



This Is Your Life Podcast
Season 5, Episode 2
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Michael Hyatt

Stu McLaren: Welcome to *This Is Your Life* with Michael Hyatt, where our goal is to help you win at work and succeed at life. My name is Stu McLaren, your host for season 5 of the show, and I'm here with the one-and-only Mr. Michael Hyatt. How are you, buddy?

Michael Hyatt: I'm doing great, Stu. How are you doing?

Stu: I am doing good.

Michael: You look great.

Stu: Well, thank you. I've been spending some time outdoors.

Michael: Well, I see that.

Stu: You know, it's been impacting me in a positive way and... Oh, what a coincidence! That's what we're talking about today.

Michael: Perfect!

Stu: Yes, and I want to open this episode up, because we are going to be talking about the benefits of getting outside more. This has really become important for you because of two recent trips that you took where you were outside quite a bit.

Michael: Yeah.

Stu: And you saw tremendous benefits from that. Can you tell us about those?

Michael: Yeah, I've never been outside more than this year, and I just noticed some benefits that I was experiencing physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and everything. One of them was that I got to go on this amazing fly-fishing trip to the Bighorn River in Fort Smith, Montana.

Stu: So you're out in the middle of nowhere.

Michael: Out in the middle of nowhere. This is the fly-fishing capital of the world, the trout-fishing capital of the world (some may contest that), but it was amazing. So we were out in that river, sometimes drifting in a boat, but mostly standing in the stream.

Stu: Wow.

Michael: And we were up to our mid-thighs for 10 to 12 hours a day, and I felt great.

Stu: Really?

Michael: Yeah, it was amazing. Then the other opportunity, or the other outdoor experience that I had was when Gail and I took our sabbatical to Maine and then Prince Edward Island this year. We were in Maine for almost three weeks, and then Prince Edward Island for a week. We spent a ton of time outdoors, and of course Maine was amazing.

I mean, that's got some of the most spectacular topography ever, and being around the ocean always just reinvigorates me and makes me feel young and rejuvenates everything, and then in Prince Edward Island I also went fly fishing. Now the funny thing about the fly fishing at Prince Edward Island is, you know, it's not really known for its fly fishing, but we found a guide who took us out, and the mosquitoes at this particular time of year (we went in June), the mosquitoes were huge.

Stu: Hahaha.

Michael: I think it may be the provincial bird of Prince Edward Island. I don't know, but they were big! So we had all this mosquito netting on, all of our fly-fishing gear, you know, waders, the whole thing, but then mosquito netting. We looked like beekeepers, there was so much on us.

The good news was I didn't catch a single mosquito bite, and the bad news was I didn't catch a single fish, but there was still this rejuvenating effect of just standing out there in the water, and we fished about three or four different locations, stream, actually in the ocean, and we just had a great time. It was my son-in-law and me.

Stu: That's awesome.

Michael: We just loved it.

Stu: This is really important because today, more than ever, we are spending more time inside, inside our homes.

Michael: Definitely.

Stu: Offices, inside of our cars, and in fact I think one of the stats that you recently shared was that people spend up to 25 percent less time outside than they did 20 years ago.

Michael: Yeah.

Stu: Which is crazy, so let's talk today about the real benefits, the life-changing benefits of getting outside more, because I think not only is this a benefit for us personally, but it also sets a precedent for our children and the people that we influence.

Michael: Yeah.

Stu: Which, for me, is a real important ripple effect of demonstrating the benefits of getting outside.

Michael: Yeah, and I just think our environments are so important. Where we do what we do is critically important, and we weren't made to live indoors all the time in these artificial environments,

Stu: Right.

Michael: And the great thing about getting outdoors is that it gives you an opportunity to experience nature as God intended it and really let it soak in.

Stu: Well fortunately for us, there are some major wins that we can experience in our lives by just getting outside more.

Michael: Yep.

Stu: That's what I want to focus on here today. What are the benefits of getting outside more? Let's start with benefit #1?

Michael: Benefit #1: *what nature does for your mind.*

Stu: Okay.

Michael: Now I want to refer to a study that I read about. This was one study that was done where people performing memory and attention tests upped their scores by 20 percent after walking through an arboretum.

Stu: Okay.

Michael: I stumbled over that, *arboretum*.

Stu: I had no idea.

Michael: *Arbor*, you know that means tree.

Stu: Okay.

Michael: Right?

Stu: Yeah.

Michael: *Arboretum*, a place with trees.

Stu: Arboretum.

Michael: Yeah.

Stu: A place with trees.

Michael: It's a thing.

Stu: Okay. Got it. Didn't know that before.

Michael: So they walked through an arboretum, and walking down a busy street, by comparison, offered no such benefits. "But the time doesn't have to be long," the researchers went on to say. "Short micro-breaks with nature, even just looking at pictures of nature, has discernible benefits for our minds."

Stu: Wow. So just getting outside in nature, in this case trees, increased the people's cognitive abilities by 20 percent.

Michael: Yep, specifically memory and attention. Now, immersive stretches of nature offer big benefits for our creativity and problem-solving skills. Get this, after spending four days in the wild disconnected from any sort of digital technology, students in one study performed 50 percent better on a problem-solving test. "Our results demonstrate that there is a cognitive

advantage to be realized if we spend time immersed in a natural setting,” said the researchers. This is one of the things I love about my sabbatical time.

Stu: Yep.

Michael: When I go away and unplug and I’m out in nature, whether it’s fishing, hiking (which I also love to do), being on the water, I come back with my creativity just so stimulated. I’m ready to work. I’ve got all kinds of ideas going through my mind.

Stu: Yeah, it’s interesting. A few months back I was on the train that you have spoken about before going from Silverton down to Durango.

Michael: Right.

Stu: I was on that train with a whole bunch of great friends and Mastermind Partners, and I was talking to one of my friends who is an amazing businessman, and we were just talking about, again, this very subject, the benefits of getting outside. He said whenever he’s stuck with a problem or a challenge that really requires him to come up with some solution, he goes outside. For him he goes either surfing or he goes for a hike.

Michael: Hmm.

Stu: He’s from Australia, so he’s living near the beach, but he gets outside, and he said inevitably whenever he comes back he has somehow found a way to be able to come up with an idea or a solution or a way to solve the problem that he’s challenged with at the time, and he said he attributes it to just getting outside. So whenever he’s stuck, he just goes for a walk, goes surfing, does something outside, and it stimulates his thinking.

Michael: Yeah, I’ve experienced the same thing, and I think part of it is you’re just oxygenating your brain.

Stu: Hmm.

Michael: You’ve got more oxygen, you’re breathing, and especially if you’re doing some light exercise, it’s bringing more blood to your brain with more oxygen.

Stu: Yep.

Michael: And that’s always a good thing.

Stu: Well, another example, a friend of mine and amazing author, Robin Sharma.

Michael: Mm-hmm.

Stu: One of the times we were scheduling, trying to meet and so forth, and he said, "You know what? Do you like walking?" I said, "Yeah. I love walking." He said, "Let's meet and walk." So instead of like meeting in the office, we went for like a half-hour walk and went through the park and everything. It was awesome, but it was amazing to see how, for me, the conversation developed into so much more than it probably would have if we were stuck in the office, so there's many ways to do this, to incorporate it.

Michael: Yeah, and it's important to be intentional about it, because if you're not careful you can spend all your time indoors.

Stu: Right.

Michael: And even like this last Saturday, I went out in the middle of the day and decided to go for a run. It was 95 degrees out.

Stu: Dude, that's crazy.

Michael: And the humidity was crazy, and so Gail said, "What are you thinking? Why are you going out?" I said, "You know, I just feel the need to get outside." I came back soaking wet and felt fantastic. I mean my brain was... I'd listened to an audiobook the whole time. I was reading this novel, and I felt so great.

Stu: Awesome.

Michael: Promptly had a nap. It was great.

Stu: Got it, so one of the major benefits that you are sharing here with us today is that it really sharpens your mind.

Michael: Yeah. Let me just say also, and I've got another note here. It's not just the positive mental effects. Don't stop at the brainy stuff like focus and creativity and problem-solving, but nature also improves our mood.

Stu: Yep.

Michael: Our generosity.

Stu: Hmm.

Michael: Just a lot more. It just makes us, I think, more others-centered and more positive.

Stu: Right. I know for me, especially when I'm in the mountains or near an ocean, I just feel like there's so much more possibility. You really feel the vastness of this amazing place that we live in.

Michael: Well it gives you perspective, like on that same... I was just recently in Durango, where you were talking about the train from Durango from Silverton to Durango, and when you're standing out there in the midst of those 12,000- and 14,000-foot mountains, it gives you a sense of perspective. You realize that whatever your problems are, they're not that big.

Stu: Yeah.

Michael: And especially there, when you look up at the sky and you can see all the stars and the Milky Way and all that, it just has a way of kind of dialing down the drama in your life and putting it into perspective.

Stu: Yep. Well, we have been talking about the #1 benefit so far of getting outdoors more, and Michael's got two more. We're going to get to those in just a minute right after this break.

*If you're like most members of my audience, you're committed to winning at work and succeeding in life, but the truth is you struggle with finding enough time to do it all. That's exactly why I wrote my new e-book, *Shave 10 Hours Off Your Workweek: 4 Proven Strategies for Creating More Margin for the Things That Matter Most*. You can't buy *Shave 10 Hours Off Your Workweek*, but you can get it for free by subscribing to my free e-mail newsletter.*

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Stu: Welcome back. Today we have been talking about three life-changing benefits to getting outdoors more. We so far have talked about the #1 benefit, which is that *nature sharpens your mind*, but I know you've got two more benefits for us. What are those?

Michael: I do. It's *what nature does for your body*. When you spend time outdoors, it just has a way of relaxing you. In fact, it's a stress killer.

Stu: Hmm.

Michael: Which, all of us struggle with stress. We're in these indoor environments, attending meetings, working on our computers, it leads to stress, but to get outside is huge for relaxing. Now I also jotted down some notes about this. It provides a cascade of other benefits for your body: rejuvenated physical energy, faster physical recovery...

Stu: Hmm.

Michael: Which is important.

Stu: I wouldn't have thought that. So just being in nature, you're going to recover faster.

Michael: Air, vitamin D, the sunshine, all that promotes healing. Reduced anxiety, reduced muscle tension, decreased stress hormones, heightened immunity, lower heart rate, decreased blood pressure, and better cholesterol.

Stu: Wow, and here's the biggest benefit to all that. It doesn't cost you a darn thing.

Michael: It doesn't. It's free.

Stu: Yeah.

Michael: The outdoors is free. Now if you want to go to really nice outdoor places it may cost a little bit. It also has a reciprocal impact on your mental energy, as well. When you feel better physically it has an impact on your mental ability, and so there is this virtuous cycle that takes place as a result of just being outside.

Stu: So #1 benefit is *it sharpens your mind*, #2 is *it rejuvenates your body*. What's the third benefit to getting outside more?

Michael: The third one is, I think, *what it does for your spirit*.

Stu: Yeah?

Michael: Yeah. You know, from my perspective, as a person of faith, God created it all, and so to be in an environment that he created... He didn't create us in houses. He created us to live

outdoors, and there's something just tremendously rejuvenating that connects us with something transcendent when we're outside.

I mean, to think when you're outside and you're lying on the beach and just watching the surf just hit the beach over and over again, or you're in an open sky and it's night and you're watching some shooting stars in the wide expanse of the heavens. You know, to me all of that just connects me with my Creator. It gives me a sense of purpose, the sense that I'm not alone in the universe, the sense that this just isn't all there is, but there is vastly more, and so it invests my life with meaning.

I think meaning is one of those things that, when people don't have meaning in their life, and I'm talking about something more than just a self-created meaning, but the sense that they were put on earth for a purpose. They've been given a mission. There is something that they're here to accomplish. I think that's incredibly important for our overall health and well-being as well.

Stu: And I think one of the things that you talked about earlier was that whole perspective.

Michael: Yes.

Stu: And I totally agree with you. For me it makes me feel part of something much bigger, and as you were saying, more meaningful.

Michael: Yeah, absolutely. Perspective is a crucial thing, because we lose perspective. We tend to think that in our little worlds inside our problems are much bigger than they really are, but you get in the expanse of nature and you realize, "Gosh, this is such a small problem."

Stu: Right.

Michael: And it's transient. It's not going to last forever. When we were in those same mountains I was talking about in Durango, we took a drive down to Mesa Verde where these apartment-dwelling Native American Indians lived for centuries, really for almost a millennium, 750 years I believe all together.

Stu: Wow.

Michael: But it's in this deep gorge. It's kind of like the Grand Canyon, and when you're there you just realize that this gorge has been here for a very, very, very long time. It's going to be here into the future for a very, very long time. Who knows how all of that was created? Was it glaciers? Was it a river? Probably some natural history people could tell us, but it just gave me

a sense that this has been here a long time before I arrived and it's going to be here a long time after I'm gone, and it just gave me a sense of perspective.

Stu: Hmm.

Michael: You know, the problems that I'm dealing with, it's just like... They're not that big of a deal.

Stu: Right.

Michael: I mean, in the whole scheme of things, they're not that big of a deal.

Stu: Yep.

Michael: In fact, I'll forget about them three months from now.

Stu: Yeah.

Michael: Maybe three days from now. You know?

Stu: That's awesome. So for you the three benefits to getting outside more, and this is what you're really sharing with everybody, are #1: nature sharpens your mind, #2: nature rejuvenates your body, and #3: nature refreshes your spirit.

Michael: Yes.

Stu: Well, I want to kind of put this into context for people in terms of practicality. How can we use this on a regular basis? Very practical, just get outside more, right?

Michael: Yeah.

Stu: But what I want to do is... As we conclude this episode, we have four major priorities that we can serve while experiencing nature so that we kill two birds with one stone, because the reality is we're all busy. There's a lot going on. So yeah, we would love to stay outside all day everyday, but the reality is we've got stuff to do.

Michael: That's right.

Stu: We have a life to live, so how can we combine some of these things so that we can kill two birds with one stone, as you say? So let's talk about some of these priorities that we can experience with nature. Let's start with #1.

Michael: Yeah, #1, I think, is just *time with our friends and loved ones*. You know, make that outdoors.

Stu: Right.

Michael: Yesterday we wanted to spend some time with two of our grandsons, and so Gail had this idea, "Let's just take them swimming. Let's go to the pool and go swimming."

Stu: Nice.

Michael: That was outdoors. It was unbelievably hot outside, but how much fun to play with the kids. You were telling me about playing with Marlin in the pool recently.

Stu: Yeah.

Michael: And it's so much fun, such a bonding thing to be outside, to be wet, to experience all that you experience in the hot sun. It was just great.

Stu: One of the things that I started doing with my two kids when we were in South Africa, when we were adopting our son and we were connecting with him there for several weeks, was I would take the kids on a walk every morning, and the kids just began to look forward to that. It just became part of what we did. So once we got home... We're very fortunate. We live right near an amazing trail that's all through the woods, and it's one of the most incredible trails that I've ever walked on, ran on, and so forth.

So I started taking the kids on this trail, and it's been so much fun, because now there are raspberries, wild raspberries growing, and it's become this whole experience with the two kids where every time we go, we look to see if there are any more raspberries that are big enough to eat, and the kids love it. They look forward to it, and I love that shared experience with them, because, you know, your good friend, and he's been a virtual mentor of mine, too, John Maxwell.

Michael: Yeah.

Stu: He talked about how there's nothing more powerful than a shared experience.

Michael: Yes.

Stu: And I think getting outside with loved ones really creates that.

Michael: It does.

Stu: It creates those memories and something that especially the kids look forward to.

Michael: It makes it much more memorable. Yep.

Stu: Awesome. Okay, so that's one way to be able to combine nature with something that you're doing already, which is spending time with friends and loved ones outside. What's another priority where we can combine these things?

Michael: I think just *mental and spiritual development*. One of the things I did this last weekend, too, as I was reading through this novel, is that I read outside for a couple of hours. It was hot out, but I got under a big tree on a picnic table and I was in the shade, and it was perfectly comfortable.

Stu: I bet you it was pretty calm and relaxing too.

Michael: Oh, it was totally calm and relaxing, and I felt like my focus was better because I was outside. I was enjoying the great outdoors, getting some fresh air and all that. I think spiritually, too, when we were on our sabbatical, my daughter, Mary, and her husband, Chris, were with us, and one of the things Mary did every morning was she was out doing her yoga exercises outside on the deck, and it was awesome, because we were about 20 yards from the ocean.

Stu: Wow.

Michael: And so just to watch her in that environment go through her exercises, you know, was awesome. So things that you could do inside, why not do those outside?

Stu: Right.

Michael: Especially when the weather is great. Take advantage of it.

Stu: Awesome. Okay, so time with friends and loved ones, mental and spiritual development, what's a third priority?

Michael: Well this was an obvious one, but *physical fitness*.

Stu: Yeah.

Michael: So in Nashville, like it is in a lot of parts of the country, it gets colder in the winter, so I typically move my exercise inside during the winter months, so I'm running on a treadmill or an AMT machine or something like that, and so a couple of weeks ago I got outside and ran,

and I thought, "Why didn't I do this sooner?" I mean I really should only be inside when the weather just doesn't allow for anything else.

Stu: Yep.

Michael: But unfortunately for me it had become a habit, and so I had to kind of get yanked out and go outside and enjoy it, but I would much rather exercise outside.

Stu: And there are many different forms of exercise.

Michael: Yes.

Stu: There's running, there's walking, you talked about...

Michael: Bicycling.

Stu: Biking, swimming... One of the things that I loved about where we lived previously was we were right on Lake Erie, and so I joined the swimming club and we were doing open water swims. I had never done open water swims before, but it was amazing, and every Saturday morning I was down there at 6 am, and the water was pretty cool, so we were wearing wetsuits. We would get in the wetsuit and we would get out into the water, and it was one of the most relaxing things for me, and I was swimming, you know, two or three kilometers in that morning.

Michael: Yeah, that's great.

Stu: And my wife would be like, "Why are you getting up so early and going swimming in the freezing cold water?" And I was like, "I love it!" You know? It was amazing, and I loved the experience of being in the fresh water and just being able to swim and relax, and yeah.

Michael: That's good.

Stu: And the experience was even better once I got the headset that operated in the water. It was awesome. Then I had my tunes. I was out in nature. It was awesome.

Michael: That's awesome. I've heard that from a lot of people that are able to do that. That's good.

Stu: Yeah, so physical fitness. What's the fourth?

Michael: The fourth one is just *fun and recreation*.

Stu: Yeah.

Michael: You know, do it outside. Instead of doing some kind of game or some kind of play inside, do it outside. Another thing we did a few weeks ago is just playing croquet outside. It was a blast, because kids at any age can play. It's a lot of fun and you're outside.

Stu: Yep. Yeah, I remember reading...I forget the person...oh, Charlie Hoehn, who used to work closely with Tim Ferriss, and one of the things... He was in a real funk in a period of his life, and one of the things he really consciously focused on was having more fun, particularly having fun outside.

Michael: Ah.

Stu: And he said it completely started to change the direction of his life, and he even got to the point where people, when they were asking for meetings and he agreed to meet with them, instead of meeting inside, he would say, "Yeah, let's go play catch outside." It totally changed the dynamic. It was more fun and as a result he started to enjoy his life a lot more, and completely brought himself out of that funk.

Michael: Yeah, that's great.

Stu: So getting outside, having more fun, really helped contribute.

Michael: Yeah, and I think, Stu, this is one of those things that's really easy to underestimate.

Stu: Right.

Michael: And to not see that there's a cause-and-effect relationship, but I would just encourage our listeners, if they have any doubt, try it.

Stu: Right.

Michael: Just get outdoors more and see what it does to your whole outlook on life, what it does to you physically, emotionally, spiritually, and every other way we've talked about.

Stu: And I think, too, if you ever get stuck, find somebody that you can do it with.

Michael: Yes.

Stu: Because I know my wife, when she was pregnant with our daughter, one of the things that she did was... There were two or three women in the neighborhood who were pregnant at the same time, and they would all go walking together.

Michael: That's great.

Stu: And they were all, you know, it was like they would never miss it because they were all doing it together, and I think that really helps.

Michael: Are you naturally an outdoors kind of person?

Stu: I love being outdoors, but I do find myself...I have to be intentional about it.

Michael: Me too.

Stu: Because I naturally kind of bunker down and stay inside.

Michael: See, I think I'm actually less outdoorsy than you are.

Stu: Hmm.

Michael: Because I love my computer and I love technology and I love gadgets and I love reading, and it would really be easy for me to just stay locked up inside.

Stu: Yeah.

Michael: So I have to force myself to go outside, so there's hope for people who don't naturally consider themselves an outdoors person.

Stu: Yeah, definitely. Well, this has been great. We've been talking about the benefits of getting outside more. We talked about the benefits and we talked about how to practically combine getting outside more with things that you're already doing, and so I want to thank you, Michael, and I want to thank the listener. If you've enjoyed today's episode you can find all the show notes over at michaelhyatt.com. You can see the video version of today's podcast at michaelhyatt.com, too, and we would love if you could do us a quick favor.

Can you jump over to [iTunes](https://www.apple.com/itunes/) and just rate the podcast for us? When you do that it just helps us get the show in front of more great people like you, and that's what we are after. If you could do that it would take you 30 seconds, and we'd be very grateful. With that, Michael, as we wind down today, do you have any final thoughts for us?

Michael: Yeah, I would just say as you're looking forward to this weekend, plan at least one outdoor activity, even if it's a walk through the rain. You know, the weather doesn't have to be perfect, but get outdoors, enjoy it with somebody you love, and see the difference it makes in your life.

Stu: Well thank you, my friend.

Until next time, remember... Your life, your one-and-only life, is a gift. Now go make it count.