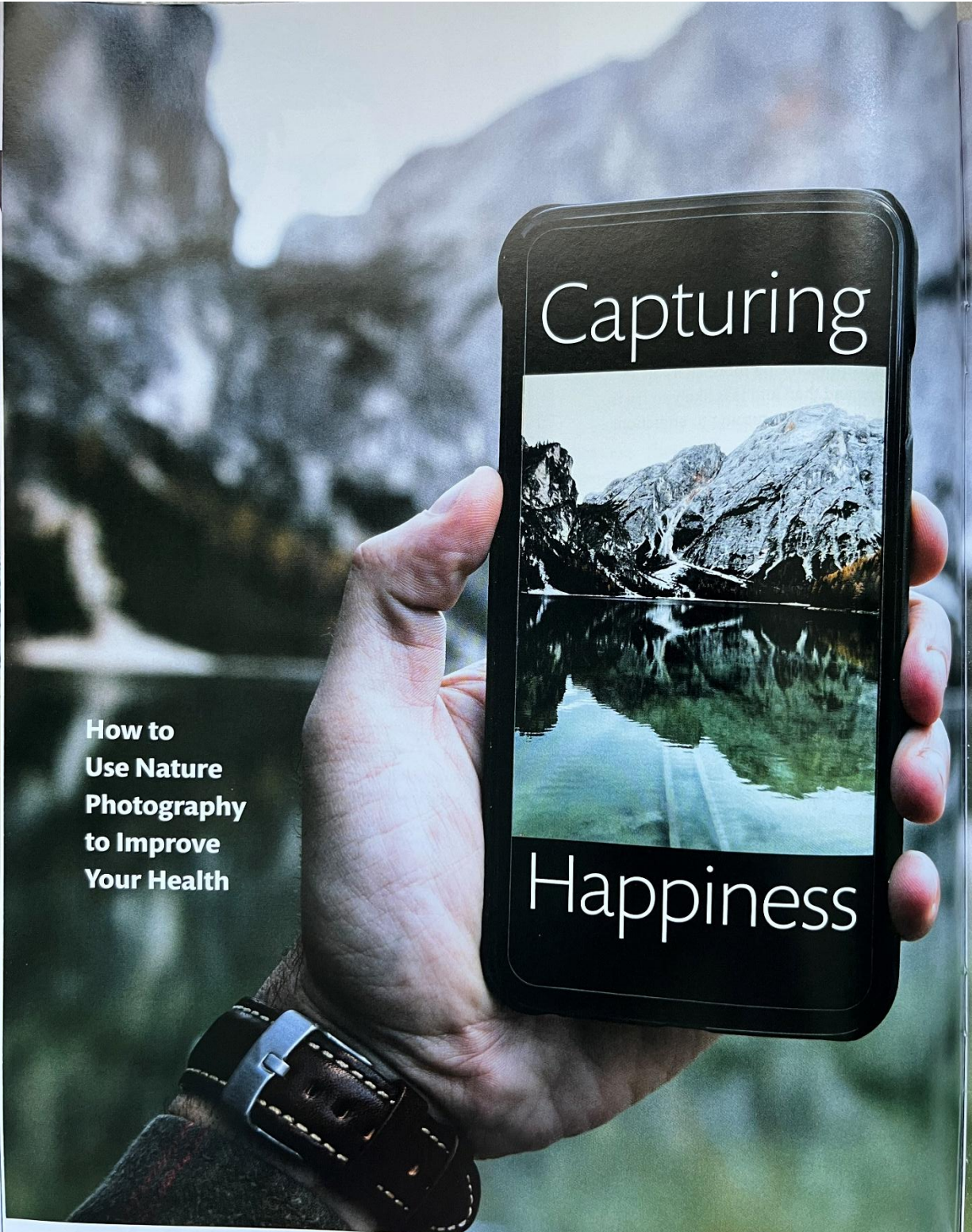
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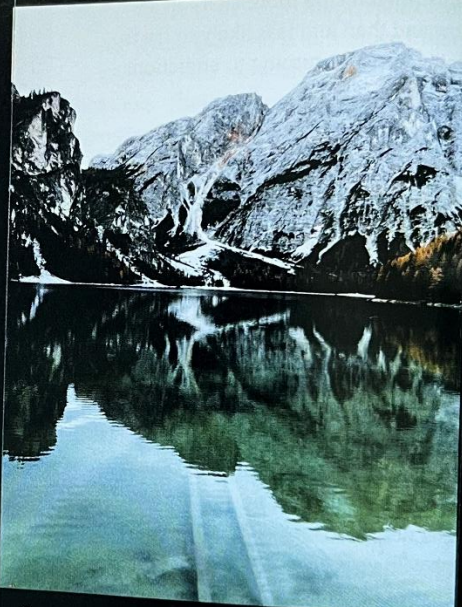
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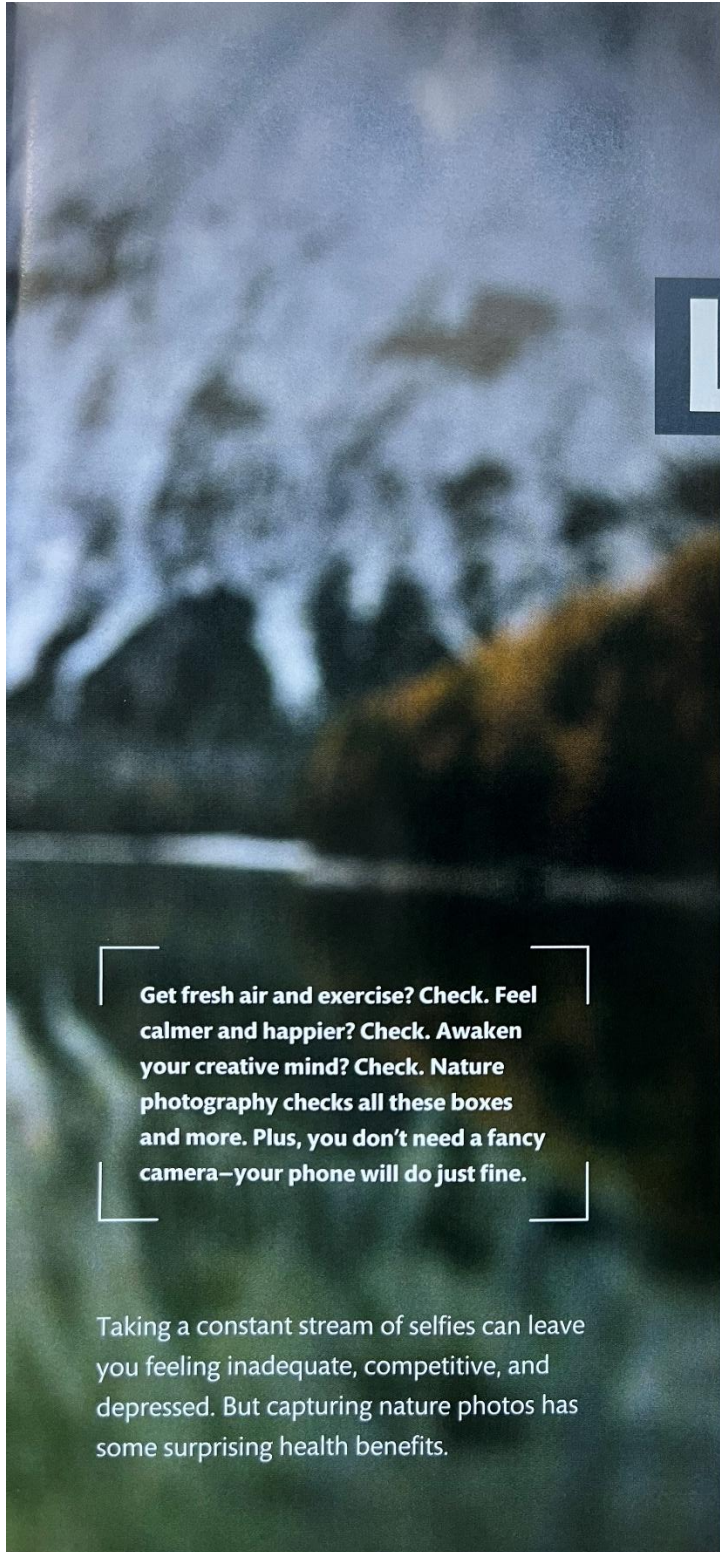


**How to
Use Nature
Photography
to Improve
Your Health**

Capturing



Happiness



By Sandi Schwartz



Looking for a fun, relaxing, creative hobby for you or your family? With the prevalence of phones that double as cameras, starting a photography hobby is easier than ever. By focusing on outdoor photography, you will reap the many benefits of both connecting to nature and engaging in a creative activity.

Why Nature Photography Is So Calming

Photography is a wonderful art form to help us feel happier and calmer. It allows us to place our focus outside of ourselves by distracting us from negative emotions, including stress, anxiety, and sadness.

Overall, art has been scientifically proven to reduce stress levels and improve mood. It is a way of tapping into the right side of the brain, where creativity, intuition, visualization, and daydreaming stem from. Creativity helps you focus on something positive, productive, and inspiring. It also gets you in a state of flow, which means you become so absorbed in your creative project that you forgot about worries and lose track of time.

The main reason nature photography is so calming is that it serves as a type of wellness practice that draws your attention to looking for awe-inspiring, gorgeous images in nature. Capturing objects you find extraordinarily beautiful in the world helps give you a whole new perspective.

The entire process of shooting photography, from choosing subject matter to discovering new angles to manipulating the light, requires a great deal of focus and attention. As you decide what to capture through the camera lens, the process manages to relax your spirit while sparking imagination in your mind.

Ruth Davey is the founder and director of Look Again, an organization in Great Britain that offers photography courses that merge

Get fresh air and exercise? Check. Feel calmer and happier? Check. Awaken your creative mind? Check. Nature photography checks all these boxes and more. Plus, you don't need a fancy camera—your phone will do just fine.

Taking a constant stream of selfies can leave you feeling inadequate, competitive, and depressed. But capturing nature photos has some surprising health benefits.

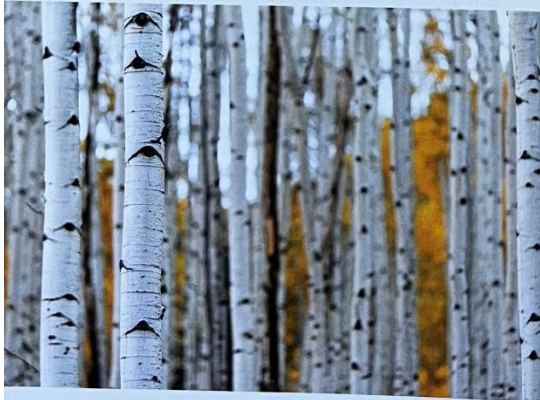
the creative and therapeutic benefits of photography and nature to increase well-being and mental health. She works with students of all ages, including youth groups and children with special needs.

A large portion of her photography classes involve students simply going outdoors, taking a walk, and focusing on all the colors they see. This practice helps them slow down, feel calm,

view the world with a fresh perspective, and connect in a creative way with the beautiful natural surroundings.

How to Start a Nature Photography Hobby

As you can see, there are plenty of reasons to try nature photography, and it's easy to get started. You can choose from a variety of cameras—from a children's camera to a smartphone to a



serious high-end camera with fancy lenses. Then it's just a matter of making the time to venture out to snap some photos. You can visit gardens, national parks, nature centers, farms, and local bodies of water, or you can find nature right in your own backyard. I bet you could even capture some gorgeous images from your front porch, balcony, driveway, or even your window. Get creative and see what you find!

Take It to the Next Level: Paint What You See

One of my favorite creative outlets is taking pictures of nature and then painting the images with watercolors. I gravitate toward nature painting because I love how flowers, trees, and animals are so unique, vivid, and fresh. When I focus on a gorgeous flower, for example, I feel more relaxed. When I go on walks with the intention of finding some intriguing nature objects to take pictures of, I end up viewing my surroundings with an artistic eye. This can be a helpful skill to teach children, too, since it encourages them to pay attention and be curious.

Here's a bit about my process. First, I go for a walk and look for attractive nature in my neighborhood, or I seek out nature during our travels, whether it be a trip to the beach or a garden. Then I snap a photo of it using my phone. When looking for beautiful images, I notice how much more mindful I am of my surroundings. Later, when I'm ready to sit down and paint, I scroll through my images and choose one to create my artwork. I can pull up the image on my phone or computer, or I can print it out the old-fashioned way to use as a reference photo. Next, I draw the object or animal. Finally, I get creative with my color palette. In addition to using the nature photos for painting, I post them online to inspire others with the beauty of nature all around us.



There are so many ways to keep a nature photography hobby fun and exciting. Try out some of these ideas:



Use your images to make cards to send to family and friends.



Print out your pictures and create a collage.



Enter a nature photography contest.



Share your images on social media, along with uplifting quotes.



Add your images to a nature journal, and write captions, stories, or poems to describe what you saw.



Decorate your home or office with your own nature photography.



Give your nature photography as gifts. You can go on a variety of websites and order special gifts with your images, such as puzzles, blankets, mugs, shirts, and more.



Put together a slideshow set to relaxing music or nature sounds.



Have nature photography challenges as a family, such as only taking pictures of natural objects of a certain color, looking for specific shapes, or searching for all the animals in a specific location. ▮

Sandi Schwartz is an author, journalist, and mother of two. As the founder and director of the Ecohappiness Project, her mission is to inspire and educate families to build a nature habit to feel happier and calmer.