

Public Mental Health Learning Community Learning Set

Welcome, and thank you for joining today's event!

Our speakers today include:



Sally Souraya

Interim Head of Public
Mental Health
Implementation Centre
(PMHIC)



Dr Georgina Gould

Dose of Nature



Dr Jo Scott

Intercultural Roots

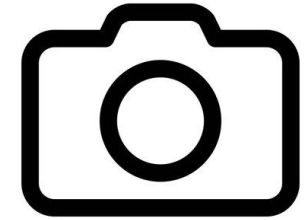
Housekeeping points before we get started



Recording the session



If not speaking, please mute

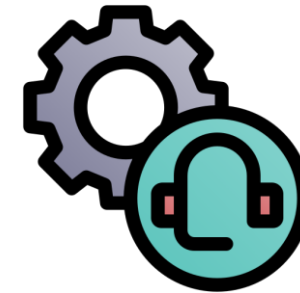


Camera on please,
if comfortable to



Please ask Questions

- Raise your hand
- Use the chat function



Tech issues, please contact
public.MH@rcpsych.ac.uk

Shared principles



Listen with respect and openness

We seek to value learning from different people and stay open to new ways of doing things.



Confidentiality

People may share something they wish to be kept confidential. We require everyone's agreement not to share anyone's information without their permission.



Collaborate

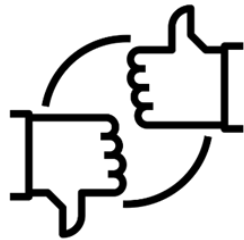
We seek to make decisions by consensus. Everyone's input is **equally** valued.

Shared principles



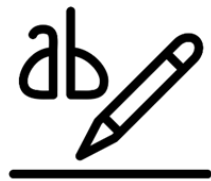
Contribute

We seek to share ideas, ask questions and contribute to discussions. We can also choose not participate at any stage.



Disagree with the point - not the person

We seek to resolve conflicts and tensions.



Use plain language

We seek first to understand, then to be understood. If possible, avoid using jargon and explain acronyms if they must be used.

Today's agenda

Time	Speaker	Affiliation	Topic
13.00-13.15	Sally Souraya	Interim Head of Public Mental Health Implementation Centre (PMHIC)	Welcome and introductions
13.15-13.50	Dr Georgina Gould	Clinical Lead Chartered Psychologist Dose of Nature	Dose of Nature: Using Nature to Support Mental Health & Wellbeing
13.50-14.00	Break		
14.00-14.45	Dr Jo Scott	Quality Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant Senior XR Research Lead Intercultural Roots for Public Health (IRPH)	Extending Nature: XR therapeutic nature-connectedness for adults experiencing anxiety
14.45-15.00	Sally Souraya		Thank you and closing remarks

Dose of Nature: Using Nature to Support Mental Health and Wellbeing

Dr Georgina Gould

Clinical Lead | Chartered Psychologist | Dose of Nature



Dose of Nature

Using Nature to Support Mental Health & Wellbeing

Dr Georgina Gould

Clinical Lead & Counselling Psychologist

www.doseofnature.org.uk



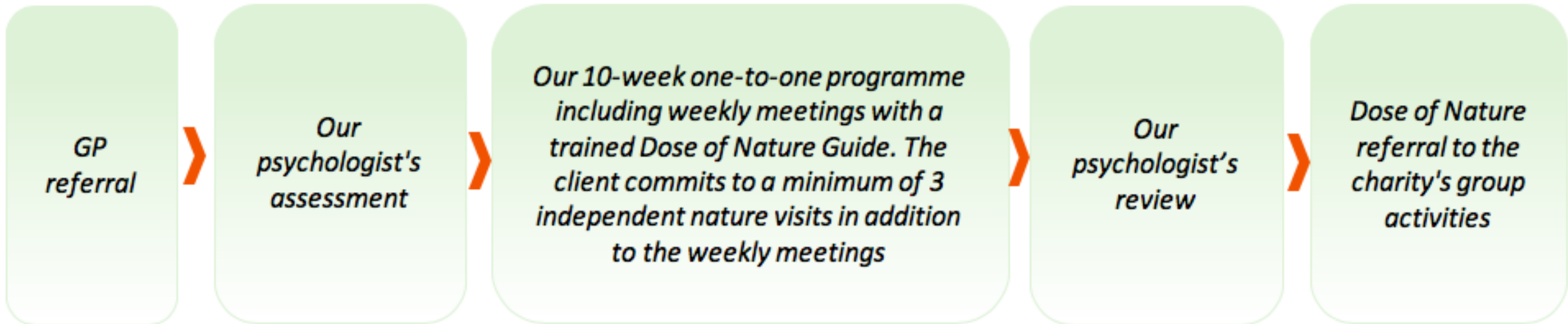
Background

- Delivered our first 'nature prescription' in July 2019
- Since then, over **2000 referrals** from **52 GP practices** across the London Boroughs of Richmond and Kingston, and **15 GP practices** in and around Guildford
- We also lead nature-based wellbeing workshops for the general population; previous groups have included teachers, charity leaders, health professionals, refugees, carers, students, older adults, recovering addicts, survivors of domestic abuse, firefighters, and people experiencing homelessness.



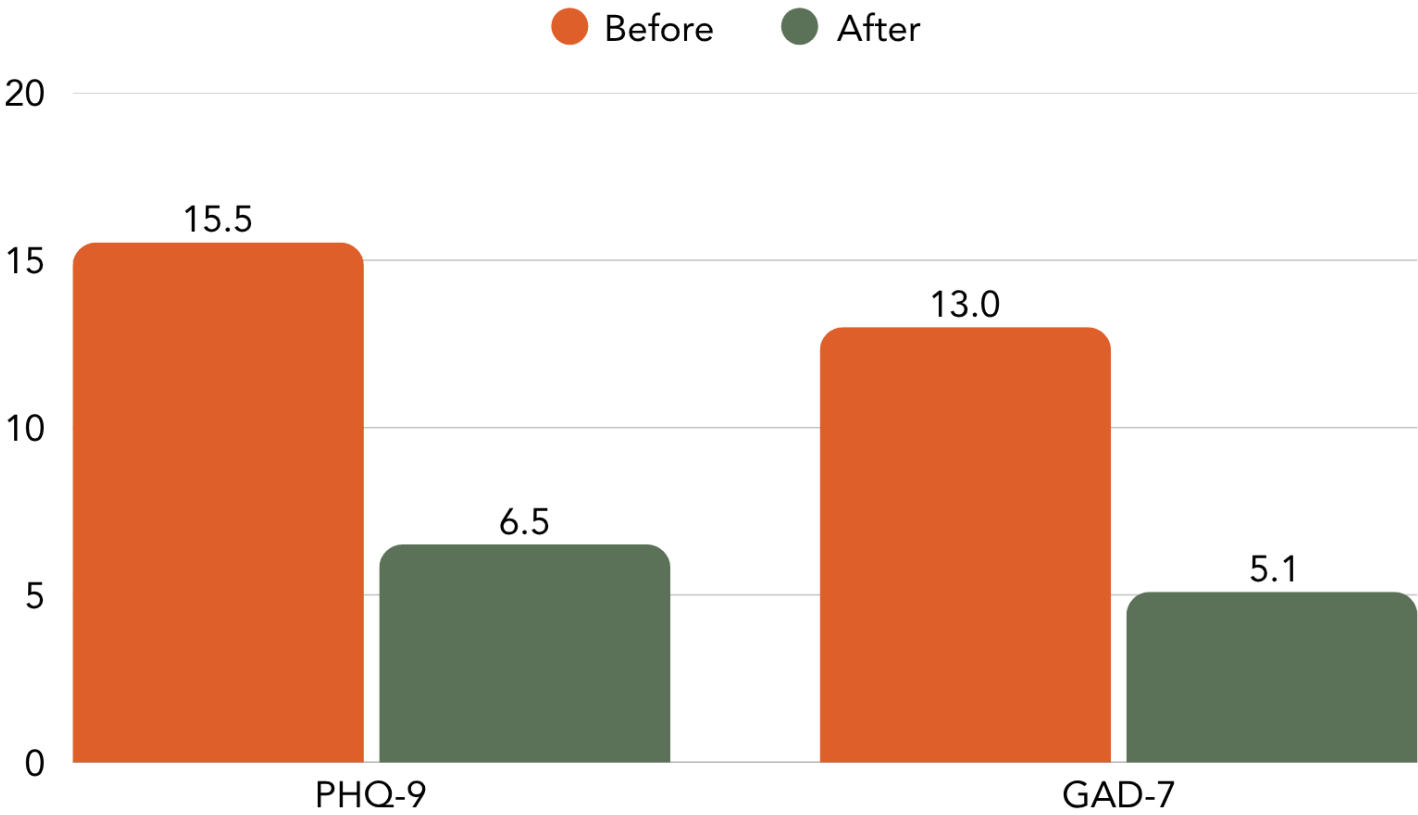
Two main components:

- To motivate a client to spend more time outside in natural environments
- Once outside in a natural setting, to encourage a deeper connection with nature



Clinical Results

Mean reductions in PHQ-9 and GAD-7



Clinical Results

All adults	Recovery rate
Dose of Nature Prescription	64%
NHS Talking Therapies ³	50%

All adults	Reliable improvement
Dose of Nature Prescription	86%
NHS Talking Therapies ³	67%

These outcomes are significantly higher than those reported by NHS Talking Therapies in their most recent full-year data (2023-24).



Clinical Results

LSE Randomised Control Trial

- Confirmed that DoN Prescription reduces depression and anxiety by 5 - 6 points, and that recovery and reliably improved rates exceed those of NHS CBT.
- Life satisfaction and perceived worthwhileness improved by 1.6 points compared to controls.
- WELLBY: calculated a benefit-cost ratio of 8.3, meaning that the benefits of a DoN prescription are more than eight times greater than its costs. This suggests a high value-for-money.



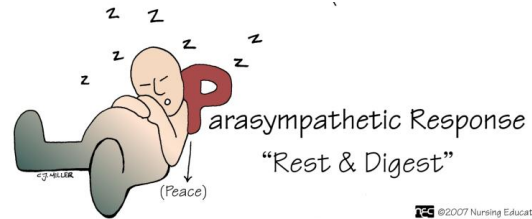
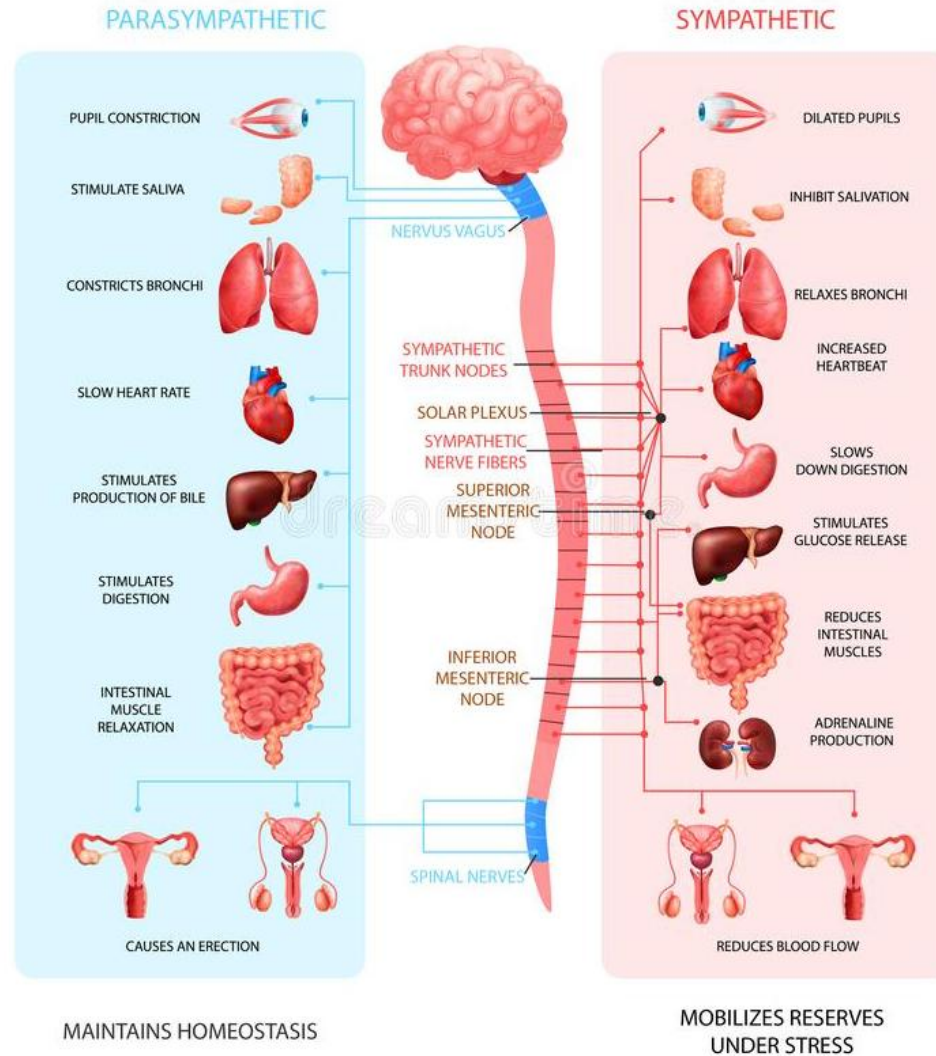


Experimental Research

- In labs and outside in nature
- Psychological measures:
 - questionnaires, preference studies
- Physiological measures:
 - heart rate, blood pressure, cortisol levels
- EEG machines measuring alpha waves
- Natural killer (NK) cells in the blood



PERIPHERAL AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM



Nature's Active Ingredients

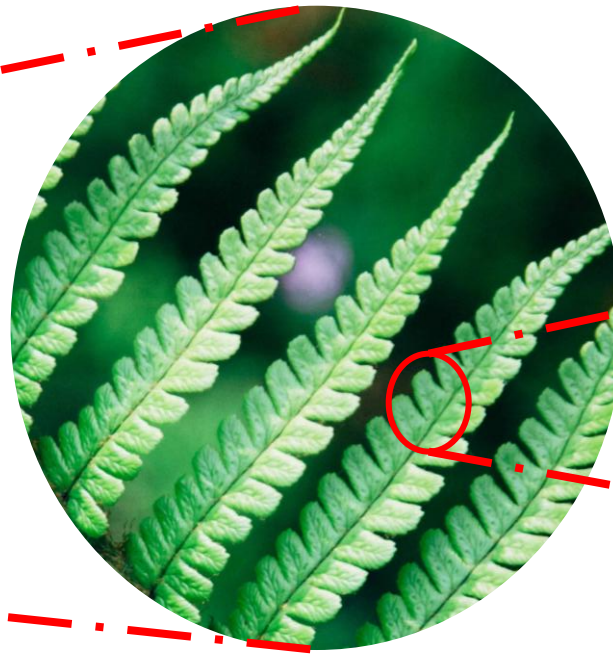
- Fractals
- Phytoncides
- Nature's sounds
- Soil bacteria (*Mycobacterium vaccae*)
- Sunlight
- Awe



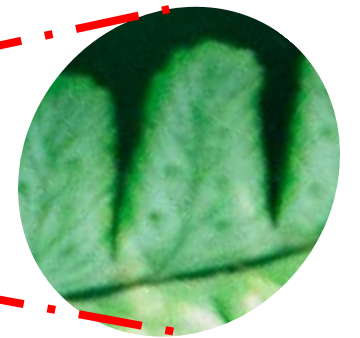
The entire fern is mostly built up from the same basic shape repeated over and over again at even smaller scales



Blade



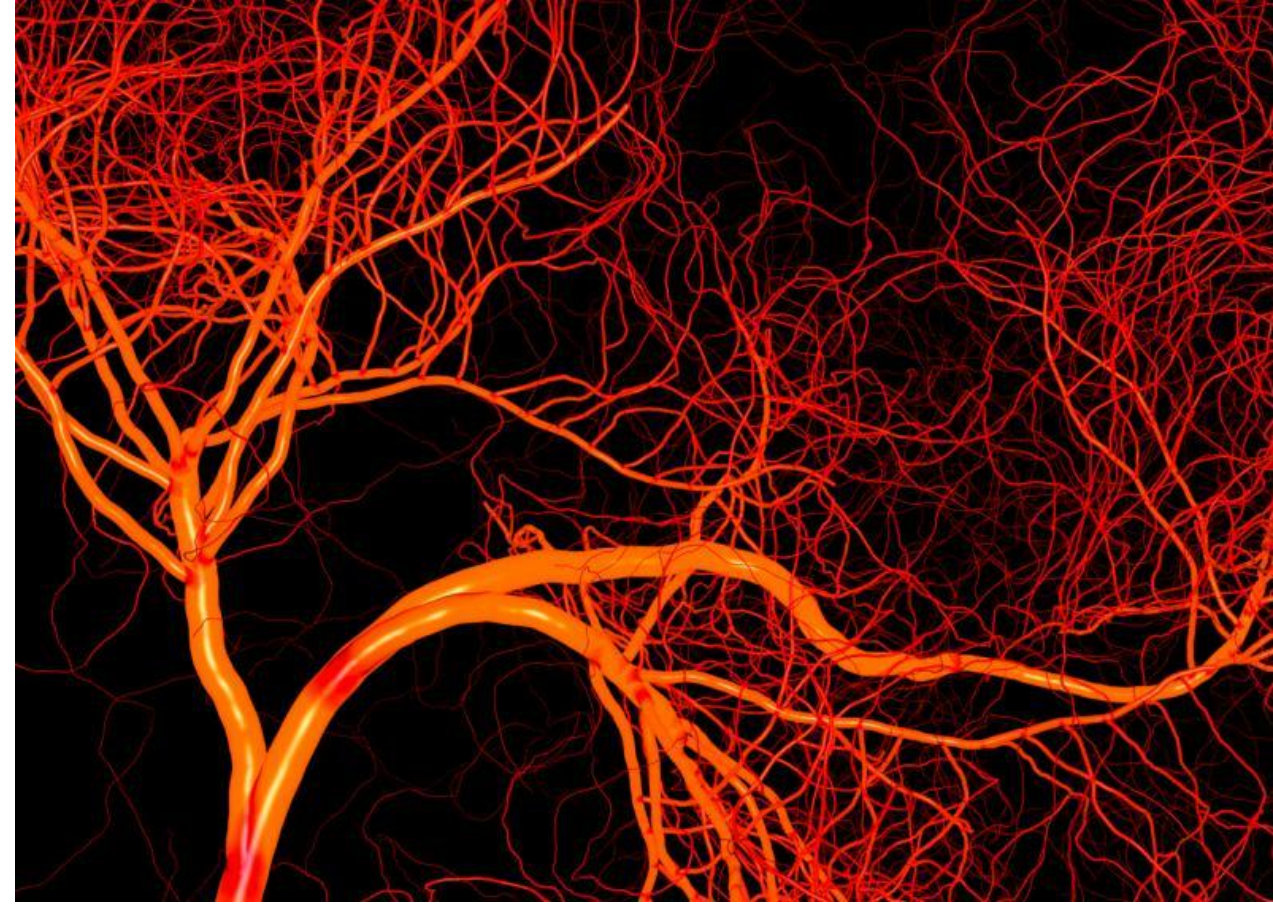
Pinna



Pinnule







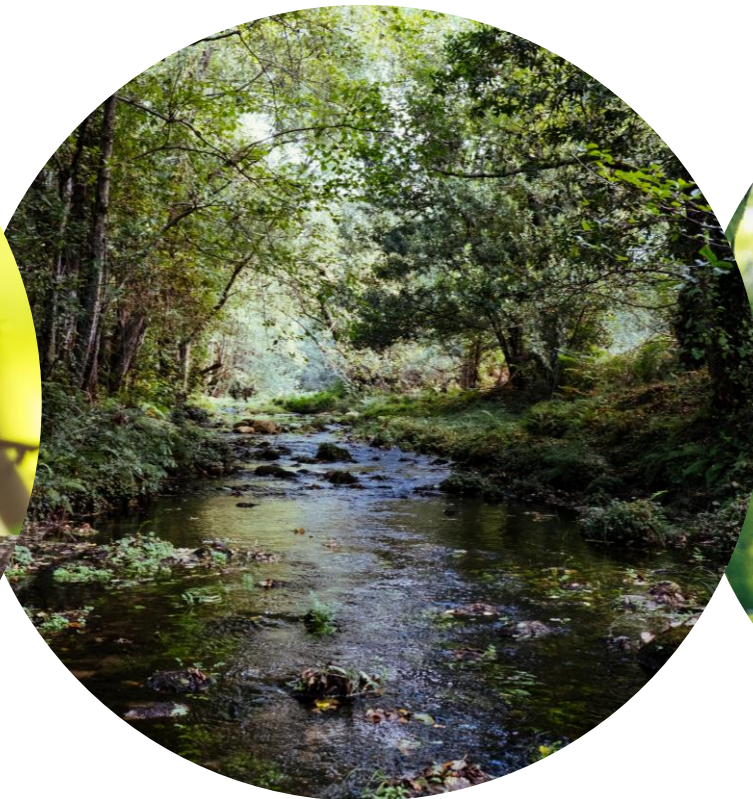
Nature's Fractals

Phytoncides

- Naturally occurring chemical compounds secreted by plants and trees to protect themselves from threats such as bacteria, insects and fungi.
- Increase numbers of natural killer (NK) cells and NK activity



Nature's Sounds



Soil bacteria – *Mycobacterium vaccae*

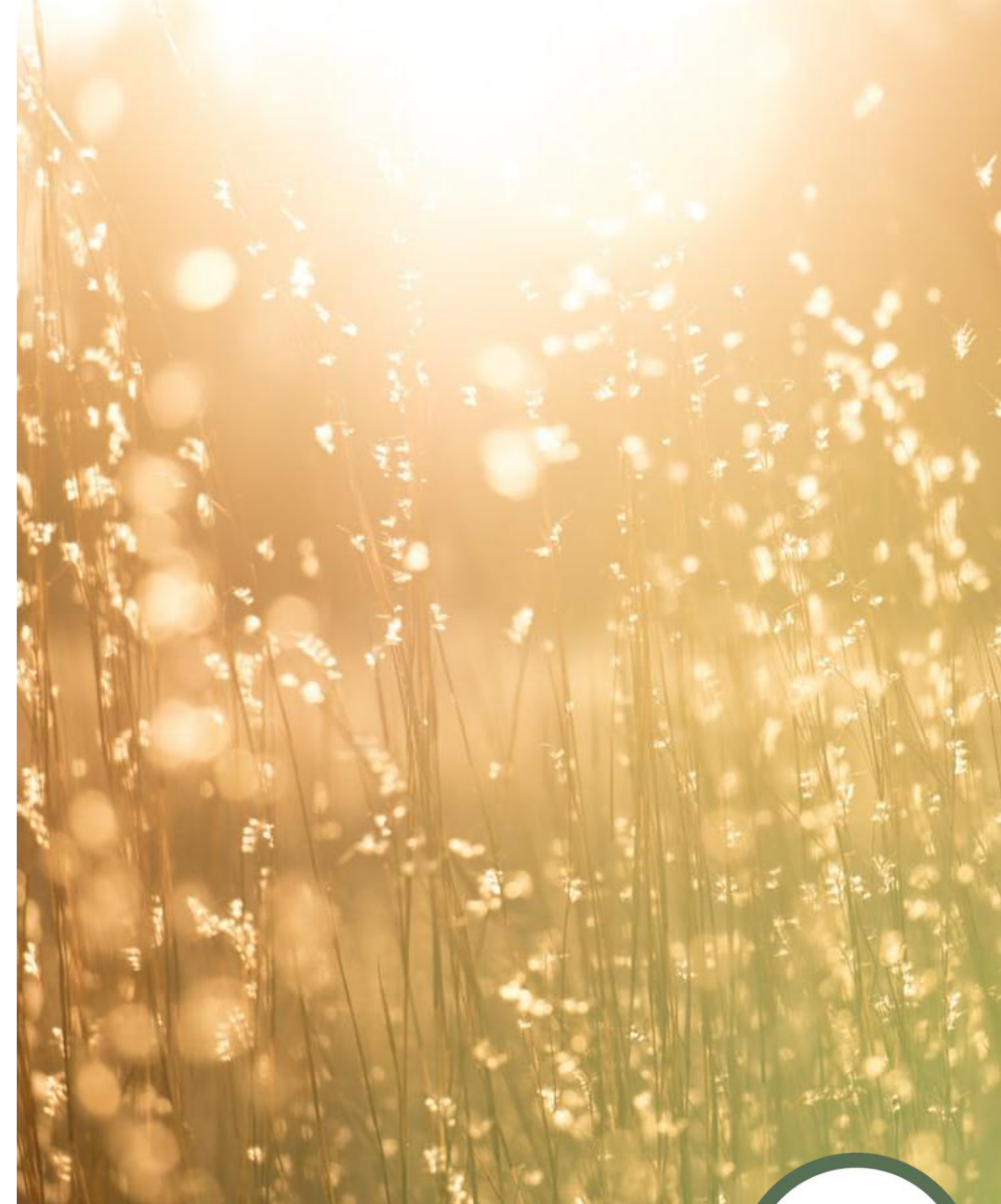
- Microorganism in soil
- 2004 Royal Marsden injected soil bacteria in lung cancer patients
 - ‘significantly improved quality of life’
 - patients happier
 - more vitality
 - better cognitive functioning
- Mice experiments
 - a ‘brain boost’
 - more resilience
 - pro-active rather than passive in response to stress



Sunlight

Exposure to sunlight has benefits for both mental and physical health

- ***Serotonin*** – a neurotransmitter associated with feelings of wellbeing and happiness. Sunlight has been found to boost levels of serotonin.
- ***Vitamin D*** - important for overall health and wellbeing and humans get most of their Vitamin D from exposure to sunlight. WHO recommends 10-30 minutes sunlight several times per week.
- ***Ultraviolet light*** - Evidence that UV light can push melanocytes—the cells that produce dark pigment in skin—to release endorphins, a feel-good chemical.





***Awe can be found in everyday nature
- take the time to notice and be wowed!***

I only went out for a walk
and finally concluded to stay till sundown,
for going out I found was really going in.

*John Muir (1838– 1914), naturalist, author and
philosopher*





Questions from the audience

Time for a comfort break

See you all shortly



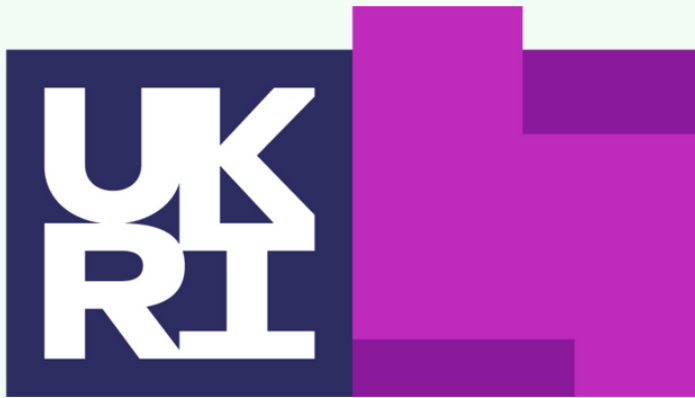
Extending Nature: XR therapeutic nature- connectedness for adults experiencing anxiety

Dr Jo Scott

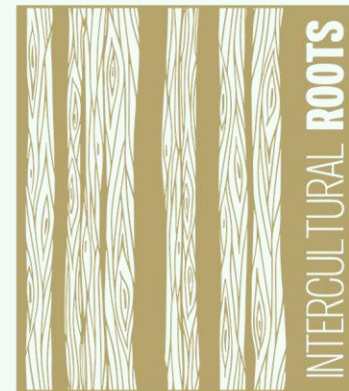
Quality Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant
| Senior XR Research Lead | Intercultural
Roots for Public Health (IRPH)

eXtending Nature

*Therapeutic Nature Connectedness for Adults
Experiencing Anxiety and Generalised Anxiety
Disorder (GAD).*



**Innovate
UK**



Project Overview



Nature-connected XR experiences built on PLACES, for adults experiencing anxiety and generalised anxiety disorder (GAD).



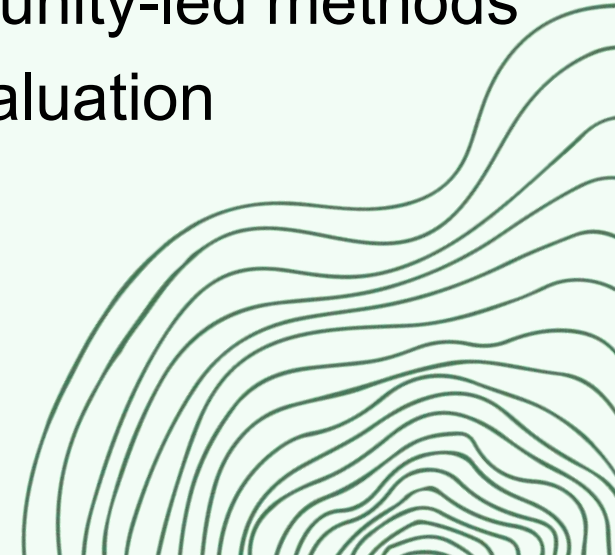
Combining creative technologies and eco-somatic practices



Embedding accessibility and inclusive design principles



Combining clinical and community-led methods for evaluation



NHS Shifts



**From hospital to
community**



**From treatment to
prevention**



**From analogue to
digital**



PLACES by EcoGPX®

What it is:

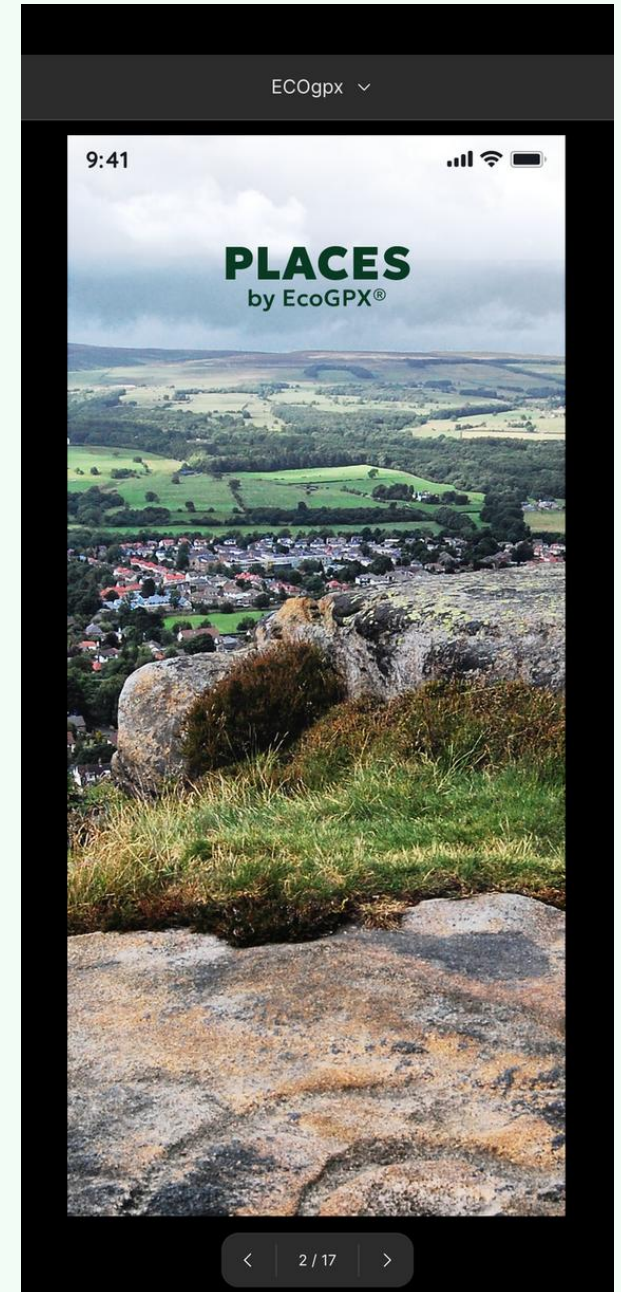
Mobile app (Apple/Google) allowing geolocated and time-tagged media to be 'placed' (3 - 10m accuracy)

Principles:

- Non-extractive
- A gateway/portal rather than an end point
- A 'quiet companion' rather than an intrusive, 'noisy' presence

Features in development:

Mapping, audio, content threads, project-specific layers/pages, to enable digital storytelling and immersive XR through sets of related geo-located and 'available anywhere' content



Underpinning Principles

**Ethical, non-
extractive
technologies**

**Accessibility by
design**

**Building with
cultural integrity**

**Co-designed with
lived experience**

**Relational Ecology
and Place**



Engaged research with our Community Advisory Board

‘Engaged research approaches are grounded in **relationship building and power sharing**, and use inclusive, equitable practices that **centre people’s lived experience** and values **multiple ways of knowing**. At its core, engaged research recognises that **knowledge is co-created**, and that involving diverse perspectives leads to research that is more **relevant, ethical, and impactful**’ (Wellcome Trust 2026, my emphasis)

Ideas arising from working with the CAB:

- Communities defining their own metrics of healing
- A ‘village’ model of governance
- Decentralizing the "Place" of Healing
- Plural epistemologies: Indigenous, migrant, and non-Western healing traditions





Relational Ecologies

The practitioner's role is to help people become receptive rather than being prescriptive about what should happen

Invitations—small shifts in attention that encourage people to relate differently to their surrounding

Fostering curiosity

Opening embodied modes of listening

Not simulating or replacing experience. When digital tools operate quietly, they can coexist with embodied and ecological practices, and deepen a sense of connection to place

Connecting personal experience with patterns/happenings in nature



Therapeutic Nature-Connectedness

Slowing down thought processes, breathing, energies

Highlighting of the continuity/cyclical nature of natural processes

Awareness of and attunement to natural processes

Widening or expanding attention

Anchoring awareness in immediate experience

Prompting a felt sense of belonging

Sensory engagement, through action/noticing



Decolonising nature connectedness research

Nature is treated as a mechanism to alleviate mental distress and improve cognitive functions, rather than as an intertwined, sacred, fundamentally holistic entity.

(Gallegas-Riofrío et al. 2022, p.9)

there is a great challenge to develop instruments (e.g., indexes, inventories, and other screening tools) for research on mental health/wellbeing and nature interactions that are not derived from Western-World assumptions. (p.9)





Questions and Challenges

What would it mean for communities to define their own metrics of healing?

How can this be balanced with the needs/norms of clinical evaluation?

How accessible and inclusive can these experiences be, given limits of time and budget?



Opportunities to Get Involved with Extending Nature



Trusts & healthcare organisations: Collaborate with us to develop this Digital Enabled Therapeutic (DET) for anxiety in real-world clinical and community settings. We are actively connecting with healthcare organisations, NHS Trusts, and wellbeing partners to pilot Extending Nature.

Organisations/Community Groups/Green Spaces: Test XN with your staff or communities; Identify groups or places you feel require a nature-connected intervention; Implement Extending Nature as part of your health and wellbeing strategy

<https://www.ecogpx.com/contact>

References/Resources

EcoGPX website: www.ecogpx.com

Extending Nature: <https://www.interculturalroots.org/project/extending-nature>

Gallegas-Riofrío, Carlos Andres, Hassan Arab, Amaya Carrasco-Torrontegui, Rachelle K. Gould. (2022). Chronic deficiency of diversity and pluralism in research on nature's mental health effects: A planetary health problem. *Current Research in Environmental Sustainability*. 100148. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crsust.2022.100148>

Wellcome Trust (2026). Engaged Research Resources. Available at: <https://wellcome.org/research-funding/guidance/prepare-to-apply/using-engaged-research-approach#engaged-research-resources-and-further-reading-8ff5>





Questions from the audience



Upcoming Events

- **Workshop (virtual)**
18th May 2026 (Monday) at 3pm
- **Learning Set (virtual)**
18th June 2026 (Thursday) at 10am

*If you would like to share your experiences of public mental health practice, including challenges and best practice at one of our future events, please email us at [**public.mh@rcpsych.ac.uk**](mailto:public.mh@rcpsych.ac.uk)*

PMHIC – latest publication

Physical activity for people using mental health services: A framework for action in Wales

The [Public Mental Health Implementation Centre](#) (PMHIC) were commissioned to produce this report by the [Dyfodol Programme](#), which is hosted in the National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health (NCCMH) and run in partnership with RCPsych Wales and the [NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee](#) (NWJCC).

It urges system leaders to embed person-centred, evidence-informed physical activity into mental health support across Wales, with key recommendations to:

- develop and support community-led, co-designed approaches
- involve fitness professionals in implementation
- tailor physical activity for people with severe mental illness.



PMHIC Blog Series: Perspectives on public mental health

Aims to highlight the voices of public health experts, promote public mental health as an intrinsic part of psychiatry, and support College members and the wider public

Authors/co-authors are invited to write blog posts that address current and relevant topics in public mental health

Format – co-produced and including a call to action that encourages reader engagement



How did you find today's event?

We value your feedback as this helps us to continue to improve these events and ensure topics covered are meaningful and relevant to you and your work

Your PMH Learning Community
Event Experience



Thank you and closing remarks

Sally Souraya

Interim Head of PMHIC