Mental Health Week – Nature

How can nature benefit my mental health?

Spending time in green space or bringing nature into your everyday life can benefit both your mental and physical wellbeing. For example, doing things like growing food or flowers, exercising outdoors or being around animals can have lots of positive effects. It can:

* improve your mood
* reduce feelings of stress or anger
* help you take time out and feel more relaxed
* improve your physical health
* improve your confidence and self-esteem
* help you be more active
* help you make new connections
* provide peer support

See a grid of nature activities below.

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| Walking: Going outside for a 15-minute walk is probably the easiest form of exercise. Talk a walk around the school field.  Why Walk? 5 Reasons to Step it Up - Health Matters - Patients ... | Water painting: Get a pot of water and a brush and pint your worries on the playground. Watch them melt away. Or simply create a work of art.  Painting with Water - Laughing Kids Learn | Bubble relaxation: Get a bubble pot or mix washing liquid with water. Gently blow the bubbles and watch them drift off into nature.  Blowing Bubbles, Exploding Patterns, and the Myth of Stuck - Hiro Boga |
| Gardening: Plant some sunflowers. These cheerful flowers track the sun each day.  The Mystery Of Why Sunflowers Turn To Follow The Sun — Solved : The Two-Way  : NPR | Bring nature indoors: Have some class plants to nurture and water each day. Plants give out oxygen and this adds oxygen to your room.  10 Most Oxygen Producing Houseplants | Indoor Plants for Oxygen | Andy Goldsworthy art: Get creative with natural materials and make a picture. |
| Talking Tokens: Spark a debate. Everyone collects a handheld natural object. Start a debate/open ended question. You can only speak when you add your token to the circle. | Bug hotel: Build a shelter for the insects using natural materials.  DIY Bug Hotel - no construction required! - Nature Play WA | Pebble Power: Make a tower of pebbles ( a cairn) How many pebbles can you balance before it collapses? Which are the best pebbles to use? |

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| Nature dream catcher: Make a dream catcher from natural materials to trap those unwanted thoughts.  Nature Art | DIY Dreamcatcher | The Upcycled Family | Cloud Watching: Lie down and watch the clouds drift by or see if you can make images from the clouds.  Cloud Watching | Sense of touch: Feel the soft, green new leaves on trees around you. Take note of how they feel. |
| Listen: Can you notice different birdcalls coming from the trees and hedges around you? | Who’s been framed?: Gather some loose materials and create a portrait of someone you know. Can anyone guess who it is?  Megan Zeni on Twitter: "I 💚 that these are all so smiley! Nature selfies  today in the #outdoorclassroom 🍂 Using found materials, loose parts, and  garden bits to represent our feelings with | Get to know a tree: One of you is blindfolded, while the other guides. Setting off from a shared starting point, the guide takes their blindfolded partner on a winding walk before choosing a tree. The blindfolded person then sets about getting to know that tree in all ways but sight. When ready, the guide leads their partner back to the starting point (again, a winding route is good to add to the challenge). Then the blindfold is removed and that person has to find their tree. |
| Mud painting: Get creative with some mud and a pot of water to create a masterpiece. Experiment with different consistencies.  Summer Reading Weekly Challenge Week Seven: Mud Painting | Moline Public  Library Kids | Tree boggarts: Boggarts are mischievous creatures who live in forests. They help to protect our woodlands. Create your own boggart using clay and natural materials. | Bark rubbings: Get paper and crayons to take a rubbing. Compare the patterns and textures on different trees. |

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| Bird feeders: Make a bird feeder to attract more birds to our field and hedges. | Different weather: Go out in two different weathers. Compare sights, sounds and smells. | Make a daisy chain: Join up with your classmates to make the longest daisy chain possible. |
| Fairy/Gnome/Elf Garden: Can you use the materials around us to build a fantasy world? | Robin Hood: Create a bow using sticks and string.  https://www.ltl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/infant-weaponry-scaled.jpg | Japanese Art of Hapa-zome: It means leaf dye. Pound plants and leaves to release their dye onto a cloth.  Japanese Art of Hapa zome | Learning through Landscapes |
| Fill bottles with water and make a bowling game. Give each pin a number and add them together to see who can get the highest score. Multiply numbers for a harder challenge. | Scarecrow Festival: Using natural materials, create a class or group scarecrow.  ✓ An Expertly Built Wooden Scarecrow Called Misko With Straw Broom To Scare  Off Birds image & stock photo. 261784678 | Story Stick: Tell a story using natural materials attached to a stick. (Double sided tape needed.)  Outdoor Lessons | Story Stick | Learning through Landscapes |

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| Picnic Time: Have a class picnic outside.  Picnics for kids: Good food in the great outdoors | Garland: Using 1m of string, thread leaves together to make a garland.  Easy Fall Leaf Garland Craft for Kids - Look! We're Learning! | String Things: Using 1m of string, make a Cat’s Cradle. How many different patterns can you make on your hands?  cats-cradle-string-fingers_1600 - Futurity |
| Dance in the rain and splash in the puddles. You will soon dry. | Seed bombs: Take a selection of wildflower seeds and mix them into a ball of earth. Take them home to place in an area to encourage bees.  How to Make Seed Bombs - Edible Communities | Make repeating patterns using pebbles, leaves, twigs etc. |
| Living Books: Recreate your favourite book scene using natural materials.  https://www.ltl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20200322_134248-01.jpeg | Match box challenge: How many different (non-living) items from the field can you fit in your box? How did you decide what to include? | Ground yourself: Slip off your socks and shoes to feel the grass beneath your feet and toes.  Unbelievable Health Benefits of Walking Barefoot on Grass | StethNews Order  your Marathon™ sod… | Benefits of walking, Health benefits of walking,  Walking barefoot |