

Cultivating Well-Being

The Impact of Green and Blue Spaces on Mental Health



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Contact with Nature is Vital

Proximity and contact with areas of quality natural environment have been shown to correlate with a wide range of positive effects on mental health. These include social cohesion, happiness and a feeling of well-being, a sense of purpose, and improved manageability of life tasks. As well as this, contact with nature has shown to have strong effects on cognitive function such as memory, attention and creativity.



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(Bratman, G. N. et al. 2019 'Nature and mental health: An ecosystem service perspective', Science advances, 5(7), p. 0903.)

Connection is Even More Impactful

Nature 'connection' as opposed to nature 'contact' is when people feel an emotional connection to the natural space around them.

A study showed that when people visited a specific green space more than once per week, they felt an emotional attachment to it which led to a greater sense of happiness.



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(Martin, L., White, M. P., Hunt, A., Richardson, M., Pahl, S., & Burt, J. (2020). Nature contact, nature connectedness and associations with health, wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviours. *Journal of Env. Psych.*, 101389)

Mitigating Health Disparities Associated with Income

Access to green space can counteract lower levels of health and wellbeing associated with the lowest income levels.

Populations exposed to the greenest environments that also have lowest levels of health inequality related to income have levels of health and well-being comparable to those with larger income but less access to green space.



(Mitchell, R. and Popham, F. 2008 'Effect of exposure to natural environment on health inequalities: an observational population study', *The Lancet*, 372(9650), pp. 1655-1660.)

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Healing Through Views

Studies showed that patients recovered from major surgery more quickly when they were facing a window which showed natural space as opposed to a brick wall. They also required less pain killers.



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(Ulrich, R. S. 1984. View through a window may influence recovery from surgery. Science, 224: 420-421.)

Biodiversity Boosts Our Mood

Green space which has a healthy eco system, is more beneficial for our mental health.

Green space which has a greater species richness, is proven to have a greater beneficial effect on stress reduction and mood than green space with poor species richness.



(Fuller et. al. 2007, 'Psychological Benefits of Greenspace Increases with Biodiversity', Biology Letters, 3(4): 390-394)

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Green Spaces Promote Health and Longevity

People who live in areas with more green space live longer, and healthier lives. Studies have shown that a 10% increase in green space within 1 km of a person's home correlates with a decrease in cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, mental, neurological, digestive and respiratory health issues.

The combined effect of this translates to the equivalent increase of 5 years of healthy life.



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(Maas J et. al., 2009, "Morbidity is Related to A Green Living Environment",
Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, Vol. 63 12, pg 967-973)

Exposure to Green Spaces Reduces Physical Stress

'Shinrin-Yoku' (Forest Bathing) is a practise of visiting afforested areas to gain health benefits from exposure to trees.

Studies have proven that this practise lowers blood pressure and heart rate as well as increases the volume and activity of immune response cells within the blood stream. This increased immune response remained within participants' bloodstreams for 30 days afterwards.



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(Park, B.J., Tsunetsugu, Y., Kasetani, T., Kagawa, T. and Miyazaki, Y. 2010. The physiological effects of Shinrin-yoku (taking in the forest atmosphere or forest bathing): Evidence from field experiments in 24 forests across Japan. Environmental Health and Preventive Medicine, 15(1): 18–26., Li, Q. 2010. Effect of forest bathing trips on human immune functioning. Env. Health and Preventive Medicine, 15(1): 9–17,

Communal Green Space Can Alleviate Elderly Loneliness

The oneliness epidemic in older people, has been proven to increase stress on the body which can lead to an increase in health problems. Social isolation has been shown to increase mortality rates by up to 50% in certain studies.

The presence of green space can increase feelings of social cohesion and therefore encourage socialisation.



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(Pantell, M., Rehkopf, D., Jutte, D., Syme, S. L., Balmes, J., & Adler, N. 2013. Social isolation: a predictor of mortality comparable to traditional clinical risk factors. *American journal of public health*, 103(11), 2056–2062.)
(Jennings, V., & Bamkole, O. 2019. The Relationship between Social Cohesion and Urban Green Space: An Avenue for Health Promotion. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 16(3), 452.)

Plants Activate Alpha Waves

Alpha waves are responsible for promoting feelings of calm and relaxation.

Brain scans have shown a 50% increase in Alpha waves in people looking at a hedge compared to those looking at a concrete wall.



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(Nakamura, R & Fujii, E. 1991. A Comparative Study on the Characteristics of Electroencephalogram Inspecting A Hedge and A Concrete Block Fence. Journal of the Japanese Institute of Landscape Architects. 55. 139-144.)