



EarthWell Nature Connection

Did you know that the oxygen in your lungs may have been released just days ago by a tree in the Amazon rainforest, that your body is literally made of elements from the earth beneath your feet, Did you know the water that flows through your veins has floated through the sky as clouds and flowed through great rivers or that the energy that fuels every movement or thought was once in the heart of a star?

Take your hand and bring it up in front of your face. Look closely at your palm and fingers – the curves, the lines, the fingerprints. The parts that make you unique amongst the 8 billion other people on this planet. Your hand. Except the hand you're looking at isn't yours, at least it wasn't until recently and won't be for long.

The skin you're looking at wasn't there six months ago. It grew since then as your old skin cells turned to dust and went back to the earth. Your body took the foods you ate during that time - fruit, vegetables, nuts, seeds, eggs, meat or fish, dissolved them into proteins, vitamins and minerals and used these to make the new layers you see now. In fact, every part of you was formed from the meals and snacks you consumed throughout your lifetime. This constant growth continues every day, throughout our lives even when we think we are fully grown.

The minerals in your bones, the iron in your blood, the proteins in your muscles, skin and hair, the carbohydrates that fuel your cells, the fats that coat your nerve cells, lubricate your joints and make up much of your brain were all part of some other plant, animal, fish, oceans, skies, the earth beneath your feet and even the sun that shines - before they became part of you.

And before they became part of whatever they were before joining your body, they were part of something else – the grasses that the cow ate or the creature whose body decomposed and became plant food. We exist thanks to a continuous cycle of matter, the building blocks of the universe, being formed and reformed, becoming part of us for a time and then moving on to become something else. We are, in every sense, made of this earth.

Now take a deep, oxygen-rich breath, and another... fill your lungs... Where do you think that air came from? The answer is everywhere on the planet! Thanks to the constant circulation of air through worldwide wind movement, some of the air in your lungs now is likely to have been on the other side of the planet at some point in the last year or two. When you exhale, parts your breath could travel round the globe in a matter of weeks to months.

The life-giving oxygen that nourishes the billions of cells we're made of all comes from trees and plants... We breathe out CO₂ and they breathe it in... They breathe out O₂ and we and other creatures breathe it in a harmonious cycle of give and take. Maybe it's not a coincidence that trees look like lungs.

The oxygen that's nourishing you right now may have been released just days ago by a giant 25-storey tall tree in the Amazon, an ancient Oak tree here in Ireland or an underwater kelp forest swaying in the ocean off a distant coast. The carbon dioxide you exhale will feed flowers of many colours, shapes and scents that will soon bloom all over the world. Every breath connects us with entire planet.

How about the last drink you took? It was either just water, or mostly water, just like you and I. Water is the most essential element for life as we know it to exist. Our scientists are scouring the galaxy with telescopes for signs of life by looking for planets and moons that contain water. Luckily, we have an abundance of this essential element right here. About two thirds of your body is made of water that is being replaced ounce by ounce every day. Each molecule of H₂O in you has been in streams, rivers, lakes, oceans, clouds and rain. When it leaves your body, it will return to all of these at some point.

What about the clothes you're wearing? Where were they made? Where did the materials come from? The fibres, the dyes, the buttons or zips. How many hands were involved in harvesting, creating and delivering these.

Many of us have forgotten that we are part of the great web of life. We've become busy with work, study and living life through screens. We are more connected in some ways, through technology than we have ever been, but more disconnected than any that came before us from the amazing world that is our home, that sustains us, that brings us peace, beauty, wonder and inspiration.

As is the case with any relationship, we need to spend time getting to know nature again, to see its value, to recognise that we want it in our lives and to understand what it needs from us.

Once we do, our connection with nature will become stronger again, so it becomes a consideration, maybe even a priority, in all that we do. We will remember that we are not simply the consumers that the worlds industries would have us believe, needing to consume more and more products to be happy until there is nothing left. We'll realise that we can get much of the contentment we seek by simply enjoying nature, and it's free!

We will want to use environmentally friendly products in our homes, schools, businesses, farms and factories knowing that they will end up back in the water we drink, air we breathe and the food we eat quite soon.

We will consider, when we buy anything, the effects of its production on the people involved in making them and on the environment itself. We might ask ourselves if we actually need it in the first place!

We will also take responsibility for it where it goes when we are done with it and it becomes our waste, considering if it is biodegradable, can be reused or recycled safely.

We will want to support nature in our gardens, hedgerows, streets, farms, parks and forests by giving it space to grow. Often, we simply need to let it be. Nature will find a way.

We are essentially all living in a bubble, floating through the galaxy – the only one that we currently know of and have access to, that we can live in. Everything we do affects us all. It's all connected. It makes sense to look after it. We have the knowledge, the technology, the tools and the people – all 8 billion of us, to make this earth a paradise for all of us. By remembering that we are all in this together, that we are all connected, we can make that a reality for generations to come.