

JUST BREATHE

by Leah Burch

Nature and the outside world has helped me get through the most challenging times of 2020. In the beginning of the global pandemic, I had this haunting, terrible impression that I would be stuck in my house for years and years until this pandemic was over, which I thought would never end. As time passed, my parents noticed that my siblings and I were all miserable, so they suggested we go take a little walk in a nature park that is only two miles away from where we live. As we were walking, I noticed myself laughing and having a good time, looking at the green, blue, and purple flowers, and the soaring birds above me. We noticed that we like that place, with all of its brown striped turkeys, spotted deer, and beautiful, coffee-colored jackrabbits. Every day we would go and have picnics there, read, hike, and occasionally bike as well.

I realized that nature can be so calming and refreshing, even in my hardest times, but I can only have that calming experience if I find it. Which I did. Finding a nice log to sit down on, and breathing in the fresh air, was a very adventurous and relieving experience. I found that when I was near the swift river, I could think more. I found that when I heard the wild turkeys gawking loudly from across the clear, frigid water, I was more grateful for what was around me. Sometimes, I would just lightly touch the verdant trees, and I would skip the smooth rocks into the cool water, and that would calm me down. I would think in the moment, in the present, but not in the past. I would forget about my crankiness and I would forget about the pandemic. I would lose myself in nature and the outside world, which was what I needed to be relaxed. I befriended nature, and that's one of the reasons why I am so happy now, because I listen to what I need-what everyone needs-which is to be outside and enjoy life. Even if I didn't enjoy my time

in the nature park right there and then, later on I was grateful for what nature brought to me, what it had to give, and what I had to find. So take a walk outside, and breathe, and you will notice how much nature can help you in your most challenging times.