

## *Testing Our Sea Legs*

A Stephy's Place Reflection July, 2024

Kevin J. Keelen

We are just about to start our annual July hiatus as Stephy's Place will be closed until August 6<sup>th</sup>. For those who volunteer and work at our Center, it is a much-needed break to regroup and rest. For our participants, it is also an opportunity to stand on one's own and see how our sea legs are managing. The expression "to have one's sea legs" not only means to be able to walk calmly and steadily on a tossing ship, but also to become accustomed to a new or strange situation. Perhaps this can be a time to try out some of the 'tools' we talk about in our groups, maybe even something you haven't tried before. Not every tool works for everyone, so I invite you to dip your toes into the water and see how it feels. We've all had similar experiences growing up, like learning to ride a bike when our teacher lets go, or swimming for the first time without a flotation device or driving the car for the first time without a chaperone. These are somewhat benign examples, but they serve to let us know that we can do this. You can do this. You will be okay.

I want to strongly encourage you to get outside as much as possible during this break. I don't think anything quite nurtures us like nature.

**The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely, or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quiet, alone with the heavens, nature and God. Because only then does one feel that all is as it should be and that God wishes to see people happy, amidst the simple beauty of nature. I firmly believe that nature brings solace in all troubles.**

**Anne Frank**

Nature has nurtured me during my entire life. Simply walking outside has been one of the best remedies for the heavy grief that I have carried through the years. Humans have had a profound connection with nature since prehistoric times. Today, however, we frequently spend most of our days indoors in artificially lit

rooms while staring at screens. Now more than ever, perhaps, it is important that we take advantage of all of nature's healing effects on the mind and body.

We don't have to go outside for long for nature to start doing its thing to help improve our mood and wellbeing. Research shows that being exposed to natural environments and greenspace reduces the body's stress hormones.

It helps to try to be present to the present moment while we take ourselves outside. We need to get our brains to notice nature. I usually go directly to my five senses and allow myself to drink it in. What do I see? How does the air and sun feel on my face and skin? What are the sounds surrounding me? Allow yourself the opportunity to smell the air and the flowers, to see and drink in the colors, to feel the breeze, listen to the birds singing, or watch the chipmunk or bunny as it hops by. Allow yourself to feel whatever it is that you are feeling at that given moment. Go ahead, dip your toes in and see how it feels.

Look deep into nature,  
and then you will understand  
everything better.

Albert Einstein

### **Important Reminder:**

**We ask you to please support the "Place" that has supported you...**

**Our annual Mourning Walk will take place on Sunday September 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:30am at Seven President's Park in Long Branch. We're asking all our participants to please register even if you can't attend (although attending is an amazing experience of solidarity).**

**Stephy's Place is our Place of refuge, and our stewardship pays it forward to keep our doors open for those who follow us on this arduous journey of grief.**

**Thank you for supporting this special and amazing Place!**

**To register go to [www.stephysplace.org](http://www.stephysplace.org)**