

NATURE, WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH



WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH

WE ALL HAVE MENTAL HEALTH AND IT IS AS IMPORTANT AS OUR PHYSICAL HEALTH. WHEN OUR MENTAL HEALTH IS GOOD, WE FEEL EMOTIONALLY WELL, ABLE TO LOOK AFTER OURSELVES AND ABLE TO ENGAGE WITH THE THINGS THAT WE CARE ABOUT. WHEN WE STRUGGLE WITH OUR MENTAL HEALTH, WE CAN FEEL OVERWHELMED AND UNABLE TO COPE, WHICH CAN MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO MANAGE IN OUR DAILY LIVES



WE WANT YOU TO THRIVE AND FOR NATURE TO THRIVE AROUND YOU. WE THINK THE TWO GO HAND IN HAND. FROM FORESTS AND RIVERS, TO PARKS AND GARDENS, TO WINDOW BOXES OR EVEN HOUSE PLANTS, WE CAN FIND NATURE WHEREVER WE ARE, WE JUST NEED TO LOOK. INTERACTING WITH NATURE CAN BE ENJOYABLE, AND BENEFICIAL TO OUR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING, ASPECTS OF OUR HEALTH THAT ARE PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT TO LOOK AFTER.



HOW DO I LOOK AFTER MY MENTAL HEALTH?

LOOKING AFTER OUR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IS IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE, AND THERE ARE THINGS THAT EACH OF US CAN DO IN OUR DAY-TO-DAY LIVES THAT CAN HELP TO SUPPORT GOOD MENTAL HEALTH, INCLUDING CONNECTING TO NATURE. WE ALL LIVE BUSY LIVES SO ITS IMPORTANT THAT WE PRIORITISE AND THINK ABOUT OUR WELLBEING.

THERE ARE MANY PRESSURES THAT AFFECT OUR MENTAL HEALTH. THIS IS WHY IT IS WORTH MAKING THE TIME FOR NATURE, IN WHATEVER WAY WORKS FOR YOU, EVEN WHEN THINGS GET BUSY AND OTHER PRIORITIES FEEL MORE IMPORTANT



HOW CAN NATURE HELP?

THERE ARE LOTS OF WAYS IN WHICH SPENDING TIME IN NATURE CAN BE POSITIVE FOR OUR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING. OUR UNDERSTANDING OF HOW OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AFFECTS THE HEALTH OF OUR BODIES AND MINDS IS GROWING. . THE BENEFITS ARE OFTEN RELATED TO HOW OUR SENSES CONNECT US TO THE ENVIRONMENT AROUND US, FROM THE SHAPES IN NATURE WE SEE TO THE SCENTS THAT TREES GIVE OFF AND THE SOFT FASCINATION THAT NATURE CAN STIMULATE WHICH HELPS OUR MINDS TO REST AND RELAX.

“Some people may go to the park and just enjoy nature. It’s not that they have to be rigorous in terms of exercise... You relax and reduce stress, and then you feel more happy.”

HERE ARE SOME OF THE MANY WAYS THAT SPENDING TIME OUTDOORS CAN HELP SUPPORT GOOD MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING.

GREEN SPACES ARE A LITTLE MORE DIFFICULT TO FIND IN BIG CITIES. AT FIRST GLANCE NATURE CAN APPEAR TO BE LOST IN OUR CITY, BUT IF YOU PAUSE USE YOUR SENSES, AND TAKE IN YOUR SURROUNDINGS, YOU MIGHT NOTICE THAT NATURE CAN POP UP IN EVEN THE MOST UNLIKELY PLACES. SIGNS OF NATURE ARE THREADED THROUGHOUT THE CITY PARKS, LANDMARKS, CITY FARMS AND NATURE WALKS FOR EXAMPLE.

CAN YOU THINK OF ANY ?



STAYING ACTIVE

A REALLY IMPORTANT PIECE OF EVIDENCE HAS BEEN FOUND BETWEEN SPENDING TIME OUTDOORS AND HOW PHYSICALLY ACTIVE WE ARE.

BESIDES THE BENEFITS FOR OUR PHYSICAL HEALTH, EXERCISING AND STAYING ACTIVE IS ALSO GOOD FOR OUR MENTAL HEALTH. WE KNOW THAT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY MAY REDUCE THE RISK OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS, LIKE ANXIETY OR DEPRESSION, AND EXERCISING IN GREEN SPACES CAN HAVE AN EXTRA ADDED BENEFIT. WALKING OR RUNNING SEEMS TO GIVE US AN EXTRA BOOST WHEN DONE IN NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS RATHER THAN INDOORS, REDUCING FEELINGS OF ANGER, FATIGUE AND SADNESS. WE DON'T EVEN NEED TO DO IT FOR LONG! DID YOU KNOW THAT EXERCISING IN GREEN SPACES E.G. PARKS FOR AS LITTLE AS FIVE MINUTES WAS FOUND TO IMPROVE MOOD AND FEELINGS OF SELF-ESTEEM.



RELAXATION AND MINDFULNESS

TAKING QUIET TIME TO REFLECT ON OUR NATURAL SURROUNDINGS IS POSITIVE FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING. THE JAPANESE CALL IT 'FOREST THERAPY' (FAMOUSLY KNOWN AS **SHINRIN YOKU**) MAY LEAD TO IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH. THIS INVOLVES SPENDING ACTIVE TIME IN A PARK, FOREST OR IN A GARDEN OBSERVING OUR SURROUNDINGS, USING ALL OF OUR SENSES.

THE PRACTICE OF 'MINDFULNESS' HAS BEEN FOUND TO REDUCE FEELINGS OF STRESS, AND INCREASE FEELINGS OF SELF-COMPASSION AND EMPATHY, AND WHO DOESN'T WANT TO BE A LITTLE KINDER TO THEMSELVES?

WHEN YOU WAKE UP FOR **FAJR** TIME YOU WILL FIND NATURE CALMING. THE BEAUTY OF LISTENING TO THE BIRDS, VIBRANT COLOURS AND THE WONDER OF SEEING PLANT LIFE.
LOOK AND LISTEN.



CONNECTING WITH OTHERS

HAVING STRONG, HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THOSE AROUND US IS IMPORTANT FOR OUR WELLBEING. NATURE HAS A LINK WITH THESE RELATIONSHIPS AS WE OFTEN USE GREEN SPACES TO MEET AND SOCIALISE WITH OTHERS (E.G. PLAYING SPORTS, HAVING A PICNIC, GOING FOR A GROUP WALK). IN FACT, NATURAL SPACES CAN PROVIDE A FREE OR LOW-COST OPPORTUNITY TO GET TOGETHER, AND THIS IS ANOTHER WAY TO SUPPORT GOOD MENTAL HEALTH. SO, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? GRAB THAT PICNIC BLANKET OR UMBRELLA AND ARRANGE A MEETING IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS.



All children need nature.

Not just the ones whose parents appreciate nature.
Not only those children of a certain economic class
or culture or set of abilities.

Every child.

INTERACTING WITH WILDLIFE

ANIMALS AND WILDLIFE MAY BE BENEFICIAL FOR OVERALL WELLBEING TOO. ACTIVITIES INVOLVING OBSERVING AND INTERACTING WITH WILDLIFE IN THEIR NATURAL HABITAT, SUCH AS WATCHING BIRDS IN A GARDEN, CAN IMPROVE PEOPLE'S FEELINGS OF WELLBEING, RELAXATION, AND CONNECTION TO NATURE.

THERE IS SO MUCH OUT THERE TO OBSERVE – FROM WATCHING THE GARDEN ROBIN FLUFF UP FOR WINTER TO THE SQUIRREL SEARCHING FOR ITS NUTS IN THE PARK, OR EVEN TO THE CITY PIGEON COOING AND STICKING ITS CHEST OUT.

WHY NOT TAKE A COUPLE OF MINUTES NOW TO LOOK OUT OF YOUR WINDOW OR STEP OUTSIDE AND NOTICE WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE NATURE AROUND YOU?

DID YOU KNOW THAT LEICESTER CITY FOOTBALL CLUB ARE NICKNAMED THE FOXES ?



CREATIVITY

MANY PEOPLE FIND THAT NATURE INSPIRES THEM TO CREATE, BE IT THROUGH PAINTING – USING BEAUTIFUL COLOURS, DRAWING, PHOTOGRAPHY OR WRITING. THERE IS SO MUCH OUT THERE JUST WAITING TO BE OUR SOURCE OF CREATIVITY – FROM VIBRANT AND FIERY AUTUMNAL LEAVES TO THE CRUNCH OF FROST UNDERFOOT ON A COLD WINTER MORNING.

TAKING PART IN CREATIVE ACTIVITIES LIKE SPORTS, ART OR EXPRESSIVE WRITING CAN HELP REDUCE STRESS AND IMPROVE MOOD AND WELLBEING. THIS GIVES US EVEN MORE REASON TO COMBINE CREATIVITY WITH OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

WHY DON'T YOU GO OUTSIDE AND CAPTURE YOUR SURROUNDINGS, TRYING YOUR HAND AT A FEW CREATIVE SENTENCES OR A QUICK SKETCH?

HOW ABOUT PLANTING SEEDS IN A PLANT POT AND WATCHING THOSE FLOWERS GROW OR BEING REALLY ADVENTUROUS BY TRYING YOUR HAND AT GROWING FRUIT/VEGETABLES IN YOUR GARDEN?



HOW YOU CAN HELP

NATURE IS TRULY AMAZING. IT CAN INSPIRE US, SOOTHE US AND ENCHANT US.

IT CAN CONNECT US WITH OTHERS AND HELP US FEEL PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER. NATURE ALSO SEEMS TO BE LIKE MEDICINE FOR EVERYONE'S MENTAL HEALTH. A SORT OF BALM FOR OUR SOULS, YOU MIGHT SAY. BUT NATURE IS EVEN MORE THAN THIS. NATURE IS VITAL. IT PROVIDES OUR LIFE-SUPPORT SYSTEM, AND WE CANNOT SURVIVE WITHOUT IT.

**NATURE IS FOR EVERYONE AND
IT IS A BLESSING FROM ALLAH**

