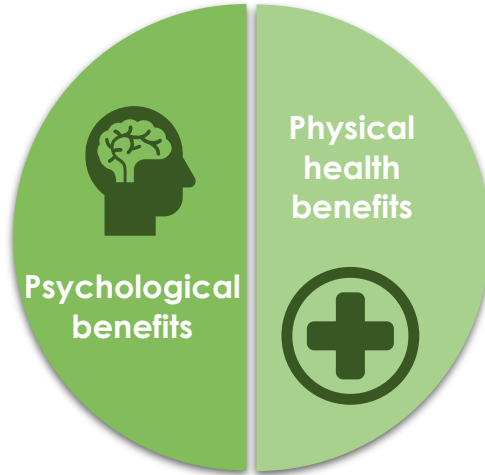


# Nature and our Mental Health

Many of us may find ourselves to be physically and psychologically disconnected from nature. Evidence suggests that being connected with nature helps us flourish by improving our physical and mental health. Without connecting with nature, we may miss out on these wellbeing benefits. The following are some of the impacts of being in nature<sup>1,2</sup>:

- **Reduction in anxiety**
- **Improved mood**
- **Improved emotional functioning**
- **Improved psychological resilience in managing stress**



- **Vitality - feeling alive and energised**
- **Lower blood pressure**
- **Lower stress hormone levels**
- **Reduced nervous system arousal**
- **Increased immune response to fight off viruses**

How much is enough to reap the benefits?  
**At least 2 hours a week spent outside<sup>3</sup>**

Environment	Activities
<p><b>Evidence suggests that <u>any</u> nature setting has a beneficial impact on our psychological and physical functioning. These can be parks, gardens, orchards, beaches, mountains and forests.</b></p> <p><b>If you live in an urban area where you have less exposure to nature, try some of these tips:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to be surrounded by the colour <b>green</b> and other colours that can be found in nature like brown and blue</li> <li>• Bring nature inside your home or office by placing potted plants, flowers or pictures of the natural environment around you</li> <li>• Put your chair facing the window while working or having a coffee</li> <li>• Use nature photos as your wallpaper on your phone</li> <li>• Listen to natural sounds on your phone (these can be found online or on mindfulness apps)</li> <li>• Watch calming nature videos such as a time-lapse video of a calm beach.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking - could you join a local walking group? Could you try mindful walking? Or could you find a local woodland trail?</li> <li>• Exercise outside (e.g. running, surfing, biking) – could you join a local group such as Park Run? Could you try Couch to 5K?</li> <li>• Fruit picking and food foraging – look up the Woodland Trust for ideas</li> <li>• Eat meals and have your coffee break outside</li> <li>• Go beachcombing for interesting finds that you can use as decoration in your home/office</li> <li>• Go litter picking in a park or beach</li> <li>• Do a meditation or some mindful activities outside (e.g. mindful walking)</li> <li>• Volunteer for a local conservation project</li> <li>• Have a bird feeder outside and notice the birds that pay you a visit</li> <li>• Dog-walking- Could you pet-sit? Check out the BorrowMyDoggy App.</li> </ul> <p><b>Maybe these ideas don't feel right for you. That's okay, you can find other ways to spend some more time in nature.</b></p>

**References:**

1. Capaldi, C. A., Passmore, H. A., Nisbet, E. K., Zelenski, J. M., & Dopko, R. L. (2015). Flourishing in nature: A review of the benefits of connecting with nature and its application as a wellbeing intervention. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 5(4).

2. Keniger, L. E., Gaston, K. J., Irvine, K. N., & Fuller, R. A. (2013). What are the benefits of interacting with nature?. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 10(3), 913-935.

3. White, M. P., Alcock, I., Grellier, J., Wheeler, B. W., Hartig, T., Warber, S. L., ... & Fleming, L. E. (2019). Spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature is associated with good health and wellbeing. *Scientific reports*, 9(1), 1-11.

**For more free resources, please visit our website; [www.psychologyassociates.org.uk](http://www.psychologyassociates.org.uk)  
 0300 303 5233  
[enquiry@psychologyassociates.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@psychologyassociates.org.uk)**