Mental Health through Nature Connectedness
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What is Nature Connectedness?

• Different to contact and exposure to nature.
• An internationally recognised psychological construct.
• A person’s sense of their relationship with nature.
• Measurable & malleable.
• Gallup World Wellbeing Poll.

UN Convention on Biological Diversity recommended increased focus on nature connectedness to achieve strategic plan and biodiversity targets.
Growth of Nature Connectedness Research

Research Papers

“strong & robust association between nature connection & PEB, as well as evidence that nature connection causes PEB”

75 Studies, n = 27,120

Why Nature Connectedness Matters - People

- Systematic review of 50 studies (n = 16,396) shows nature connection related to **feeling good & functioning well**.

Why the Adolescent Dip Matters

- A national analysis of 29,784 Canadian adolescents.
- Connection to nature ‘important’ - associated with a 25% reduction in high mental health symptoms
- Adolescent engagement with nature ‘protective for their psychological well-being’.
- Connection to nature drops 30% from age 9 to 15

Wider Context: Moments or Minutes?

• Valuable research has focussed on measuring time or visits and often overlooked the role of nature connectedness – a close relationship with nature.

• Three separate national surveys (n = 4960, 4206 & 2096) now found that nature connectedness and noticing nature explain variance in mental wellbeing to a greater degree than time or visits.

Worthwhile Life

Nature Connectedness  Nature Visits

Socio-economic status

Relative difference in wellbeing as a function of contact, connection and socio-demographic factors. Does amount of time spent together provide an accurate indication of a close relationship?
People don’t tend to notice nature…

• 80% of people rarely or never watch wildlife, smell wild flowers or photographed nature.

• 62% of people rarely or never listen to bird song or notice butterflies.

• Those people that do have a higher level of nature connectedness, feel better and do 40 to 50% more for nature.

How do we increase nature connectedness?

For human and nature’s wellbeing…
Noticing the Good Things in Nature

- Prompts to notice the good things in nature (intervention condition) or built spaces (control) each day for a week.
- Randomised controlled trial, 582 adults (mainly 18 to 38), including those with a common mental health problem ($n=148$).
- Measured mental wellbeing and nature connection at baseline, post and follow-up.
Results

• Significant increases in mental health & nature connectedness - sustained at 1 month
• Improvement in quality of life reached clinical significance in adults with a mental health difficulty (n=148)
• Wellbeing improvement partly explained by changes in nature connectedness and positive emotions
• First experimental evidence of strong clinical potential as a wellbeing intervention
• People who gained most were those who had spent less time outdoors and were less connected to nature.
Incorporated into Go Jauntly on iOS

Design Your Own

Pathways to Nature Connectedness

Senses  Emotion  Beauty  Meaning  Compassion
Applied Pathways to 30 Days Wild

- Activities informed by pathways
- 1,000,000+ participants over 5 years
- Tracked 1105 participants
- Improvements across all measures
- Improvements sustained for 2 months
- Those who have lower NC show greater improvement
- Although attracts those with high nature connection & females.
- How to reach those who don’t watch Springwatch?
Where next…

• Audio mindful nature-connectedness intervention that reduced paranoia.

• Using the five pathways in early recovery from substance use disorder – clinically sig. improvement in quality of life compared to an existing approach.

• Study into understanding eco-anxiety UK, Canada and China data.

• Building greater awareness of how a close relationship with nature is key for wellbeing – (e.g. include in each of the 5 ways to wellbeing) - findingnature.org.uk/2019/01/28/5-ways-to-wellbeing-with-nature/
Summary

• A close relationship with nature is important for wellbeing and pro-nature behaviours.
• It can be targeted and improved to benefit mental health.
• For a new relationship with nature create moments using the pathways to nature connectedness.

let nature be your story