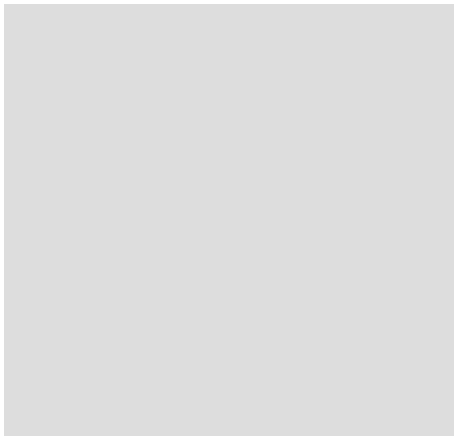




FINDING CONNECTION TO NATURE IN TIMES OF SOCIAL DISCONNECTION

Selena Arcovio and Shaheen Alarakhia



- Social distancing has changed what we can do to take care of ourselves
- Many things like work and school have turned towards electronics as we seek to continue to flatten the curve
- Especially in the current environment, we need to find new ways to reduce anxiety, increase connection with our self and others, and uplift our spirits
- Eco-therapy is one way we can begin to do this

What is Eco-Therapy?

- Simply put, ecotherapy is the integration of nature into our lives to improve mental health outcomes



Benefits of Eco-Therapy



- Reduction in mental fatigue
- Reduction in stress levels
- Reduction in anxiety symptoms
- Reduction in depressive symptoms
- Increase in self-reported health



Calming impact of nature

- This is likely something we have all experience, taking a deep breath of fresh air seems to calm us down, but why does it happen?
- Breaks from attentional fatiguing activities
- Those with higher levels of stress see higher levels of improvements in nature

Types of Ecotherapy

- There is no limit of ways you can interact with nature but some ideas that you might find useful are
 - Horticulture therapy
 - Physical exercise in a natural environment
 - Mindfulness Walk
 - Assigning yourself Green time
 - Photowalking



Horticulture Therapy

- Interacting with plants and engaging in garden-related activities can be used to promote positive well-being.
- The benefits come from interacting with nature but also from caring for a plant and watching it grow.
- Gardening also has physical benefits - it can increase hand-eye coordination and it is a healthy form of movement.



Physical Exercise in a Natural Environment

- Easy to incorporate into our exercise regimes
- Has shown more improvements in mood than exercise alone
- Increases opportunities to interact with nature, giving all the benefits of nature

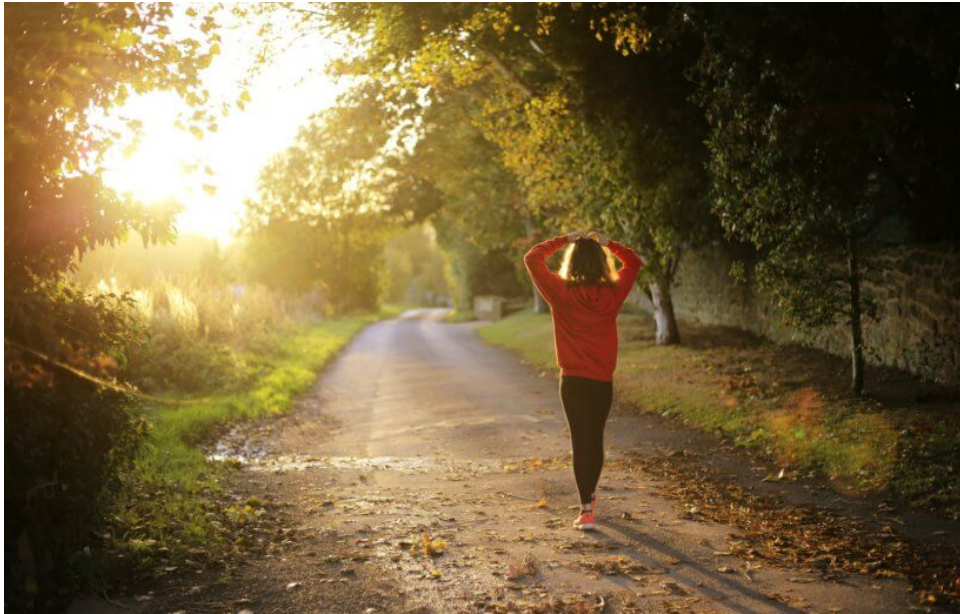


Green time

- The act of spending time in nature
- Benefits all ages
- Improves concentration and mood
- Reduces anxiety
- Can even be applied to indoor spaces



Mindfulness Walk



- You can incorporate mindful walking into your daily life in as little as 5-10 minutes a day by using all of your senses — sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch — to bring awareness to your body and surroundings.
- Tips on Mindfulness Walking:
 - Notice how your body feels as you walk
 - Focus on the feeling of your feet making contact with the ground
 - It is normal for your mind to wander during a walk, gently redirect it back to the present
 - Use your five senses as guides to explore your surroundings

Photowalking

All you need is a location in nature, a camera, and your body!

Tips for Photowalking:

- Choose a theme or intention for your mindfulness photowalk - ex. the colour green, wildflowers, textures, bark, puddles, etc.
- Notice the sensory experience that comes from the subject you are trying to capture in your photo
- Review your photos after the walk. Notice the emotions, thoughts, and bodily sensations that arise when you look at the photo.



Mindfulness Walk Video

