



Rider & Associates



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## Operation Awe: A Cure for Depression

One day you may be able to step into a doctor's office, be diagnosed for depression, and get a prescription to walk in a state park or hike up a mountain slope. Why? The feeling of awe-inspiration can scramble brain waves and alter your sense of being, says experts' being interviewed in a recent issue of Parade Magazine. Psychologist Dacher Keltner three years ago began a project called "Project Awe," to examine the neurological response when someone gets dumbstruck by seeing and feeling something that is amazing. "Awe is the feeling of being in the presence of something vast or beyond human scale, that transcends our current understanding of things," he says.

Until now, only six major emotions – happiness, sadness, fear, anger, disgust and surprise – were analyzed for their effect on human behavior. "Awe was thought of as the Gucci of the emotional world," Arizona State University psychologist Michelle Shiota. "(It was) cool if you have it, but a luxury item." This author clearly remembers his knees buckling, his legs turning to rubber, the first time he saw the Grand Canyon live and in person. People have had similar feelings looking at a stunning sunrise, watching deer skipping through a forest, gazing at millions of stars on a clear night, or seeing a panoramic view from the top of a mountain or from an airplane to a city below. "Awe causes a kind of Be Here Now that seems to dissolve the self," says social psychologist Paul Piff, of the University of California-Irvine. "It makes us act more generously, ethically and fairly." So the recommendation here is that if you're feeling down, go to the Mother Nature store and pick up some awe-inspiring scenery. It'll work wonders!

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