

Connecting With Nature Toolkit

The benefits of nature on our mental health are powerful, and even small interactions with nature can really help.

With that in mind, we want to help inspire you to spend a little more time in nature, whether you live deep in the middle of the countryside or deep in the inner city.

**Get
Back**  **to Nature**

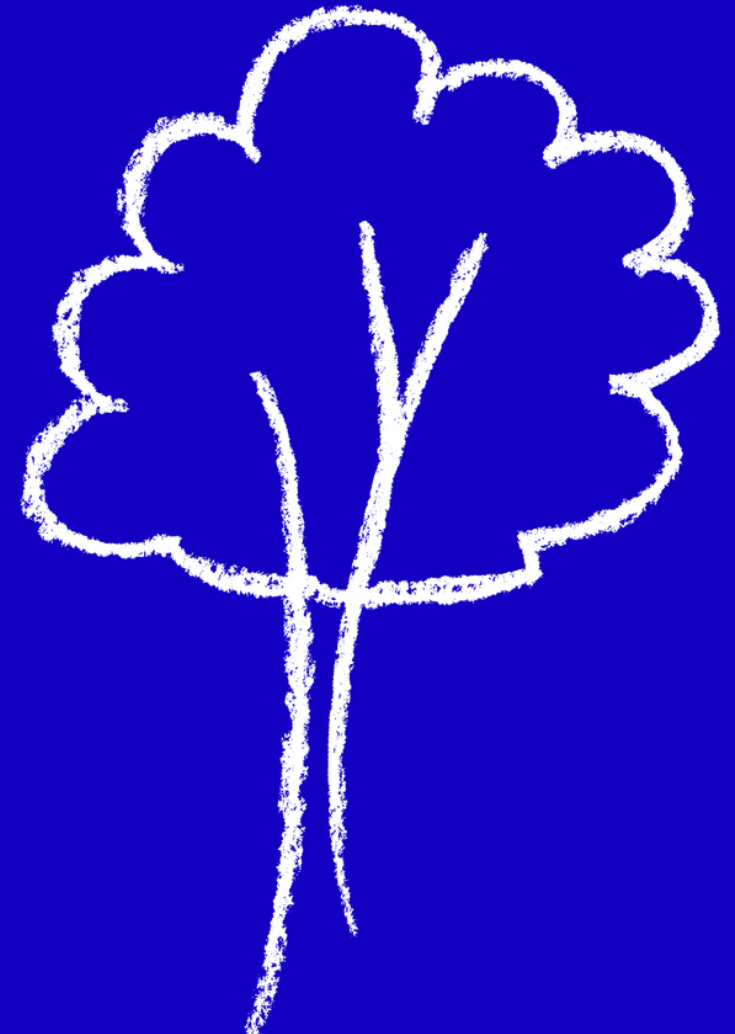


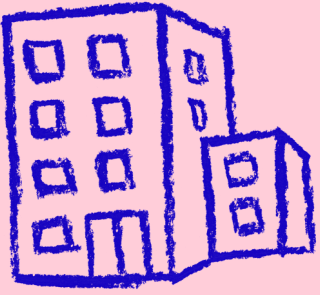
...this short guide will give you tips to help you connect with nature.

Benefits of connecting to nature

Spending time in nature has been found to help with mental health problems including anxiety and depression. There are also so many wellbeing benefits that come from spending time in nature, such as:

- Reducing stress and helping with relaxation.
- Improving your mood.
- Inspiring ideas and boosting creativity.
- Improving cognitive ability, memory, concentration and retention of information.
- Connecting to something bigger than yourself, gives a sense of purpose.
- Encouraging exercise, improving your physical health
- Boosting your desire to gain knowledge and try new things.
- Generating feelings of gratitude, respect, connection and a desire to maintain the environment.





Connecting to Nature in the City

It can feel hard to connect with nature when you don't have a garden or easy access to the countryside. But here are still things you can do...

Bring the outside in

Create an indoor herb garden with jars or cans.

Grow a window vegetable garden.

Rock and pot painting.

Draw or paint indoor plants or your window landscape view.

Go on a Nature Hunt

Take time to try and spot nature poking through in unlikely places

Head to your local park or green space

Join a rewilding or urban gardening group

Indoor houseplants

Research suggests that indoor plants help to rid the air of common toxins and indoor pollutants.

Having plants inside has been shown to reduce stress.

Indoor plants add colour and liveliness to your space, improving productivity.

Research has shown physical health benefits eg. reduced blood pressure and increased energy.



Connecting to Nature in the Countryside

Outdoor Mindfulness

Head outside and find a nice comfortable spot...

Bring your attention to your breathing - what did you notice?

Look for colours - what did you see?

Listen to sounds of nature - what did you hear?

Take notice of smells - what could you smell?



Get Creative

Check out some YouTube tutorials to help you get started...

Recycle or make a birdfeeder.

Paint positive quotes on natural timber and place around the garden.

Pot a plant in something different, like old boots or unwanted furniture.

Create a bug hotel.



Getting Active

Exercise and staying active is not only good for your physical health, it also has great benefits for your mental health. Physical activity can reduce the risk of mental health problems, like anxiety or depression, and exercising in nature offers even more benefits.



Start small

If you've not been active for a while, then start slowly and build it up over time.

Try...

Taking a 10min walk around your local park



Doing some stretches in your garden



Run for 5mins then walk for 5mins.

Keep going

Don't get put off if you can't find a form of exercise you enjoy right away.

Try...

Joining a group class



Getting a friend to exercise with you

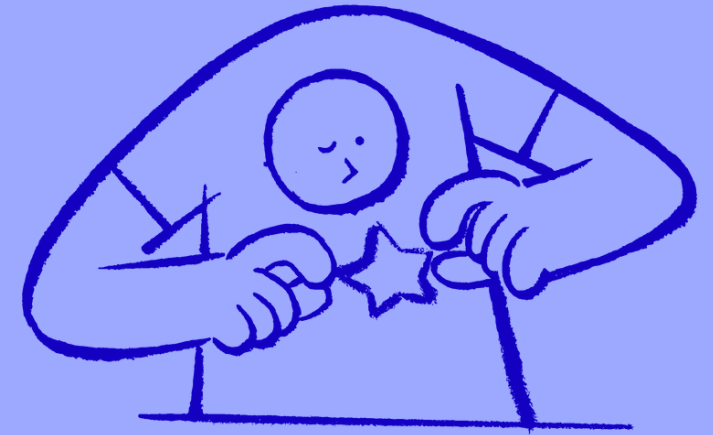


Choose 5 different activities and try them all out to see what you enjoy most.

Don't beat yourself up

Sometimes, getting out in nature feels too difficult. And that's okay, just be kind to yourself.

If, and when, you are feeling able to try something, here are some tips for connecting with nature more easily.



- ➔ The sounds of nature are very healing. Consider a YouTube video of birdsong or nature sounds without leaving your home.
- ➔ Simply looking at the sky or out the window is going to give you all the benefits of connecting with nature. Try to notice all the natural things outside your window – spot some birds, notice some clouds, enjoy daylight.
- ➔ If you are able, do go outdoors, but please don't feel like you have to hike 10 miles through the forest! Just sitting on your doorstep will give you a connection to the outside world that will help you to feel just a little bit better.
- ➔ See if you can order a plant to be delivered to your home and then enjoy looking at it, watering it and spending time with it, I would encourage you, if you feel up to it, to visit Mayfield Nurseries. It's such a special, tranquil place – regardless of whether you buy plants or not.

Connecting with Others

We run lots of groups that allow you to connect with nature, while being supported by and connecting with others in the same situation as you.

Mayfield Nurseries

Mayfield runs Therapeutic horticulture sessions, to help you connect to nature in the beautiful setting of Mayfield Nurseries gardens.

Visit <https://www.mayfieldnurseries.org.uk/> to find out more.

Peer Support

Join our Walk and Talk peer group when it re-opens in early June.

Text 'Peer Support to 074 5127 6010 and we will call or text you back.

Wellbeing Centres

All our wellbeing centres run weekly walking groups for people signed up to the service.

Visit: www.solentmind.org.uk/support-for-you/our-services/ to find your local wellbeing center.

