

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS 2021

This year's Mental Health Awareness Week focuses on **connecting with nature**.

How can we use nature to help our mental health?

There's a lot of research to support the role nature can play in protecting and supporting our mental health. So why not use this week as an opportunity to start meaningful conversations about mental health, while making the most of the UK's natural spaces for your mental health and wellbeing?

When we're in nature, it can help to keep us grounded and present. It allows us to step away from our daily worries or stresses and help to improve our mood.

During Mental Health Awareness Week, MHF suggests trying the following:

- **Experience nature:** take time to recognise and grow your connection with nature. Take time to notice and celebrate nature in your daily life. You might be surprised by what you notice!
- **Share nature:** Take a photo or video and share to inspire others on social media.
- **Talk about nature:** discuss nature with your family, workplace and community and find new ways to connect with nature in your local environment.

Tips to connect with nature:

- **Spot the small stuff in nature.** That might be something as simple as a bee, a tree or a weed. Take time to look around you and appreciate all that is nature.
- **Take some quiet time,** using all your senses to reflect on your surroundings. Whether you're relaxing in the garden or on your way to work, look, listen and take note. These can be centering, calming moments.

- **Visit nature** e.g. parks, gardens or forests or the beach. This can help you lift your mood and help you feel better about things.
- **Bring nature indoors.** If it's difficult to get out, you could buy some plants (or flowers) or create a window box vegetable patch. These are great ways to connect with and reflect upon nature.



- **Exercise outside** whenever you can, whether it's a run, cycle or walk. These activities may help to prevent or reduce feelings of anger, tiredness and sadness.
- **Undertake creative activities outside,** like photography, exercise, dance, music or art. All of these things can help reduce stress and improve your mood.
- **Take care of nature** can be a great way to feel good. This can be as simple as recycling, walking instead of driving, or joining a community conservation/volunteer group. Taking care of nature can help you feel that you're doing your part and that can make you feel more positive.
- **Try to make a habit,** each day, of connecting with nature. Stop to listen to the birdsong, smell the freshly cut grass, take care of a house plant, notice any trees, flowers or animals nearby. Take a moment to appreciate these connections.

If you need to talk to someone about your mental health, contact your EAP if you have one, talk to a friend or try :

<https://www.samaritans.org/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>