

MENTAL HEALTH Bulletin

Why Nature is the theme for Mental Health Awareness Week 2021

During the long months of the pandemic, millions of us turned to nature. Research showed that going for walks outside was one of our top coping strategies and 45% of us reported being in green spaces had been vital for our mental health. Websites which showed footage from webcams of wildlife saw hits increase by over 2,000%. Wider studies also found that during lockdowns, people not only spent more time in nature but were noticing it more.

It was as if we were re-discovering at our most fragile point, our fundamental human need to connect with nature.

Even small contacts with nature can reduce feelings of social isolation and be effective in protecting our mental health and preventing distress. Despite this, many of us are not accessing or benefitting from nature. Teenagers, in particular, appear to be less connected with nature and around 13% of UK households have no access to a garden.

During Mental Health Awareness Week, at Shenley, we are asking you to consider three things to help you connect with nature and improve your mental health:

- **Experience nature:** take time to recognise and grow your connection with nature during the week. Maybe look for different flowers or shapes of trees on the way to school or a trip to the park. If you have a garden, try to take time for a cuppa and a chat outside. Encourage children to try to grow something. Morrison's are giving away free packets of sunflower seeds if you ask at the checkout. Children could have a competition to grow the tallest sunflower.
- **Share nature:** Talk about nature, take photographs outside, exercise in the garden or go for a walk. Buy a plant or some flowers for inside the house.
- **Protect nature:** Look at recycling where you can and save energy by turning off appliances and lights when you leave the room. Talk to children about the environment and look at ways everyone can contribute to protecting nature and our environment.

I hope that the weather is good to us this week, although even the rain and snow we have had recently are all part of our natural world!

In addition to this newsletter, a [top tips document](#) is also available on the school website to give you ideas on how to connect with nature and improve your mental health.

If you need any further information about mental health awareness week, please do not hesitate to get in touch on shenleyenquiry@e-act.org.uk

Best wishes

Ms Corbett-Lees

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