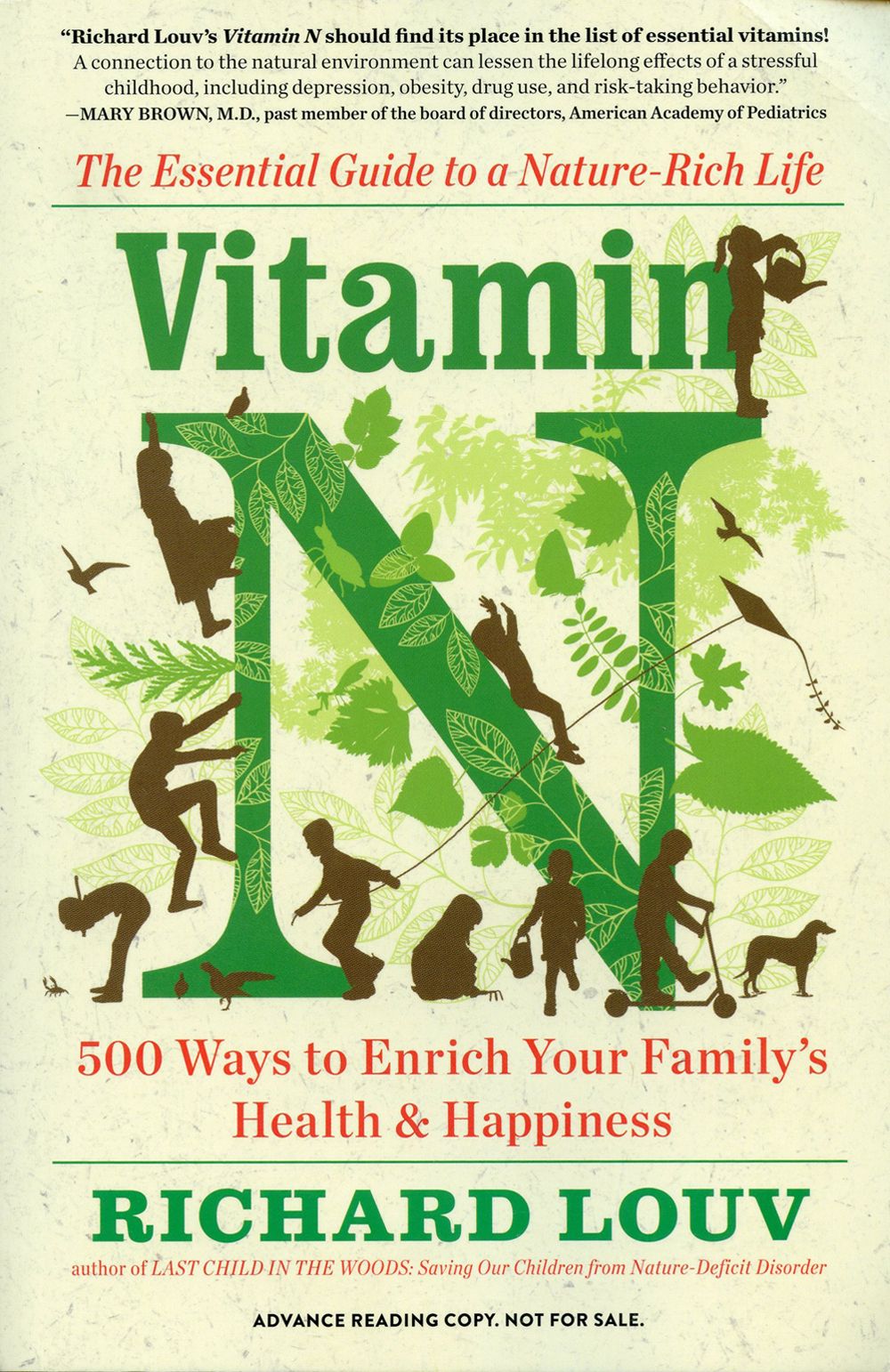
Here are 12 suggestions drawn from the book,*VITAMIN N,* which offers 500 actions for individuals, families and communities:



**1. View nature as an antidote to stress.**All the health benefits that come to a child come to the adult who takes that child into nature. Children and parents feel better after spending time in the natural world-even if it’s in their own backyard.

**2. Lose the cell phone; get a better connection.** Tech isn’t the enemy, but it can certainly be a barrier. Vow to periodically leave your cell phone in your pocket, ringer off, cancelling all the beeps, tweets, and repeats, so you’re more present with your child. Limit access to texting, computers, and TV part of the day or week. For example, schedule Friday as a “Smartphone and iPad-Free Outdoor Play Day” for the kids and the parents as well.

**3. Go further—plan a techno-fast/vacation.**Commit to a few days away from digital life. On your own or with kids, go camping, rent a cabin, or house–trade with someone who misses traffic jams. Set your computer to send out an e-mail auto-reply: “I’m taking a brief break from all communications electronic”.

**4. Put together a family G.O. Bag.**Stuff a duffel bag with daypacks, a compass, binoculars, nature guides, and maybe a topo-map of your bioregion. Add granola bars, hats, gloves, fleece vests, sunglasses, collapsible hiking poles, some old hiking shoes or other comfortable footwear, and water bottles. Wrap your G.O. Bag. Stash it in your car trunk. Now your family can Go Outside on a moment’s notice. (This is also a safety precaution for fires and other natural disasters.)

**5. Start or Join a Family Nature Club.**Here’s a way to create a community of support for parents and children: join an existing family nature club, or form a new one. It’s a great way to create a community of support for families. This same concept can be adopted by teens or adults without children of their own, in the form of friendship nature clubs.

**6. Establish a Parent-Teacher Nature Club.**Robert Bateman, the renowned Canadian artist, whose paintings often depict wildlife, suggests that teachers and other educators create their own Teacher Nature Clubs to organize weekend hikes and other nature experiences for teachers. Go further: create a Parent-Teacher Nature Club. (Call it the PTN. In fact, your PTA could take the lead and create a PTN.) Such clubs would encourage teachers experienced in the natural world to share their knowledge with teachers less experienced in the outdoors.

**7. Don’t cut down the tree, build up the kid!**Provide training in the value and management of natural risk*.*Teachers, play leaders (or “playworkers” as they’re called in the UK), and parents who supervise groups of children need regular training in play leadership. “Such training has been successful in adventure playgrounds, and limited numbers of forest schools, zoos, child development centers, children’s museums and expanding integrated natural/built playgrounds at schools and parks,” says international play expert Joe Frost. Common sense helps. But up-to-date knowledge about play and risk is essential.

**8. Make every school a “green haven.”**In the public mind, schools are too often associated with stress and even violence. One way to change that perception is to turn them into “green havens,” writes Louise Chawla, professor of environmental design, University of Colorado in Boulder, and coeditor of the journal *Children, Youth and Environments*. “Not every family has natural areas around their home or a park down the block, but almost every family sends their children to a school where there is a playground or playing fields.” She recommends turning parts of school grounds into gardens, natural habitats for study and play. “Then all children could have a green haven in their lives. A place for calm, peace, and rapt absorption.”

**9. Work for natural equity.**Every child has a right to experience the natural world, not just those of a certain economic or cultural group or set of abilities, not just those with parents who encourage nature play and nature learning. Every child. Start or support a regional campaign to connect *all* children to nature in the city or county in which you live. Bring pediatricians and educators, business people and conservationists, liberals and conservatives, places of worship and service organizations together to reduce nature-deficit disorder in *every* neighborhood.

**10. Champion the return of recess and other school programs that get kids outside.**Engage your PTA and other organizations to help bring back recess and physical education — and then go the next step: encourage outdoor exercise and learning. In addition to improving physical and mental health, outdoor time can raise test scores. And now for something completely different: though the approach is still rare, some high schools now allow student athletes to letter in outdoor sports, such as hiking and fishing.

**11. Exert parent power.**Parents can demand nature-rich education and have more influence to achieve that goal than they may believe. “School board members, trustees, administrators, and teachers listen to parents big-time,” says Tim Grant, editor in chief of the Canada-based journal *Green Teacher*. “Many teachers have said they’ve made suggestions to principals and received no response, but when the parent makes the same suggestions, things often start to happen” at the national, state, and local levels. Push to enact bills supporting environmental education in the classroom and outdoor experiential learning. Beyond schools, encourage your pediatrician to prescribe nature.

**12. Put nature on the calendar.**If you plan the family’s sports commitments and vacations in advance, do the same for time spent in nature. Try skipping organized sports for a season and use that time to get outside. That suggestion won’t work for everyone, but for busy parents, teachers and community leaders, taking time for nature requires *making* time, and putting it on the calendar.

See more here:

<https://www.childrenandnature.org/2018/11/19/lets-optoutside-365-days-a-year-starting-nov-25-2/?mc_cid=80de4c35c6&mc_eid=e6c37a29f5>