

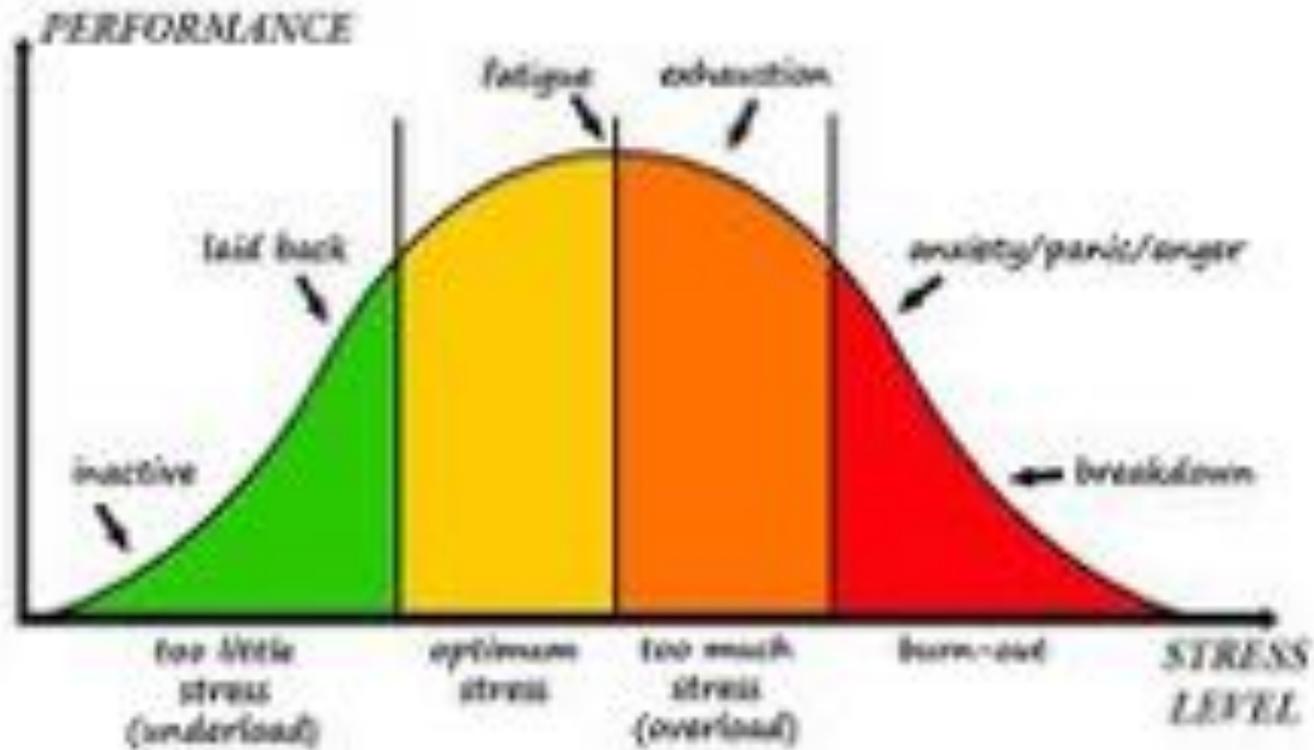
# Practical nature connection strategies for wellbeing

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# Overview

- Evidence for the wellbeing benefits of regularly connecting with the natural environment
  - Physical health benefits
  - Mental health benefits
  - Social health benefits
  - Occupational health benefits
- Maximising these benefits
- Practical strategies to regularly connect with nature for self-care and improved health and wellbeing



Stress-performance curve, adapted from Yerkes-Dodson law (1908)

# Recovery



## Four recovery experiences:

- Psychological detachment
- Relaxation
- Mastery
- Control

## Recovery profiles

## Enhanced in natural environments

# Theoretical Framework— Environmental Psychology

- Wilson's (1984), Biophilia Hypothesis: humans have an innate tendency to associate with nature. Evolutionary perspective in which humans' inborn need to affiliate with nature is argued to be an indirect confirmation of nature's beneficial effects.
- Ulrich's (1983), psychoneuroevolutionary model, based on his Stress Reduction Theory: natural environments induce positive emotions and soothe autonomic arousal as they have historically proven favorable for survival.
- Kaplan and Kaplan's (1989), Attention Restoration Theory: The main benefit nature has to offer is effortless attention and pleasurable fascination which provide individuals with the opportunity to restore attentional capacity and recover from mental fatigue.

# Nature benefits

**40 years of  
interdisciplinary  
research:**

Physical health

Mental health

Social health

Occupational health



# Physical health

- Cardiovascular health
- Reduced risk of obesity
- Reduced risk of diabetes
- Reduced risk of high blood pressure and respiratory disorders
- Enhanced sleep
- Recovery from the physiological symptoms of stress
- Exercise in greenspace enhances the usual benefits of physical activity

# Mental Health

Reduced levels of stress, anxiety and depression



Improved attention memory and cognition

Improved life satisfaction and wellbeing



# Social health

## **Increased:**

Prosocial, cooperative and helping behaviour

Community cohesion

Pro-environmental or environmentally responsible behaviors

## **Decreased:**

Violence and crime

Antisocial behaviour

# Occupational health

Reduced sick leave

Increased productivity

Increased job satisfaction

Recovery from work stress

Improvements in overall mental health

# Consistency of effects

Age

Gender

SES

Different countries & cultures

# Maximising benefits

Intense and/or extended

Green & Blue Space

Exercise

Social contact

Nature connection

# Nature connection

An individuals' interest in, fascination with, and desire for nature contact

A sense of self that includes nature

A broader concept encompassing emotions, experiences, and an understanding of human interconnectedness with all other living things

People's nature connectedness, but not their contact with nature, predicts a sense that life is worthwhile – nearly 4 times larger than the increase associated with higher socio-economic status

Nature Experiences Questionnaire

# Pathways to nature connection

## Senses:

Noticing and actively engaging with nature through the senses. Simply listening to birdsong, smelling wild flowers, or watching the breeze in the trees.

## Emotion:

Engaging emotionally with nature. Simply noticing the good things in nature, experiencing the joy and calm they can bring, and sharing feelings about nature with others.

## Beauty:

Finding beauty in the natural world. Simply taking time to appreciate beauty in nature and engaging with it through art, music or in words.

## Meaning:

Exploring and expressing how nature brings meaning to life. Simply exploring how nature appears in songs and stories, poems and art, or by celebrating the signs and cycles of nature.

## Compassion:

Caring for nature. Simply thinking about what we can do for nature and taking actions that are good for nature, such as creating homes for wildlife, supporting conservation charities and rethinking our shopping habits.

**In 5  
words,  
how do  
you  
engage  
with  
nature?**





# Strategies for self care

- Exercise in nature
  - walk/run/swim
  - combine with social walk with friend/outdoor bootcamp
- Outdoor yoga/meditation/mindfulness
  - Notice the good things
  - Grounding
- Gardening
- Nature sounds
- Horizon
- Micro-breaks
  - Nature views
  - Indoor plants
  - Pictures on walls or screensavers

# Adapting to current restrictions

- Exercise in any nearby greenspace including front/backyard
  - walk/stretch/bodyweight exercises
  - combine with talking to friend on the phone/videochat
- Outdoor yoga/meditation/mindfulness
  - While looking out the window, at a picture or plant, imagining a natural scene
  - Grounding - with an indoor plant or hold rock or seashell
- Gardening - make an indoor succulent garden or terrarium
- Nature sounds - play nature sounds like rain/birds etc.
- Horizon – rooftop if accessible and safe
- Micro-breaks
  - Nature views out the window, watch a nature doco
  - Indoor plants
  - Pictures on walls or screensavers

# Working from home

## Exercise

Take a video meeting outside on your lap-top or phone

Walk outside locally or in your own back/front yard on the phone/use handsfree

## Micro-breaks

Nature views from windows

Indoor home/office plants

Pictures in home office/other walls or screensavers work/personal computers  
Patios & balconies at home

## Other

Gardening (could be sprouts or herbs in the kitchen)

Nature sounds  
Yoga/meditation/mindfulness - outdoor/indoor versions

Grounding exercises - outdoor/indoor versions



# Key takeaway

What is one beneficial thing you learnt in tonight's webinar?

A piece of information? A strategy?





# Any questions?

You are welcome to email me if you have any questions that I haven't covered in this webinar.

# Leah Hague



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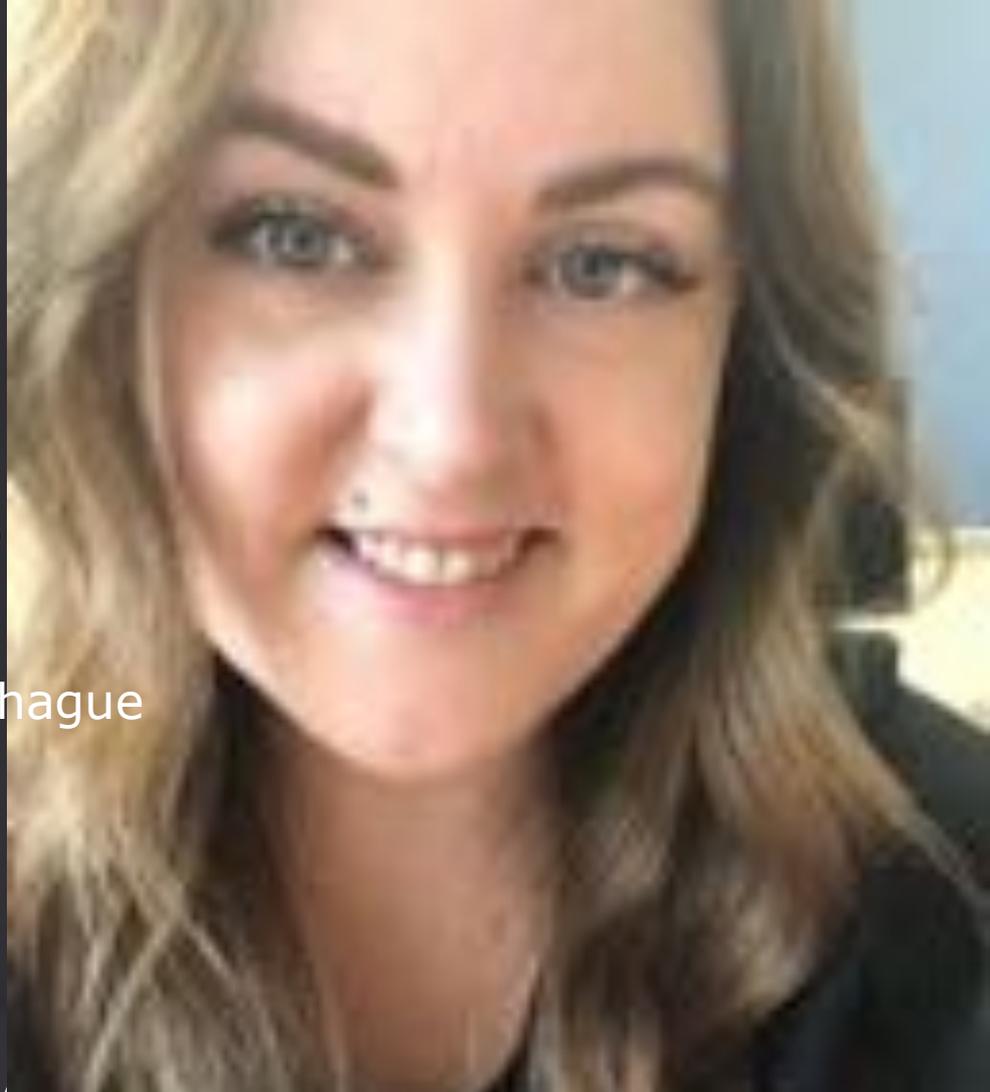


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# Credits

Special thanks to all the people who made and released these awesome resources for free:

- Presentation template by [SlidesCarnival](#)
- Photographs by [Unsplash](#)

### **Best for physical health:**

- Loureiro & Veloso (2017). Green exercise, health and well-being. In Fleury-Bahi et al. (Eds.), *Handbook of Environmental Psychology and Quality of Life Research* (pp. 149-169).
- Seymour (2016). The human–nature relationship and its impact on health: A critical review.
- WHO (2016). *Urban green spaces and health*.
- Lovell et al. (2018). *Health and the natural environment: A review of evidence, policy, practice and opportunities for the future*. United Kingdom: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

### **Best for mental health:**

- Gascon et al. (2015). Mental health benefits of long-term exposure to residential green and blue spaces: a systematic review.
- Mensah et al. (2016). Enhancing quality of life through the lens of greenspaces: A systematic review approach.

### **Best for social health:**

- Hunter et al. (2019). Environmental, health, wellbeing, social and equity effects of urban green space interventions: A meta-narrative evidence synthesis.
- Nadkarni et al. (2017). Impacts of nature imagery on people in severely nature-deprived environments.

### **Best for occupational health:**

- Gilbert et al, (2018). Building personal resources through interventions: An integrative review.

### **Best for age:**

- Taylor & Kuo (2006). Is contact with nature important for healthy child development? State of the evidence. In Spencer & Blades (Eds.) Children and their environments: Learning, using and designing spaces, (pp. 124-140).
- Dettweiler et al. (2017). Stress in school. Some empirical hints on the circadian cortisol rhythm of children in outdoor and indoor classes.
- Mutz et al. (2019). Outdoor adventures and adolescents' mental health: daily screen time as a moderator of changes.
- Yao, Y. F., & Chen, K. M. (2017). Effects of horticulture therapy on nursing home older adults in southern Taiwan.

### **Best for gender:**

- Burke et al. (2009). Pathways connecting neighborhood influences and mental well-being: Socioeconomic position and gender differences.

### **Best for SES:**

- Mitchell (2015) Neighborhood environments and socioeconomic inequalities in mental well-being

### **Best for different countries/culture:**

- Various international research, most effects have been replicated in other countries/cultures

### **Best for intense/extended experiences:**

- Bancroft et al. (2015). Association of proximity and density of parks and objectively measured physical activity in the United States: A systematic review.
- Chiang et al. (2017). Wild or tended nature? The effects of landscape location and vegetation density on physiological and psychological responses.

### **Best for nature connection:**

- Pritchard et al. (2019) The Relationship Between Nature Connectedness and Eudaimonic Well-Being: A Meta-analysis

**References not provided on the slides which have not been covered by the previous list.**

**Gardening:**

- Murray et al. (2019). The impact of care farms on quality of life, depression and anxiety among different population groups: A systematic review.
- Olson et al. (2019). From Vacant Lots to Community Gardens. Health and Well-Being in the neighborhood.

**Mindfulness in nature:**

- Nisbet et al. (2019). Mindfulness in nature enhances connectedness and mood.
- Richardson & Sheffield (2017). Three good things in nature: Noticing nearby nature brings sustained increases in connection with nature.

**Nature sounds:**

- Annerstedt (2013). Inducing physiological stress recovery with sounds of nature in a virtual reality forest — Results from a pilot study

**Micro-breaks:**

- Lee et al. (2018). Linking green micro-breaks with mood and performance: Mediating roles of coherence and effort.
- Genjo (2019). Feasibility study on mental health-care effects of plant installations in office spaces.

**Ideas for more activities:**

- [https://mentalwellbeing.initiatives.qld.gov.au/activities?field\\_activity\\_type\\_target\\_id\[26\]=26](https://mentalwellbeing.initiatives.qld.gov.au/activities?field_activity_type_target_id[26]=26)