



Empowering pre-primary and primary school teachers' in using and combining Eco-Art for Eco awareness, psycho-social tools and non-formal teaching methods



SEEDS

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and non-formal teaching methods**

MODULE 3

Eco – Psychology



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

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TOPIC 3.1: Developing Emotional Resilience and Empathy Through Interactions with Nature

SUBTOPIC 3.2.1: The Psychology of Nature Connection

The concept of connection with nature is increasingly emerging as a fundamental factor for psychological resilience, emotional balance, and human well-being. The psychology of nature explores how interaction with the natural environment enhances emotional awareness, reduces stress, and cultivates empathy—both toward other people and toward the ecosystem as a whole. Connection with nature is not merely experiential, but also emotional, cognitive, and existential—it functions as a framework of identity and meaning for the individual (Liu et al., 2022).

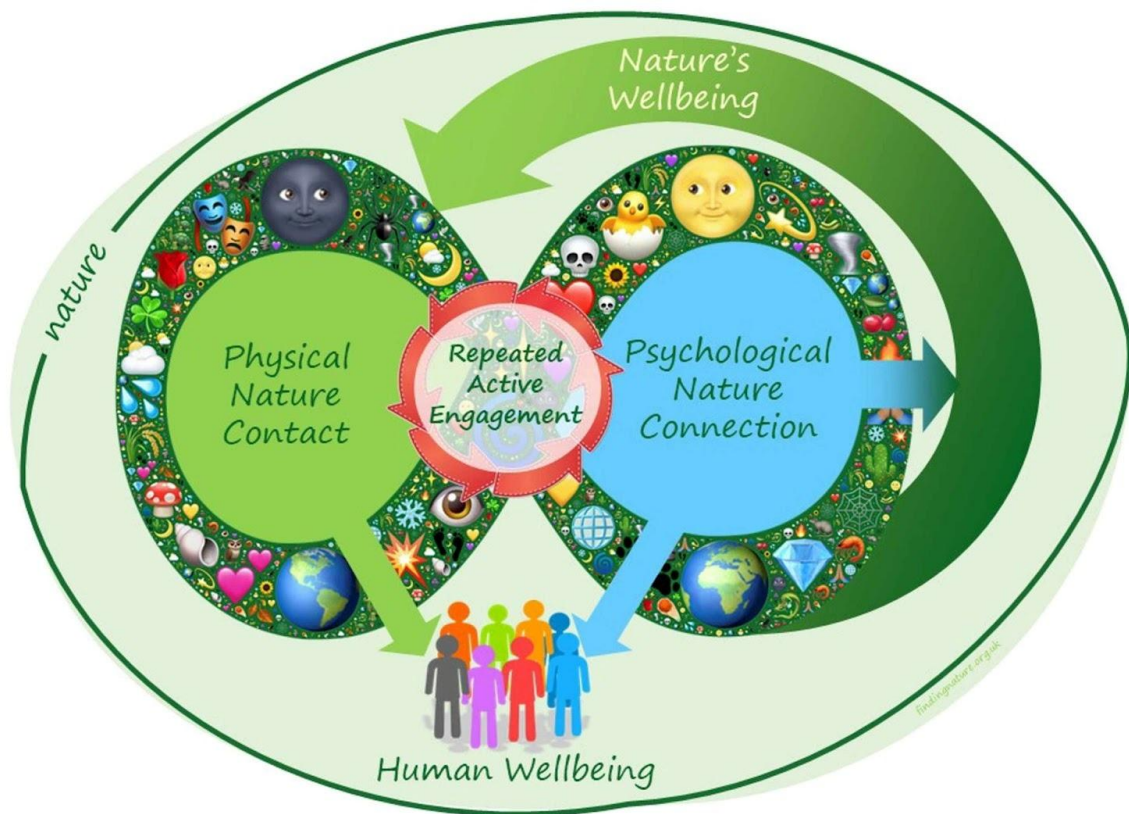


Figure 1. Sensory immersion in nature: participants engaging with a river ecosystem. **Note.** Photograph from *From contact to connection: cultivating a deeper relationship with nature*, by Sam Gandy, 2024. Copyright 2024 by Ecohustler. <https://ecohustler.com/nature/from-contact-to-connection-cultivating-a-deeper-relationship-with-nature>

Deepening the human–nature relationship has been the subject of numerous studies, which support the view that the stronger the sense of connection to the natural environment, the greater the emotional stability, self-esteem, and ability to manage stressful situations. According to the study by Richardson and colleagues, nature connection can be considered one of the key pillars of psychological well-being on a social level, not just an individual one (Richardson et al., 2020). The positive effects of nature on psychology are observed on multiple levels: from physical relaxation and reduced cortisol levels to enhanced attention and cognitive function. A study by the American Psychological Association highlights that even brief exposure to natural environments is associated with improved mood, reduced depression, and strengthened capacity for empathy (Weir, 2020).

The importance of nature as a therapeutic context is also confirmed by European research institutions. The European Forest Institute, for instance, emphasizes how interaction with forest ecosystems can improve human health, reduce stress levels, and strengthen social cohesion. Forests, as natural environments, function not only as ecological lungs but also as “psychological sanctuaries” that contribute to balanced human development (efi.int, 2021).

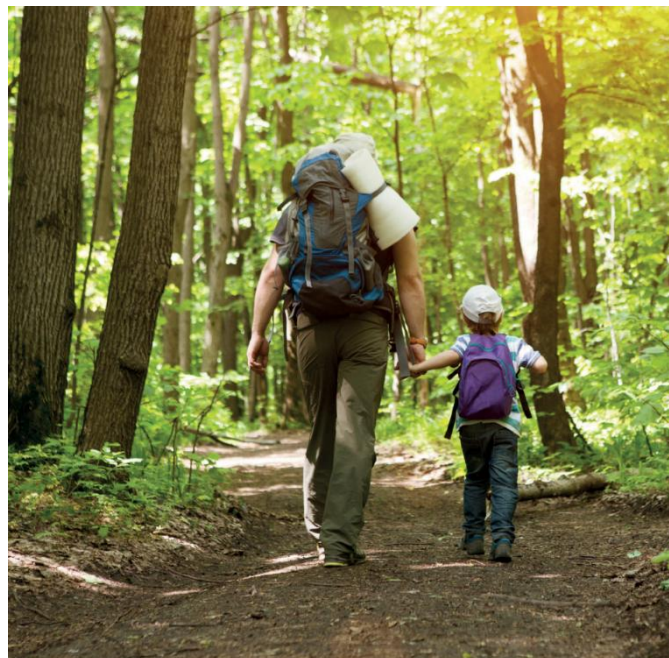


Figure 2. Homepage screenshot of the European Forest Institute website. **Note.** Image from European Forest Institute (EFI; EFI.int), 2020-12, Retrieved from https://efi.int/sites/default/files/styles/max_960_wide/public/2020-12/homepage.png?itok=hbgz7HDB. Copyright 2020 by European Forest Institute.



Equally interesting is the Urban Nature Connection study, which supports the idea that even within urban environments, the presence of greenery can have a similarly positive impact on emotional well-being. Through multifactorial analyses, researchers concluded that the visibility and accessibility of green spaces enhance positive mood, reduce feelings of isolation, and promote mental resilience (Wang et al., 2019).

Systematic connection with the natural environment may also reinforce broader ecological behavior and participation in environmentally responsible practices. A study published in *Biological Conservation* argues that psychological connection with nature leads to changes in people's values and attitudes toward ecosystem protection, reinforcing a sense of responsibility and personal action for the protection of the planet (Barragan-Jason et al., 2023).

Furthermore, research published in *Open Research Europe* proposes an interdisciplinary definition of nature as a tool for personal and collective psychological development. The researchers concluded that the relationship with nature constitutes a form of “supportive dialogue” with oneself and the world, enhancing self-awareness and the sense of belonging to the broader ecological system (Europa.eu, 2025).

SUBTOPIC 3.1.2: Empathy Through Nature Immersion

Empathy is defined as, understanding a person from their frame of reference rather than one's own, or vicariously experiencing that person's feelings, perceptions, and thoughts (American Psychological Association, 2023). Empathy, as a fundamental social-emotional skill, is influenced not only by interpersonal relationships but also by an individual's relationship with the natural environment. The theory of "nature connection" supports the idea that exposure to nature can enhance a person's ability to recognize, understand, and share the emotions of others—both humans and non-human beings. According to a study published in the *Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education*, engagement with the natural environment improves interpersonal relationships and strengthens empathy, especially among children and adolescents participating in outdoor education programs (Molyneux, Zeni and Oberle, 2022).





Figure 3. Forest Fridays nature immersion with first graders. **Note.** Photograph from *Forest Fridays: How nature can boost empathy, imagination, and well-being*, by Natalie Crowley, 2017. Copyright 2017 by Education that Inspires.

<https://www.educationthatinspires.ca/2017/08/21/forest-fridays-how-nature-can-boost-empathy-imagination-and-well-being/>

Contact with nature acts as a powerful enhancer of emotional awareness and authentic presence. Physical exposure to forests, water, or low-stimulus landscapes leads to reduced tension and stress, facilitating the development of inner calm and clarity. This creates the conditions for increased empathy, as psychological defensiveness decreases and sensitivity toward the “other” increases. The American Psychological Association notes that nature has a catalytic effect on emotional balance, enhancing attention, gratitude, and social connectedness (Weir, 2020).

Of particular importance is the relationship between nature and social-emotional learning (SEL). Findings indicate that a strong connection to the natural environment is positively associated with empathy skills and the ability to create and maintain healthy relationships. This connection fosters a sense of familiarity with nature, which transfers into social interactions, enhancing emotional understanding and cooperation (Lanza et al., 2023).



Notably, nature served as a supportive framework during the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies showed that individuals who developed a consistent relationship with natural environments (e.g., hiking, spending time in parks) exhibited improved mental resilience and empathy toward others, especially in socially restricted settings. Contact with nature offered a sense of stability and connection, even under conditions of uncertainty (Darcy et al., 2022).

Finally, research highlights the impact of digital representations of nature (e.g., videos, VR, images) on users' empathy. A compelling finding is that even indirect exposure—through digital experience—can enhance emotional identification with nature and strengthen environmental responsibility. This phenomenon, referred to as “**eco-empathy**,” occurs when individuals experience emotional closeness with non-human life forms, even from a distance (Chen, Cheng and Yang, 2024).



Figure 4. Screenshot of a student wearing a virtual-reality headset in a natural environment, illustrating VR used in environmental education. **Note.** Photograph by Oonal/Getty Images, 2022, as featured on *Inside Higher Ed* website; <https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/files/media/GettyImages-638752158.jpg>. Copyright 2022 by Getty Images.

SUBTOPIC 3.1.3: Emotional Resilience in Natural Settings

Emotional resilience is defined as an individual's ability to recover from stressful or traumatic experiences and to maintain a relative state of mental stability. Within the framework of modern psychology and mental health, reconnecting with nature is increasingly recognized as a factor that strengthens this resilience. Nature acts as a stress regulator and a source of psychological balance, offering an environment that promotes recovery and personal empowerment (American Psychological Association, 2020.).

The practice of regular engagement with nature—such as walking in natural environments—has been shown to enhance mental resilience. A study conducted in the United Kingdom found that group walks in parks and forests reduce anxiety and help individuals cope with the effects of stressful events, while also providing social support and boosting emotional resilience (Marselle, Warber and Irvine, 2019).



Figure 5. Adventure training to build psychological resilience. **Note.** From *How to build resilience ...in 10,000 gruelling steps* [Photograph], by Andrew Dawson, 2020. Copyright 2020 by Unleashed-Unlimited.

<https://www.unleashed-unlimited.com.au/journal/2020/11/2/how-to-build-resilience-in-10000-gruelling-steps/>

The theory of Allostatic Active Inference, developed by Schwartenbeck (2023), suggests that the maintenance of well-being depends on an individual's ability to adapt cognitive and emotional strategies in relation to their environment. The natural environment provides stable, low-intensity stimuli that support emotional stability and stress regulation (Waugh and Sali, 2023).



Figure 6. Parents guiding children through resilience-building activities. **Note.** From *How to help your children build resilience* [Image], by Chillibyte, April 3, 2023. Copyright 2023 by Morale App. <https://moraleapp.co/how-to-help-your-children-build-resilience/>

The study of everyday resilience highlights the importance of small, repeated experiences connected to nature, such as exposure to daylight, observing trees, or touching the ground. The research team led by Smyth (2023) concluded that frequent contact with such natural stimuli



enhances daily psychological resilience, particularly when evaluated through experience sampling methods (Ong and Leger, 2022).

The concept of resilience is evolving and takes on different dimensions across cultural and social contexts. In Indigenous communities, connection to the land is a fundamental source of mental strength and resilience, functioning as a cohesive support system that includes cultural identity, spirituality, and ecological wisdom (Fleming and Ledogar, 2024).

Specific European academic research also confirms the link between the natural environment and emotional resilience. Drawing on the same academic source, a study focusing on adolescents post-COVID-19 showed that outdoor and adventure education programs enhance coping skills, self-confidence, and mental resilience through experiential learning in natural settings (John Francis Allan et al., 2024).

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that exposure to nature serves as a non-pharmacological protective factor for individuals experiencing chronic stress, supporting internal flexibility, self-regulation, and psychological recovery (Schetter and Dolbier, 2011).

TOPIC 3.2: Understanding the Interconnectedness of All Life and the Impact of Human Behaviors

SUBTOPIC 3.2.1: Ecological Interdependence

Ecological interdependence refers to the mutual reliance among organisms and their environment, where changes in one part of an ecosystem can affect the entire system. This principle underlines how human behaviors—such as deforestation, pollution, and climate change—disrupt biodiversity and ecological functions (Davis, Green, & Reed, 2009).



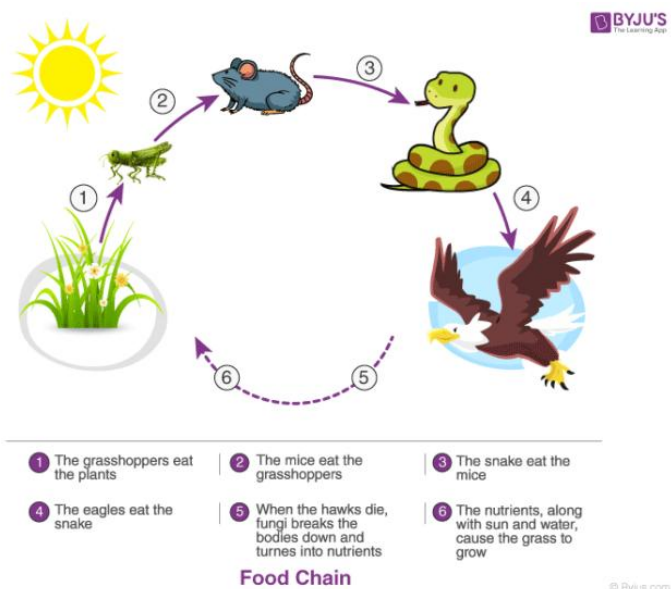


Figure 7. Interdependence of plants and animals in a forest ecosystem. **Note.** From *Interdependence of plants and animals* [Illustration], by BYJU'S, n.d. Retrieved from <https://byjus.com/chemistry/interdependence-of-plants-and-animals/>

For instance, deforestation reduces biodiversity and diminishes ecosystem services like soil conservation. Water pollution from fertilizers and industrial waste causes eutrophication, harming aquatic life. Additionally, climate change due to greenhouse gas emissions alters weather patterns, sea levels, and natural habitats (Davis et al., 2009).

The European Union acknowledges these challenges through integrated sustainability policies. The paper *Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030* emphasizes the need for coordinated action across sectors, recognizing the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic goals.

A practical example is flood risk management, where EU countries restore natural floodplains and implement early warning systems to protect both ecosystems and communities. These strategies demonstrate how acknowledging interdependence leads to more resilient environmental planning (Davis et al., 2009).

Furthermore, environmental education and public participation play key roles. Teaching ecological interdependence in schools fosters awareness and sustainable behavior.

Participatory governance, involving citizens and stakeholders in decision-making, enhances collective action for ecosystem protection (Davis et al., 2009).

SUBTOPIC 3.2.2: Anthropocentrism vs. Ecocentrism

A deeper connection with the environment, encouraging a holistic approach to conservation and sustainability. Ecocentrism emphasizes the intrinsic value of ecosystems, species, and the Earth itself, promoting policies and practices that safeguard the natural world for its own sake rather than simply for human benefit.

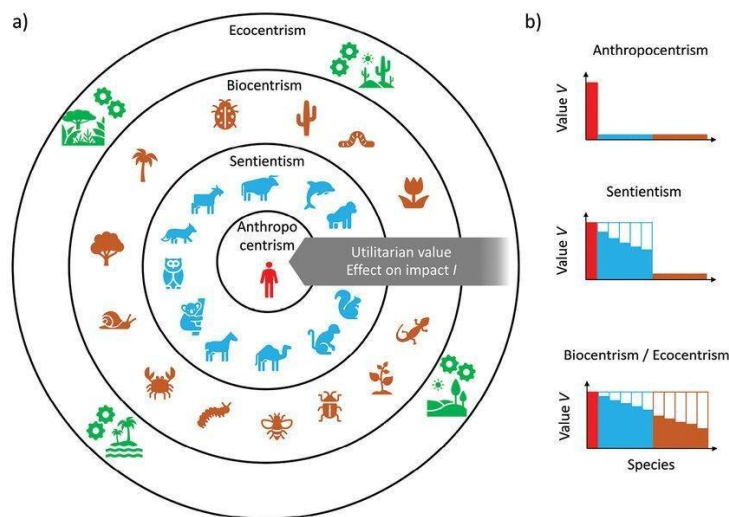


Figure 8. "Differences between the moral communities considered by value systems influenced by anthropocentrism, sentientism, biocentrism and ecocentrism" in the article "What is valued in conservation? A framework to compare ethical perspectives" (Latombe et al., 2022). Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Differences-between-the-moral-communities-considered-by-value-systems-influenced-by_fig1_359431689

Historically, anthropocentrism has driven much of modern industrial growth, with nature viewed primarily as a resource to be exploited for human needs and desires. This mindset has led to overexploitation of natural resources, habitat destruction, and climate change. Figures like Lynn White (1967) argue that anthropocentric thought, rooted in cultural and religious traditions, has justified human dominance over nature, causing the environmental crises we face today.

In contrast, the ecocentric approach, articulated by philosophers like Arne Naess (1973), proposes that humans are just one part of the larger web of life, and that non-human entities have inherent value. By shifting toward ecocentrism, society can begin to value ecosystems, animals, and plants not as tools for human use, but as beings deserving of protection and respect in their own right. This shift has the potential to inspire more sustainable lifestyles and foster environmental justice for both human and non-human species alike.

Ecocentrism promotes a shift in ethics, law, and policy toward recognizing the interdependence between humans and nature. It rejects the idea of human separation from the environment and emphasizes that ecosystem health is vital to human well-being. This perspective encourages valuing nature intrinsically, prioritizing biodiversity, ecosystem restoration, and sustainability for all life forms.(Taylor, 1986).

SUBTOPIC 3.2.3: Human Behaviors and Environmental Impact

Human activities, including deforestation, pollution, and overconsumption, have drastically disrupted ecosystems, leading to significant biodiversity loss and contributing to climate change. Deforestation, particularly in tropical regions, destroys vital habitats, reduces carbon sequestration, and contributes to soil degradation. Pollution from industrial activities, agriculture, and urbanization contaminates air, water, and soil, harming wildlife and disrupting the balance of ecosystems. Overconsumption of natural resources, driven by global demand for products, also accelerates the depletion of ecosystems, undermining their ability to regenerate and sustain life(Foley et al., 2005).

Case studies such as the destruction of mangrove forests in Queensland, Australia, provide a clear example of how human actions have ripple effects on ecological systems. Mangroves play a critical role in coastal protection, water filtration, and providing habitats for various species. However, large-scale development and land reclamation for agriculture and urban expansion have led to the destruction of these vital ecosystems. This not only impacts biodiversity but also exacerbates the vulnerability of coastal communities to storm surges and erosion, illustrating the far-reaching consequences of human behavior on both local and global scales (Courier Mail, 2025).





Figure 9. Mangrove Dieback in Northern Australia, An image showing the dieback of mangroves across a stretch of coastline in Northern Australia. Retrieved from: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-07-10/unprecedented-10000-hectares-of-mangroves-die/7552968>

Psychological theories on human attachment to nature suggest that the increasing alienation from the natural world is linked to environmental degradation. According to Giuliani (2003), as people become more detached from nature, they are less likely to feel a sense of responsibility for protecting it. This disconnection is a contributing factor to the unsustainable behaviors that drive environmental harm. When humans no longer recognize their intrinsic connection to the natural world, the degradation of ecosystems becomes a more abstract concept, making it easier to justify actions that harm the environment.

The human behaviors driving environmental degradation underscore the need for a paradigm shift toward sustainable practices. Addressing these behaviors requires both individual and systemic changes, including reducing consumption, protecting natural habitats, and fostering a deeper connection with nature through education and cultural shifts toward ecocentric values.

The environmental consequences of human behaviors such as deforestation, pollution, and overconsumption highlight not only the fragility of ecosystems but also the ethical responsibility humans have in safeguarding the natural world (Foley et al., 2005, p. 570). Addressing these impacts requires more than awareness; it demands stewardship, collective action, and the integration of sustainable practices into daily life (Bennett, Bousquet, &

Raymond, 2018, p. 45). These principles form the foundation of ethical responsibility and stewardship, which are explored in the following subtopic.

SUBTOPIC 3.2.4: Ethical Responsibility and Stewardship

The concepts of ethical responsibility and stewardship are central to sustainable development and environmental protection. Stewardship refers to the responsible use and conservation of natural resources by individuals, communities, organizations, or governments, emphasizing that ecosystems are part of a broader web of interdependence (Bennett et al., 2018).

Ethical responsibility is rooted in the idea that nature holds intrinsic value and that humans must protect ecosystems for both current and future generations. This view is supported by philosophical, religious, and scientific traditions advocating for tools and standards that guide sustainable management (Worrell & Appleby, 2000).

Stewardship promotes responsibility, accountability, and citizen engagement. Through collaborative models, communities develop shared practices of environmental care, fostering social cohesion and sustainability (Mathevet, Bousquet, & Raymond, 2018). In Europe, it aligns with corporate social responsibility (CSR), where companies integrate environmental concerns into their strategies, supported by EU sustainability initiatives (European Commission, 2023).

Environmental ethics also shape consumer behavior. Research shows that consumers support companies that respect the environment, even amid negative publicity, demonstrating the value of trust and ethical branding (Larbi, 2014).



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Figure 10. Hands gently holding and planting a young sapling in soil, symbolizing environmental stewardship and growth. **Note.** Photograph by Chaimongkol Khumkhotsoong/Vecteezy, published approximately 4–5 years ago; the Vecteezy free photo service . Copyright by the creator under Vecteezy licensi

Stewardship must be inclusive. Cultural traditions, especially those of Indigenous and local communities, contribute essential knowledge and values for effective conservation (Bennett et al., 2018).



Figure 11. Framework illustrating synergies between human rights and environmental due diligence standards. **Note.** From *Toward ‘sustainability due diligence’: Synergies between standards and methodology* [Diagram], by Shift Projec 2025, from <https://shiftproject.org/sustainability-due-diligence/>

Education for sustainability empowers new generations to think critically, recognize ecological interdependence, and take action at multiple levels. Learning extends beyond schools to communities and public institutions (Siddiqui, Nigam, & Khalid, 2024).

In conclusion, ethical responsibility and stewardship are core to an ecopsychological approach that seeks to repair the human–nature relationship. Through education, policy, and collective action, a new environmental ethic is emerging—one based on respect, responsibility, and care.

TOPIC 3.3: Exploring Therapeutic Practices to Enhance Well-Being and Ecological Awareness

SUBTOPIC 3.3.1: Nature Therapy and Emotional Healing

Nature therapy, also known as green therapy, ecotherapy, or nature-based therapy, comprises a wide range of practices that use nature to promote emotional well-being and psychological healing. It is rooted in the idea that humans have an innate connection with the natural world, and restoring that connection can significantly benefit mental health. These practices are especially effective in managing anxiety, depression, stress, trauma, and emotional dysregulation (Jordan & Hinds, 2016; Berger & Lahad, 2013).

Among the most well-known practices is forest bathing, or *Shinrin-yoku*, which originated in Japan and involves slow, mindful immersion in forest environments. Research by Park et al. (2010) and further summarized by Hansen, Jones, and Tocchini (2017) has shown that forest bathing significantly reduces cortisol levels, blood pressure, and heart rate, while enhancing mood and feelings of vitality. Another common approach is horticultural therapy, which uses gardening and plant-care activities in therapeutic settings. This method has demonstrated positive outcomes for individuals with depression, PTSD, and cognitive impairments, fostering improved mood, reduced anxiety, and enhanced self-esteem (Soga et al., 2017).

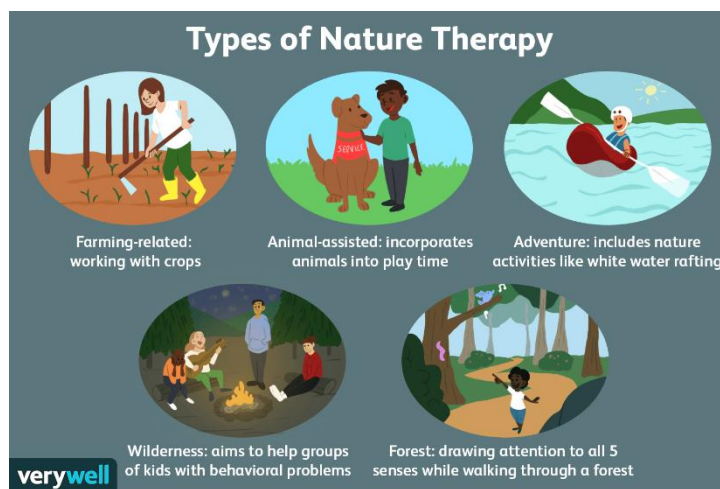


Figure 12. How Nature Therapy Helps Your Mental Health. Adapted from “How Nature Therapy Helps Your Mental Health,” by Verywell Mind, n.d. Retrieved from: <https://www.verywellmind.com/how-nature-therapy-helps-your-mental-health-5210448>



Eco-therapy is an umbrella term for a range of therapist-led interventions conducted in natural settings. These may include structured nature walks, conservation activities, or outdoor mindfulness exercises. Closely related is eco tuning, a gentler practice focused on re-aligning individuals with the natural rhythms of their environment to cultivate emotional clarity. Garden therapy and general gardening as a healing practice also form key components of nature therapy, especially for individuals seeking calm and routine in nature-based activities. These approaches are accessible and especially effective for reducing stress and promoting long-term engagement (Amel, Manning, & Scott, 2017).

In more expressive forms of nature therapy, clients may participate in land or earth art, which involves using natural materials such as leaves, stones, and soil to create symbolic artwork. This is often utilized in environmental arts therapy to facilitate emotional exploration and self-expression (Blandy & Fenn, 2012). Meanwhile, wilderness therapy and adventure therapy offer more intensive outdoor experiences, often involving hiking, camping, or survival challenges combined with therapeutic support. These are particularly effective for adolescents and young adults, helping them build resilience, emotional insight, and coping skills (Russell & Phillips-Miller, 2002). Finally, outdoor therapy and nature-based psychotherapy refer to therapeutic sessions conducted partially or entirely outdoors, integrating traditional talk therapy with the grounding effects of natural surroundings.

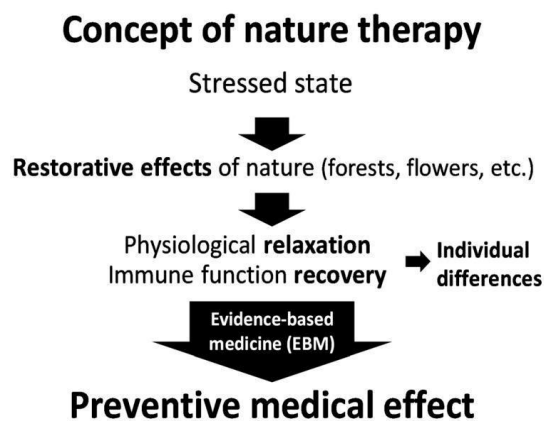


Figure 13. Miyazaki, Y. (2017). *Concept of nature therapy [Figure]*. In M. M. Hansen, R. Jones, & K. Tocchini, “Shinrin-yoku (forest bathing) and nature therapy: A state-of-the-art review.” *International Journal of Environmental*. Retrieved from: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5580555/#ijerph-14-00851-f001>



A central component of nature therapy’s effectiveness lies in sensory engagement, which plays a vital role in calming the nervous system. Engaging the sense of sight, for instance, by observing greenery, flowing water, or natural fractal patterns (like those in leaves or tree branches), can induce a state of calm and stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system, which supports rest and recovery (Ulrich et al., 1991; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1995). Similarly, natural sounds—such as birdsong, rustling leaves, or trickling water—have been shown to reduce stress and improve mood. According to Buxton et al. (2021), listening to natural soundscapes enhances cognitive function and emotional stability more effectively than urban environments.

The sense of touch also plays a grounding and therapeutic role in nature-based settings. Whether it’s walking barefoot on soil, handling plants in a garden, or feeling the texture of bark or stones, tactile experiences activate the somatosensory system and help individuals reconnect with the present moment. Field (2010) notes that touch is closely linked to emotional regulation and safety, especially in trauma recovery.



Figure 14. Morton, L. (2022, December 8). Debbie Warren puts her hands on a tree trunk during a guided forest therapy walk in Magalia, Calif. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from: https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/12/08/paradise-forest-therapy-climate-wildfire/?utm_source

In combining these sensory experiences with structured or intuitive therapeutic practices, nature therapy facilitates nervous system regulation, emotional awareness, and resilience. The multisensory nature of the environment becomes an active co-therapist, inviting calm, supporting reflection, and promoting healing through connection with the earth.

SUBTOPIC 3.3.2: Mindfulness and Ecological Awareness

Nature-based mindfulness practices, such as walking meditations and focused observation, help individuals develop present-moment awareness while deepening their connection with the natural world. These practices foster emotional calm, self-awareness, and a sense of ecological belonging (Jordan & Hinds, 2016). For example, walking meditations encourage individuals to pay close attention to the sensations of movement, breath, and contact with the earth, while focused observation of natural elements, like a leaf, tree, or stone, enhances sensory awareness and curiosity (Kabat-Zinn, 2005).

Mindfulness in nature also promotes ecological awareness, especially when combined with reflective journaling or creative exercises. Journaling prompts, such as asking what one noticed or how a place makes them feel connected, can elicit meaningful reflections about humans' relationship with the environment (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009). Creative practices like composing poetry or making earth mandalas with natural materials support emotional expression and deepen appreciation for nature's cycles and impermanence (Berger & Lahad, 2013).

A simple yet powerful method is the "sit spot" exercise, where individuals return to the same spot in nature regularly for quiet observation. This cultivates a long-term relationship with place and fosters both mindfulness and ecological literacy (Louv, 2008). Ultimately, these practices not only improve well-being but also support a more compassionate and connected relationship with the Earth.





Figure 15. Outdoor fun + mindfulness = mental health boosts for kids. Adapted from *Outdoor Fun + Mindfulness = Mental Health Boosts for Kids*, by National Geographic Kids (n.d.) Retrieved from: <https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/parents/ecotherapy-can-boost-kids-wellbeing/>

Examples and Optional Exercises

- **Walking Meditation**

Slowly walk through a natural environment, focusing attention on your breath, the sensation of your feet on the ground, and sounds around you. This promotes calm awareness and connection with the land. (*Kabat-Zinn, 2005*)

- **Focused Observation Exercise**

Choose one object in nature (e.g., a stone, tree, or leaf) and observe it for 5–10 minutes. Notice its shape, texture, color, movement, and any emotional responses it brings.

(*Jordan & Hinds, 2016*)

- **Reflective Nature Journaling**

After a nature-based mindfulness practice, write in a journal using prompts such as:

- “What did I notice that I usually overlook?”
 - “How did this environment make me feel more connected?”
 - “What is this place teaching me today?” (*Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009*)
- **“Sit Spot” Practice**
Return to the same spot in nature regularly (e.g., daily or weekly) and sit quietly for 15–20 minutes. Observe changes in light, sound, animal behavior, and plant life. Journal or sketch your experience. (*Louv, 2008*)
 - **Earth Mandala or Nature Art**
Collect natural items—leaves, stones, petals, twigs—and create a temporary mandala or sculpture. Reflect on cycles of life, impermanence, and your relationship with nature.
(*Berger & Lahad, 2013*)
 - **Nature-Inspired Poetry or Storytelling**
After time spent outdoors, write a short poem or story inspired by what you saw or felt. This creative outlet can help integrate emotional and ecological awareness.
(*Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009*)

These nature-based practices are not only therapeutic but also highly adaptable for educational settings. Teachers, counselors, and environmental educators can incorporate these exercises into outdoor learning, social-emotional education, and ecological literacy programs. By engaging students in mindful observation, creative reflection, and nature-based art, educators can foster emotional resilience, concentration, and a deeper sense of environmental responsibility.

SUBTOPIC 3.3.3: Art as Therapy in Natural Settings

Eco-art therapy, also known as environmental arts therapy, is a creative therapeutic approach that blends art-making with direct engagement with nature. Rooted in the belief that creative expression is a fundamental part of healing and that human beings are deeply interconnected



with the Earth, this modality invites individuals to use natural materials and outdoor spaces as both medium and canvas for emotional exploration (Berger, 2006; Malchiodi, 2012). Whether practiced individually or in groups, art in nature offers a gentle, sensory-rich method to express complex feelings—especially those that may be difficult to articulate verbally, such as grief, trauma, or transitions.

Unlike traditional studio-based art therapy, nature-based art encourages working with impermanent, found materials—such as leaves, stones, sticks, sand, water, and even shadows or sunlight. This impermanence can itself be healing, allowing individuals to experience and accept change, release attachment, and honor the ephemeral nature of emotions and life experiences (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009). For example, a person processing loss may create a leaf mandala that is later scattered by the wind, symbolizing the letting go of grief and the natural cycle of life and death.



Figure 16. *Nature materials can bring a sense of balance and grounding. Adapted from Eco-Art Therapy: Deepening Connections with the Natural World, by the American Art Therapy Association (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://arttherapy.org/eco-art-therapy-deepening-connections-natural-world/>*

Eco-art therapy can also be a highly meditative and embodied experience. Sculpting with clay from the earth or arranging a spiral of feathers and pinecones connects individuals to tactile sensations and natural rhythms, encouraging mindfulness and grounding. According to Berger (2006), creating site-specific art outdoors engages not just the hands and imagination, but the entire body and spirit, supporting nervous system regulation and emotional integration.

The following figure illustrates the shift in relational focus across three therapeutic models. In the Eco Therapist model, healing occurs within a triad of therapist, client, and nature, emphasizing transpersonal and interpersonal connections (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009). The Art Therapist model centers on the interaction between client, artwork, and therapist, where creativity mediates therapeutic communication (Malchiodi, 2012). The Eco Art Psychotherapist model integrates both, positioning *nature* as an active participant that facilitates reciprocal responses between client and therapist, fostering ecological and psychological awareness (McNiff, 2018).

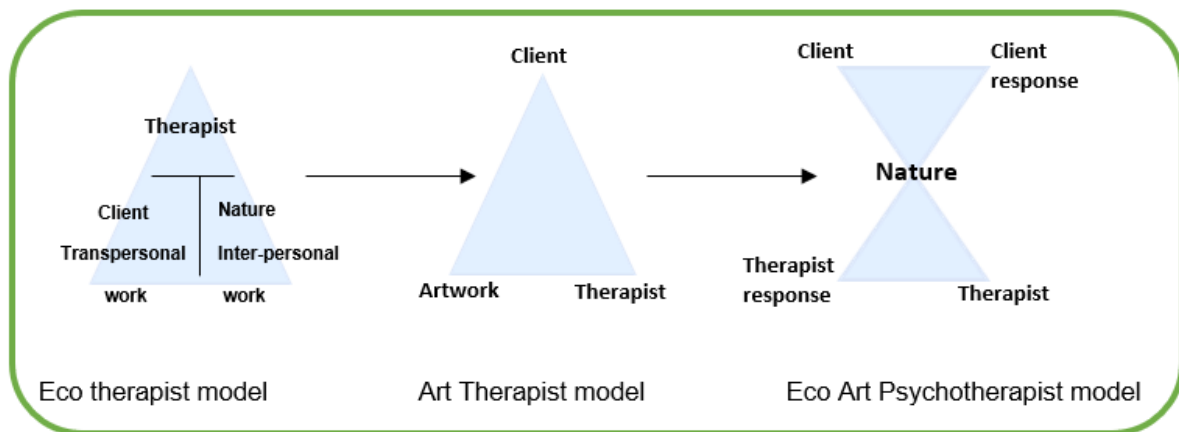


Figure 17. Shaw's 2019 Eco Art Psychotherapy Model.. Adapted from *Eco Art Therapy*, by T. Shaw (2019) Retrieved from: <https://naturebasedarttherapy.com/what-i-offer/eco-art-therapy/>

In addition, collaborative art-making in natural settings holds powerful potential for building community, fostering connection, and supporting collective healing. Group eco-art projects encourage cooperation, communication, and shared intention. These might involve the co-creation of large-scale mandalas, labyrinth paths formed from natural materials, or communal storytelling projects that draw on the land for inspiration. Through collaboration, individuals

develop not only a sense of interpersonal connection, but also a shared appreciation for place, deepening environmental awareness and stewardship (Inwood, 2010).

Furthermore, collaborative eco-art can serve as a form of ecological activism or community engagement. Public installations created from natural or repurposed materials may be designed to raise awareness about local environmental issues, honor endangered ecosystems, or invite reflection on our impact on the Earth. This form of expressive engagement empowers individuals and communities to voice their concerns, hopes, and gratitude through symbolic visual language (Gablik, 1991).

SUBTOPIC 3.3.4: Building Sustainable Well-Being

The concept of **sustainable well-being** goes beyond individual health to include the preservation of ecosystems and social cohesion—now and for future generations. It emphasizes balance among people, nature, and time, promoting well-being that does not deprive others - human or non-human- of the same opportunity. This view challenges consumer-driven models and shifts toward reciprocity and collective resilience (Lomas, Pawelski, & VanderWeele, 2024).

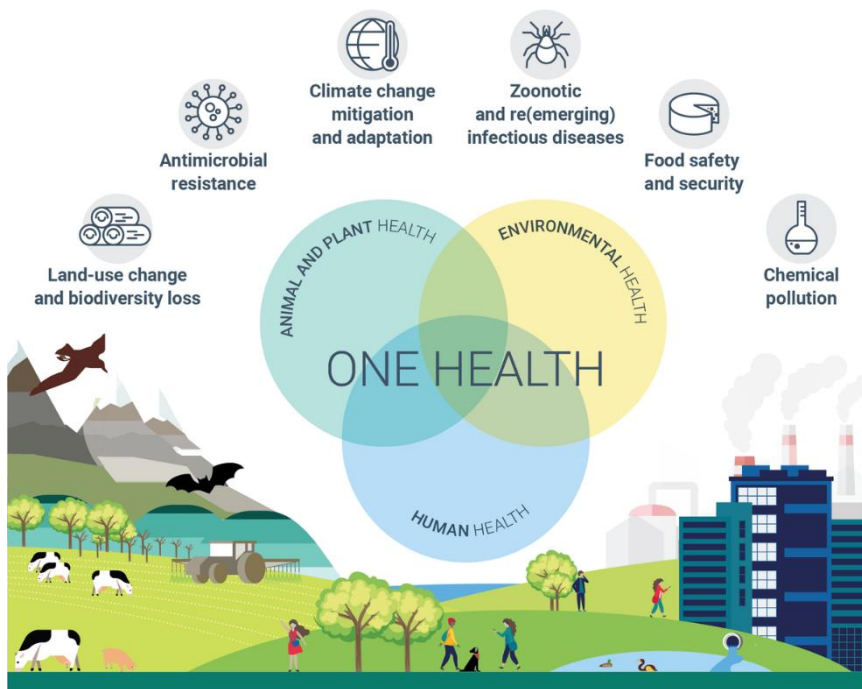


Figure 18. *Wheel of Well-Being: demonstrating the seven dimensions of sustainable well-being.* **Note.** From *Enhancing Sustainable Well-being Education in Europe and beyond* [Diagram], by Shift Project's SWEPPP initiative (Wellbeing 4 Sustainability)2025. Copyright 2025 by Wellbeing 4 Sustainability. <https://www.wellbeing4sustainability.eu/>

Built environments play a key role in supporting sustainable well-being. Sustainable architecture and bioclimatic design affect not only environmental performance but also mental and social health. Access to natural light, green spaces, quietness, and inclusive urban design improve emotional well-being and environmental respect (Haider & Kapur, 2024).

Nature-based interventions, like park walks or community gardening, provide psychological support—especially for vulnerable populations—offering safety, self-esteem, and social connection (James Kutu Obeng et al., 2023).

Housing quality also contributes significantly. Poor housing can lead to anxiety and isolation, while sustainable homes should offer autonomy, connection with nature, and psychological safety (Prochorskaite, 2013). A recent study identifies ten core design elements—lighting, acoustic comfort, thermal control, privacy, and social interaction—as essential for long-term well-being (Altomonte et al., 2020).

At the policy level, the European Environment Agency (EEA) proposes redefining progress beyond economic growth, promoting societies grounded in justice, solidarity, and ecological limits (EEA, 2023).

Crucially, sustainable well-being requires intergenerational and inclusive justice. The active participation of young people, Indigenous communities, and marginalized groups in policy-making enhances social trust and psychological resilience.

In conclusion, sustainable well-being is both individual and collective—a shift from consumption to connection, where health and happiness are redefined through our relationships with people and nature.



Suggested Exercise “Nature’s Benefits Card Game”(Sandiford et al., n.d.)

Objective:

Students learn how human health and community well-being depend on healthy ecosystems by managing environmental decisions through a card game.

Materials:

- **Nature's Benefits Card Game** (designed for grades 6–12)

Includes **Ecosystem cards**, **Resource beneficiary cards**, and **Event cards** (e.g., natural disasters, human impact, sustainability efforts)

- Timer or clock (game time is ~20–30 minutes)
- Discussion prompts or worksheet for reflection

Activity Steps:

1. Introduction (10 minutes):

Present the concept: ecosystems provide essential services to people. Explain that through this game, students will simulate how resource decisions impact community well-being cfpub.epa.gov.

2. Gameplay (20–30 minutes):

- Each student or group draws cards, creating chains linking ecosystem types to the individuals who benefit.
- Event cards are drawn periodically, introducing challenges like pollution, natural disasters, or sustainable interventions.
- Players manage and adapt their chains to maintain ecosystem services amid changing conditions.

3. Discussion & Decision-Making (10 minutes):

Facilitate a class discussion:

- Which events most disrupted well-being?
- How did cooperative actions or sustainable management help?
- What behaviors supported resilience and fairness?



4. Reflection (10 minutes):

Students respond to:

- How do ecosystems support my health and community?
- What happens when ecosystems are degraded?
- How can society balance resource use with long-term well-being for all?

Why It Aligns with Sustainable Well-Being:

- **Ecosystem-health linkage:** Highlights ecosystems as foundations of physical, social, and mental well-being.
- **Resilience under duress:** Challenges mimic real-world shocks (e.g., disasters, pollution) and require adaptation.
- **Collaborative decision-making:** Encourages equitable resource-sharing and collective responsibility.
- **Systems thinking:** Promotes understanding of interconnected ecological, social, and policy dynamics, resonating with your subtopic's emphasis on equity, ecosystem health, and intergenerational well-being.

TOPIC 3.4: Nature as a Therapeutic Tool for Emotional Regulation

SUBTOPIC 3.4.1: The Science Behind Nature's Healing Power

Emotional regulation is the ability to monitor, evaluate, and modify one's emotional responses to achieve adaptive outcomes, enabling individuals to respond to challenges in a flexible and adaptive manner (Gross, 1998; Thompson, 1994). While emotional balance is sometimes used interchangeably with emotional regulation, it generally refers to a broader state of stable and harmonious emotions rather than the active process of managing them (Gross, 2015; Campos, Frankel, & Camras, 2004). Exposure to natural environments, such as parks, forests, and green spaces, has been shown to support emotional regulation specifically, by reducing stress and cortisol levels, improving mood, and enhancing attentional control (Ulrich et al., 1991; Bratman, Hamilton, & Daily, 2015).



Theoretical frameworks, including the Stress Reduction Theory and Attention Restoration Theory, explain how interacting with nature can promote adaptive emotional responses (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Ulrich, 1993). Empirical studies also indicate that nature exposure can increase the use of adaptive regulation strategies, such as cognitive reappraisal, while decreasing reliance on maladaptive strategies like expressive suppression (Cheng, Lau, & Chan, 2015; White et al., 2019). These findings suggest that engaging with natural environments may be a practical means of enhancing emotional regulation and overall psychological resilience.

Fractal patterns in nature, such as tree branches and ocean waves, along with natural sounds, have been shown to calm the brain and promote relaxation (Taylor et al., 2011). These elements contribute to stress reduction and overall mental health improvement.



Figure.19 From Nature and Health, Covid-19, Nature and Well-being

Figure. 20 Mental Health Awareness

Week 2021: Why Nature?. Retrieved from:

Retrieved from: <https://wildinthecity.org.uk/nature-and-health/>

<https://www.3btraining.com/first-aid-courses/mental-health-awareness-week-2021-why-nature/>



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Educational Application

In educational and therapeutic settings, integrating nature-based emotional regulation strategies can support students' self-awareness and mental health (Jordan & Hinds, 2016; Louv, 2008). Outdoor activities that encourage reflection, observation, and sensory awareness help learners manage stress and improve focus (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009; Chawla, 2015).

These practices align with the “5 Ways to Wellbeing” highlighted by Finding Nature, which emphasize connecting with nature, staying active outdoors, noticing the environment, learning through natural experiences, and giving back through environmental care (Finding Nature, 2019). Incorporating these strategies into classrooms or therapeutic programs can enhance social-emotional learning (SEL), environmental education, and trauma-informed teaching approaches, creating supportive spaces where students can thrive (Berger & Lahad, 2013; Malchiodi, 2012).

By blending structured outdoor activities with reflective practices, educators can foster both mental wellbeing and environmental stewardship, helping students develop life-long skills for resilience and self-awareness.

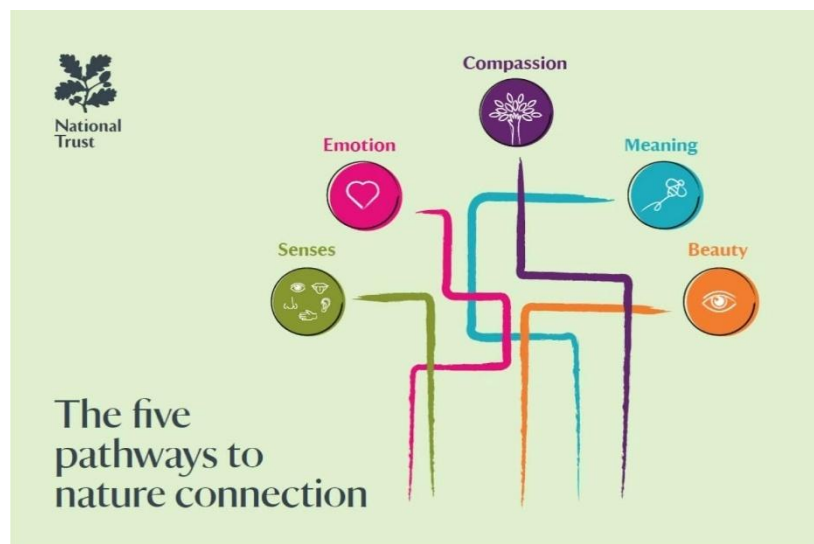


Figure 21. 5 Ways to Wellbeing with Nature

Retrieved from: <https://findingnature.org.uk/2019/01/28/5-ways-to-wellbeing-with-nature/>

Optional Exercises

1. Nature Metaphor Journaling

Invite learners to choose a natural phenomenon (e.g., a river, tree, storm, or mountain) and write about how it relates to their emotions or personal growth.

Prompt: “How is your emotional experience like this part of nature?”
(Inspired by Berger & Lahad, 2013; Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009)

2. Seasonal Reflection Activity

Have students reflect on the current season and how it mirrors their inner emotional state. This can be done through drawing, poetry, or journaling.

Prompt: “What season do you feel like today? Why?” (Adapted from Louv, 2008; Inwood, 2010)

3. Emotional Regulation Walk

During a slow nature walk, ask participants to notice elements that make them feel calm or grounded. Afterward, discuss or journal: *Prompt:* “What part of nature helped you feel more balanced?” (Based on Jordan & Hinds, 2016; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989)

4. Nature-Inspired Breathing

Guide learners through a breathing exercise using imagery—for example, imagining their breath as waves on the shore or wind through trees.
(Aligned with Kabat-Zinn, 2005; Malchiodi, 2012)

This helps build calming routines associated with nature.

SUBTOPIC 3.4.2: Cultivating Emotional Balance Through Nature

Nature serves as a powerful metaphor for emotional regulation, teaching lessons of resilience, adaptability, and impermanence (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). Observing natural cycles—such as changing seasons or flowing rivers, encourages mindfulness, helping individuals develop inner balance and emotional stability (Richardson et al., 2016).





Figure 22. *Finding Metaphors For Life in Nature*. Retrieved from: <https://silvotherapy.co.uk/articles/metaphors-in-nature>

Optional Exercises

1. Nature Symbolism Collage

Explore personal emotional states through natural metaphors by collecting or drawing natural elements that reflect feelings or challenges. Arrange them into a collage with captions.

Prompt: “Which parts of nature reflect how you feel or what you’re learning about yourself?” (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Richardson et al., 2016)

2. Flow Like a River – Guided Visualization

Lead a guided visualization imagining oneself as a river flowing around obstacles, encouraging emotional adaptability. *Prompt:* “How can you let your feelings flow without getting stuck?” (Richardson et al., 2016)

3. Changing Seasons Reflection



Write or discuss how different seasons mirror emotional growth or difficulty, using drawing or poetry if preferred. *Prompt*: “Which season feels most like your current emotional state, and why?” (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Richardson et al., 2016)

4. Nature-Based Emotion Wheel

Create an emotion wheel linking feelings such as calm, sadness, or anger to natural images (e.g., still lake = calm). Invite learners to add their own associations. *Prompt*: “What natural scene represents this emotion for you?” (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989)

5. Rock, Tree, River Grounding Exercise

Choose one natural form—rock (strength), tree (growth), river (resilience)—and practice grounding techniques imagining embodying that element. *Prompt*: “What natural form helps you feel grounded or strong today?” (Richardson et al., 2016)

TOPIC 3.5: The Balance Between ECO (Ecological Mindfulness) and EGO (Self-Centered Thinking)

SUBTOPIC 3.5.1: ECO vs. EGO Framework

Ecological mindfulness (ECO) emphasizes an awareness of the interdependence of all living beings and the ecosystems they inhabit, fostering behaviors that support sustainability, conservation, and social responsibility (Schumacher, 1973; Keller & Golley, 2000). This mindset encourages recognition of humans as participants within ecological systems rather than as dominant controllers, promoting ethical and environmentally responsible decision-making (Capra, 1996).

In contrast, self-centered thinking (EGO) prioritizes personal desires and immediate gratification over collective and ecological well-being, often leading to overconsumption, resource depletion, and environmental degradation (Schumacher, 1973; Kasser, 2002). Psychological research links ego-driven behaviors to lower pro-environmental engagement,



whereas ecological awareness correlates with sustainable consumption patterns and ecological activism (Clayton, 2003; Nisbet et al., 2009).

Engaging with natural cycles, such as observing seasonal changes, plant growth, or water flow, can cultivate an ECO mindset by illustrating interdependence and ecological balance (Folke et al., 2011; Jordan & Hinds, 2016). Participatory environmental practices, including ecological restoration, community gardening, and conservation projects, reinforce this perspective by connecting personal action to tangible ecosystem outcomes (Keller & Golley, 2000; Chawla, 2015). Such experiential learning aligns with theories of environmental identity, suggesting that repeated engagement with nature strengthens pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors (Clayton & Opatow, 2003).

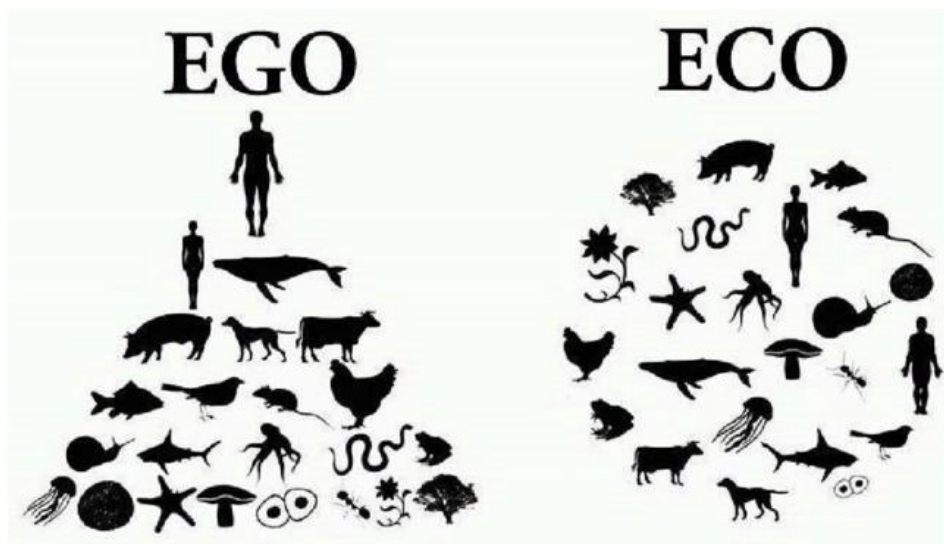


Figure 23. Diagram 'Ego-Eco'-Humankind is part of the ecosystem, not apart from or above it. This diagram depicts this simple fact clearly (diagram: S. Lehmann, 2010). Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Diagram-Ego-Eco-Humankind-is-part-of-the-ecosystem-not-apart-from-or-above-it-This_fig1_330697869

Optional Exercise: Reflecting on ECO vs. EGO Mindsets

Invite learners to spend time observing a natural cycle (e.g., seasonal changes, plant growth, or water flow) and reflect on how this cycle illustrates interdependence and balance in the environment. Then, ask them to journal about their own behaviors or thoughts that reflect either an ECO (ecological mindfulness) or EGO (self-centered) perspective. Finally, have them

identify one action they could take to foster more ECO-oriented behaviors in their daily life.

Prompt: “How does observing nature’s cycles help you understand your connection to the environment? In what ways can you shift from self-centered (EGO) to ecological (ECO) thinking?” (*Adapted from Schumacher, 1973; Keller & Golley, 2000*)

SUBTOPIC 3.5.2: Balancing Personal Needs with Ecosystem Health

Balancing personal needs with ecosystem health involves integrating self-care and ecological responsibility. Mindfulness practices, including ecological mindfulness, encourage reflection on the environmental consequences of personal choices, such as diet, energy consumption, transportation, and material use (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Eco-conscious lifestyles, ranging from minimalism and plant-based diets to regenerative agriculture, illustrate practical strategies for meeting personal needs while contributing to ecosystem resilience (Orr, 1992; Garnett, 2014). Studies in environmental ethics indicate that aligning personal well-being with ecological stewardship enhances mental and physical health outcomes, including stress reduction, improved life satisfaction, and a sense of purpose, while also reducing environmental harm (Folke et al., 2011; Kahn & Kellert, 2002; Nisbet & Zelenski, 2011).

Educational programs that integrate mindfulness with environmental engagement, such as “green therapy” interventions, have been shown to foster empathy, ecological awareness, and sustainable behaviors among participants (Jordan & Hinds, 2016; Chawla, 2015). This suggests that cultivating an ECO-oriented mindset not only benefits ecosystem health but also supports holistic human well-being.



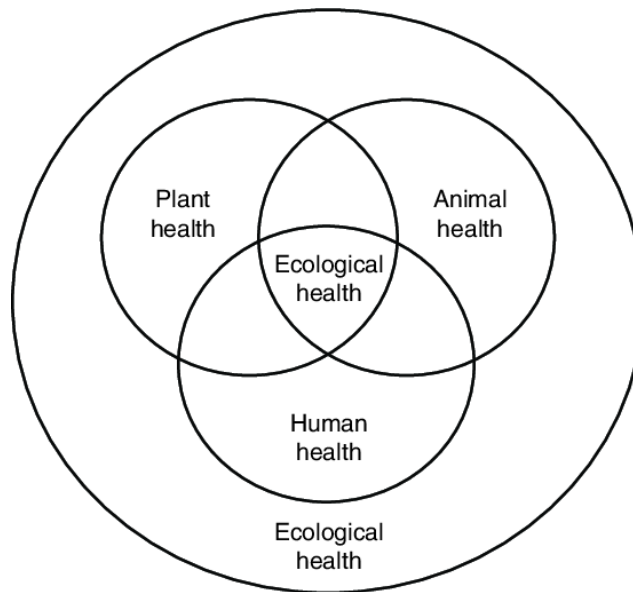


Figure 24. Expansion of the ecological health spheres concept (formerly presented by Tabor 2002). Expanded concept is used in efforts to disseminate conservation medicine in Brazil. (Adapted from Mangini and Silva 2007).Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Expansion-of-the-ecological-health-spheres-concept-formerly-presented-by-Tabor-2002_fig1_282291550

TOPIC 3.6: Cultivating Empathy and Awareness of Our Place Within the Larger Ecosystem

SUBTOPIC 3.6.1: Empathy Through Nature Connection

Empathy, the ability to understand and emotionally respond to the experiences of others, is considered a key factor in both social and environmental harmony. Psychological research shows that a person’s connection to nature can significantly enhance their capacity for empathy. When individuals perceive themselves as part of a broader ecosystem and recognize the value of other forms of life, their empathy extends beyond the human circle to include animals, plants, and ecosystems. This fosters not only care for nature but also a deeper sense of interdependence with all living beings (Mesa Rose Matthews and Rebeka Jávora, 2023).

Empathy toward nature is not only the result of personal experience but also an internalized disposition. The concept of “*innate empathy with nature*” describes individuals who feel a natural identification with life beyond the human world. People with this disposition tend to show greater concern for environmental issues, a stronger willingness to act, and a more intense



emotional response to ecological degradation. This form of empathy goes beyond simple environmental awareness, as it involves experiential connection and a deep sense of moral responsibility (Tam, 2013).

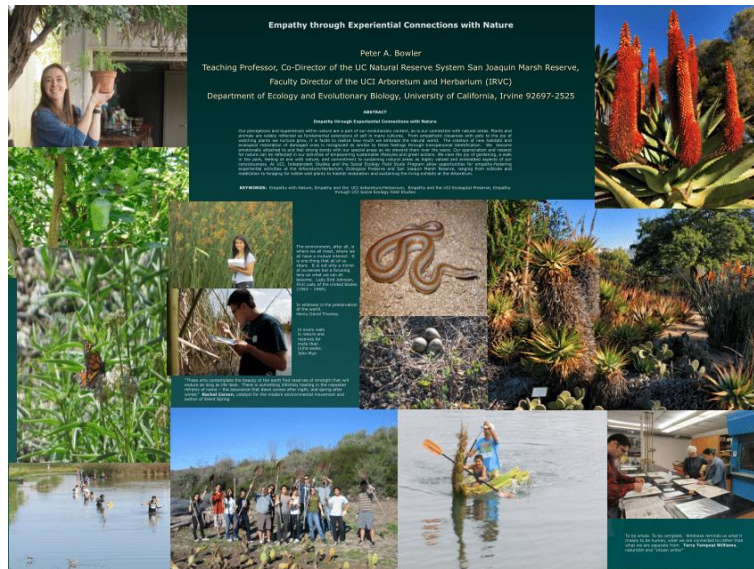


Figure 25. *Empathy through experiential connections with nature.* **Note.** Poster from “Empathy through Experiential Connections with Nature,” by Peter Bowler, 2023. Copyright by Peter Bowler. Retrieved from ResearchGate.

Early exposure to nature can support the development of emotional and cognitive empathy. According to recent studies, children and adolescents who regularly participate in nature-based activities, such as forest play, exploration, or caring for plants and animals, demonstrate higher levels of empathy, both toward people and non-human beings (Matthews & Jávora, 2023). This connection appears to be strengthened when nature-based experiences are accompanied by reflection and emotional engagement (Smith, Mann and Marsh, 2024).

Direct interaction with animals is another powerful tool for cultivating empathy. Educational programs that encourage observation, gentle contact, and care for animals have been shown to foster empathetic attitudes. Animals act as "mirrors" of emotion, helping individuals recognize and regulate their own feelings. These experiences also lead to increased respect for animal rights and more ecologically responsible behavior (Sabra, 2016).



Figure 26. Children seated on a log during outdoor storytime at Lake Wilderness Arboretum. **Note.** Photograph from Lake Wilderness Arboretum 2015; https://www.lakewildernessarboretum.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/2014_children_log1.png. Copyright 2016 by Lake Wilderness Arboretum Foundation.

The empathy that emerges from a connection with nature also has direct implications for mental health. A sense of closeness to the natural environment is associated with greater psychological well-being, reduced stress, and enhanced emotional resilience. These changes form a feedback loop: improvements in individuals' well-being through nature foster stronger commitments to its care. In this way, empathy becomes a bridge between personal healing and ecological responsibility (environment.ec.europa.eu, 2023).

It is also important to note that empathy through nature enhances cooperation and social cohesion. When people experience nature collectively, through community-based initiatives, eco-therapy, or participation in conservation groups, empathy grows not only toward non-human beings but also among people (Rustamova, 2025). Natural spaces provide neutral meeting grounds that restore relationships and foster a sense of belonging.



Furthermore, the development of empathy through nature can contribute to the creation of a new eco-ethical framework, in which humans cease to see themselves as superior to the environment and begin to act as guardians or companions of life. This shift in consciousness is fundamental to environmental justice and sustainability. It promotes an ethic of care rather than domination and opens the way for more cohesive, sensitive, and responsible societies (Næss, 1995).

In conclusion, empathy cultivated through nature connection is not merely an emotional trait, it is a catalyst for transformation: personal, social, and ecological. The inner connection to life around us, when combined with active observation and action, can lead to a new ethos that sees the self and the planet as inseparably intertwined.

SUBTOPIC 3.6.2: Awareness of Interdependence

The concept of ecological interdependence is a core principle of ecopsychology and a foundation for developing a conscious, responsible relationship between humans and the environment. Understanding that all living beings and natural systems are interconnected through dynamic, reciprocal bonds leads to a deeper awareness of fragility and mutual influence across the planet. This awareness is not theoretical but experiential; it is expressed through everyday choices, values, and behaviors. Studies show that strengthening this awareness leads to increased concern for sustainability and the protection of natural resources (Chuang, Xie and Liu, 2016).

Interdependence applies not only to ecology but also to health—human, animal, and environmental. The One Health approach emphasizes that human health cannot be examined in isolation from the broader environment. When humans harm ecosystems, they create conditions that return as threats to their own health—such as pandemics, pollution, or food insecurity. Educating and informing citizens about the unity of these domains is a key tool for prevention and the promotion of environmentally responsible behaviors. Moreover, fostering cooperation between health, environmental, and agricultural policies emerges as a necessary step toward the sustainable management of crises and challenges (Requena-Mullor et al., 2024).



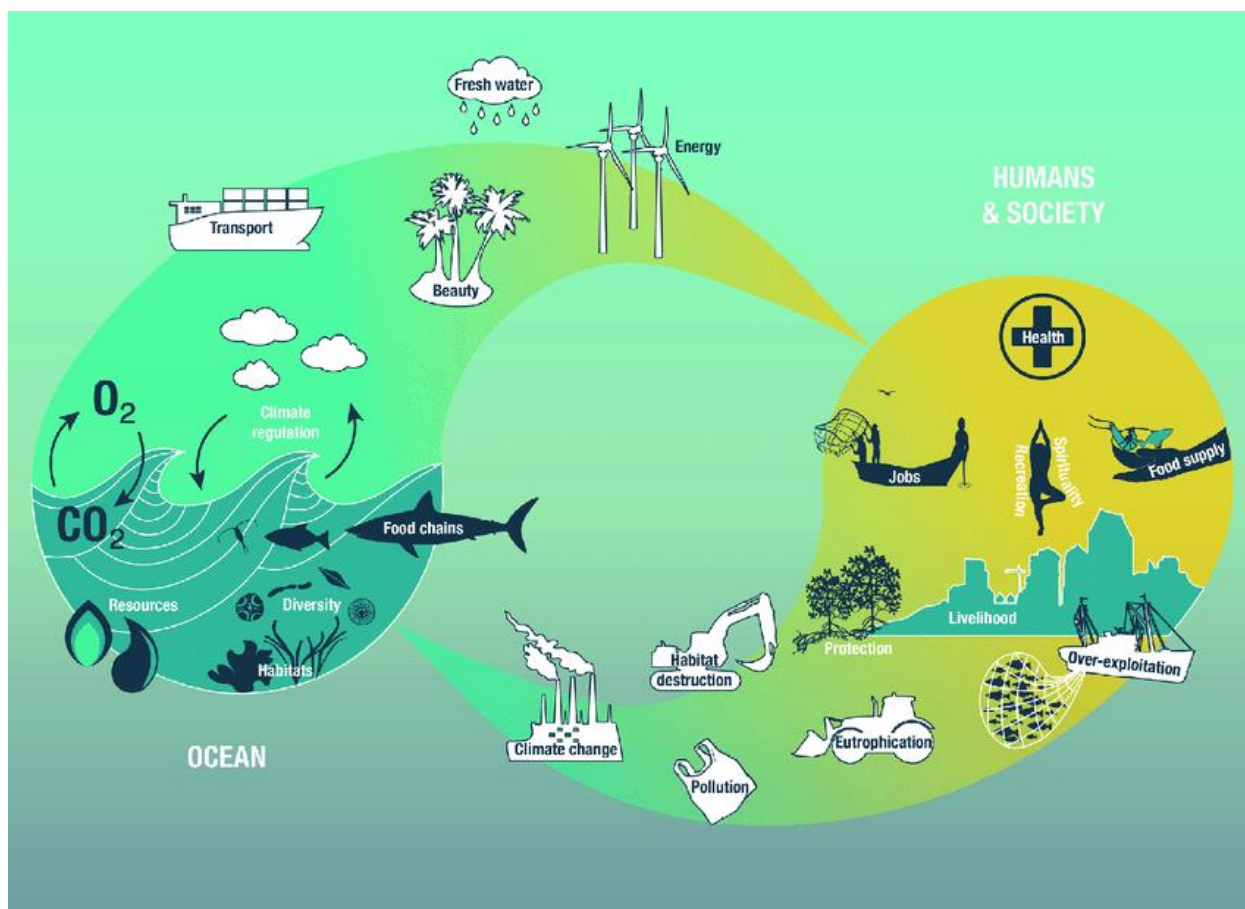


Figure 27. Diagram titled *Interdependence Between the Ocean and Humankind*, illustrating the reciprocal benefits and pressures between ocean ecosystems and human societies. **Note.** Diagram from Franke, Blenckner, Duarte et al., as part of the article *Operationalizing Ocean Health: Toward Integrated Research on Ocean Health and Recovery to Achieve Ocean Sustainability* (2020). Copyright 2020 by the authors.

The notion of “ecological solidarity” further reinforces the institutional and political dimension of interdependence awareness. It is not merely a moral stance but a proposal for improving ecological governance. From this perspective, environmental policies must consider the complex links between natural and social systems. Understanding interdependence helps shape fair, holistic, and effective environmental policy strategies, in which people participate as responsible and informed members of a larger ecosystem. Ecological solidarity requires not only technocratic solutions but also the creation of new values (Thompson et al., 2011).





Figure 28. *The interdependence of human health and the health of planet Earth.* **Note.** From *The interdependence of human health and the health of planet Earth* [Diagram], by Kiera McCabe, Youth STEM Matters artist, 2021. © 2021 Youth STEM 2030. <https://www.youthstem2030.org/youth-stem-matters/read/the-interdependence-of-human-health-and-the-health-of-planet-earth>

When strengthened through education, ecological awareness can transform how individuals think and act. Knowledge of ecological interdependence and the consequences of human choices encourages a shift from individual utility to social and environmental responsibility. Educational programs based on experiential learning—through nature activities, environmental workshops, or interdisciplinary project work—can empower people to see themselves as part of an interconnected whole. Education grounded in cooperation and observation of nature is among the most effective in shifting attitudes (Kociszewska, 2014).

The personal sense of connection to the environment—an internal perception of interdependence—is directly linked to environmental commitment. People who experience nature as interwoven with their lives tend to display stronger environmental ethics and a greater willingness to adopt sustainable behaviors. This demonstrates that interdependence is not only a cognitive understanding but also an emotional and spiritual experience, which translates into

action when rooted in personal identity. The element of commitment is essential to ecological behavior (Davis, Green and Reed, 2009).

Awareness of interdependence is also critical during times of crisis—such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and social inequalities. In such contexts, understanding that “nothing exists in isolation” strengthens the call for collective action and collaborative solutions. Reinforcing interdependence as a value—not as a weakness—contributes to the formation of communities that are resilient and adaptable. The ecopsychological perspective teaches that awareness of interdependence is not only knowledge, but also a cultivated way of being.

In conclusion, cultivating awareness of interdependence forms the foundation of a new ecological consciousness that transcends individualism and enhances the sense of participation in a broader web of life. Through education, institutional policy, and everyday action, nurturing this awareness can lead to more responsible, sustainable, and just societies.



Figure 29. *Kids learning empathy in nature – wildlife.* **Note.** From See What Grows. <https://seewhatgrows.org/learning-empathy-in-nature/kids-learning->

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