



Peer Education Project



A Guide for Parents/Caregivers



Mental Health
Foundation



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Over the past year, I have realised just how vital it is for me to spend time away from screens and work. It allows me to clear my head and breathe freely, without worries of pending assignments, even if it is just for a short while.

**Peer Educator
Peer Education Project**










Why is nature good for our mental health?



Connecting with nature is not just about the amount of time we spend outdoors; it is also about building a relationship with nature by noticing and becoming sensitive to what is around us. We use our senses to do this – such as noticing the different cloud shapes in the sky, smelling the scents of flowers and listening to the birds chirping in the trees.

Encouraging your child or young person to build in opportunities to connect with nature in everyday life can improve both the health of their bodies and their minds.

Research tells us that there are many mental health benefits to connecting with nature, such as:

-  Feeling happier;
-  Feeling less stressed or angry;
-  Having more and better-quality sleep;
-  Feeling less worried;
-  Being more environmentally aware and engaged;
-  Increasing self-esteem and self-confidence;
-  Improving attention and concentration;
-  Encouraging participation in physical activities; and
-  Increasing social contact with other people and animals.

Why is nature good for our mental health?

Children and young people are increasingly spending more time indoors than ever before, with research before the pandemic suggesting that three quarters of young people spend less time outdoors than prison inmates.

Research from the Wildlife Trust suggests that children and young people who have the least access to nature also have the worst levels of physical health and mental wellbeing.

So, it's important to work with your child or young person to find ways to connect with nature that work for them, based on what you have available to you.

This guide will provide some ideas to get you started.



Top tips for supporting your child or young person to connect with nature

Inspire curiosity

Being curious yourself can inspire your child or young person to question and take notice of their surroundings. If you go out for a walk together or even if you are just looking out your window, comment on the nature you see.

Ask your child or young person questions and encourage them to ask you questions too! It is important to show you can engage with nature from your window or even just on a trip to the local shop.

Turn to books and other resources

There are plenty of books and online resources available to inspire you and your child or young person to connect with nature. We've put links to some of these below.

Put technology on hold and get outside

It can be difficult to switch off from our phones and other technology, but it's important for us all to have time away from our screens.

Try to disconnect from your own devices at points during the day, especially when you are exploring your local area or nature spots, and encourage your child or young person to do the same.



Top tips for supporting your child or young person to connect with nature

Empower their ideas

Give your child or young person the space and encouragement to explore their ideas and interests. It's important for them to find out what they enjoy and how they like to connect with nature.

If that means getting a little muddy or wet playing outside, then try to encourage that, even if it means an extra load of washing!

Get creative

Nature inspires many people to be creative, be it through painting, drawing, photography or writing.

Why not encourage your child or young person to explore their creative side?

Connect with others

Nature can be enjoyed with others. Encourage your child or young person to think about activities they could plan with others like going for a walk with a friend, playing football, having a picnic outside or joining a community gardening group.

