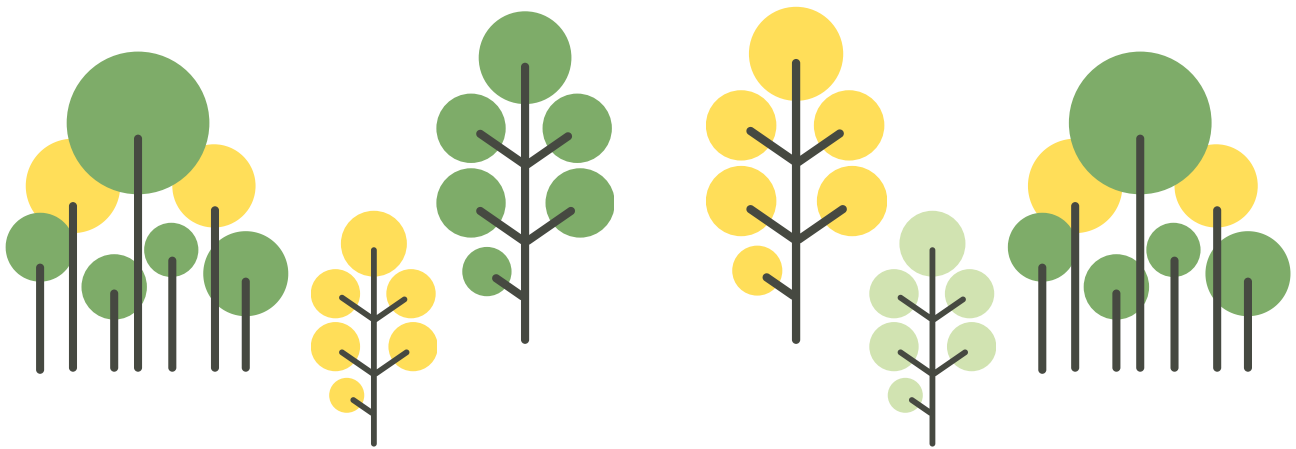


THE BIG BENEFITS OF NATURE

(and how they could
supercharge your life)



 *Nature's Ways*

natureswaysuk.com

WELCOME

It is widely accepted that healthy body = healthy mind and we know that exercise and healthy eating are the cornerstones of this. But, what if there was a simple way to really supercharge our health without paying a single penny?

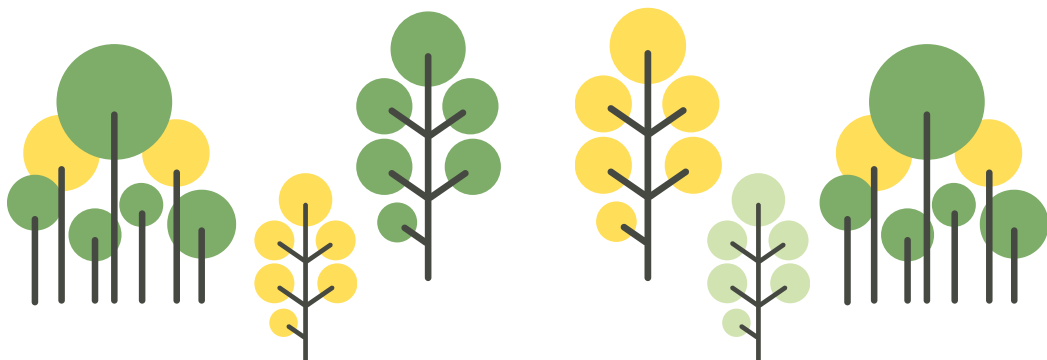
There is growing evidence to suggest that being in nature brings substantial, interconnected, benefits to both our physical and mental states. Being in nature is a way of completely refreshing ourselves without expensive subscriptions, entrance fees or memberships.

Nature is a precious and free resource that every single one of us can access to improve our own lives, and in turn, improve the lives of the people around us, strengthening and enhancing our health and relationships.

There is a large and growing body of ancient, modern and emerging evidence supporting the health benefits of being in nature. When these are layered on top of moderate exercise they form a powerful and accessible formula for protecting and enhancing your health and wellbeing.

The following pages contain a summary of theories and research. I have not carried out my own original research.

Some people may have opposing views - please do make up your own mind!



THE 10 BIG BENEFITS OF NATURE

1

YOU can be YOU

In nature, you can be you. The trees don't care what you wear or which political party you vote for - just wear what makes you comfortable and think what makes you happy! You can also adapt the way you approach nature to your own goals and interests. Maybe you want to work up to walking a couple of km a week or you want to learn 5 types of birdsong in a month. One day you might feel like you have superpowers, the next you are struggling to get going. YOU are the expert on yourself so do what you need to do and raise or lower the bar as you feel. Nature will be there, Like an old friend, to support you.

2

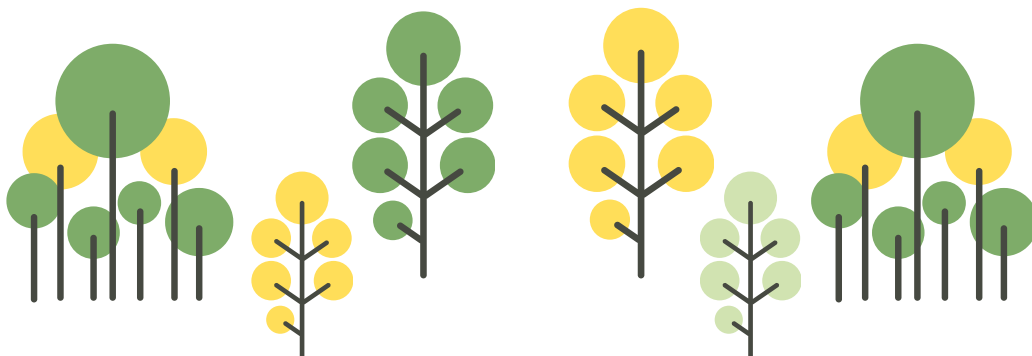
Step out

It's pretty obvious, but walking is a great form of getting your daily steps in, and it's accessible to most people. Walking outside almost inevitably involves an encounter with nature and whether it's the starting point to a bigger fitness goal or a form of exploration, it doesn't matter. Walking in nature loosens up muscles, gets your blood pumping and helps increase stamina – all great for heart health and general fitness!

3

Happy days

Endorphins and dopamine are two of the 'happy chemicals' that make up our emotions. Endorphins trigger dopamine production and dopamine rewards us for beneficial behaviour by flooding our body with happy feelings. It is produced when we exercise and when we have successful social interactions, so a nature based activity like walking with a group of like-minded people is a double-whammy dopamine boost. Positive interactions with animals have also been shown to stimulate dopamine production in humans!



4

Add some colour

Chromotherapy, or the use of colours to heal was practiced by ancient Egyptian and Chinese cultures and it is still used today as an alternative treatment on the basis that different colours promote the production of certain chemicals in our bodies. Whilst research in this area is ongoing, and feelings about colour are also influenced by personal experience and culture, it is generally agreed that strong colours such as intense reds, oranges and yellows excite the emotions whereas the blues and greens found in nature are relaxing. There is even some evidence that looking at greenery from inside a window can have a calming effect.

5

Sun yourself

Sunlight has long been used as a cure for both mental and physical ailments and Heliotherapy (helios is the Greek word for sun) was first used in the late 1800s to treat skin conditions and rickets. Today we know that Vitamin D (which is created when ultraviolet B rays from sunlight hit our skin) promotes bone health, reduces the risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and also lowers blood pressure by relaxing our blood vessels. Vitamin D is vital for health so going outside to soak up those natural rays is important, especially during the summer. Don't forget to be careful in the sun too, and be sure to apply the sun cream!

6

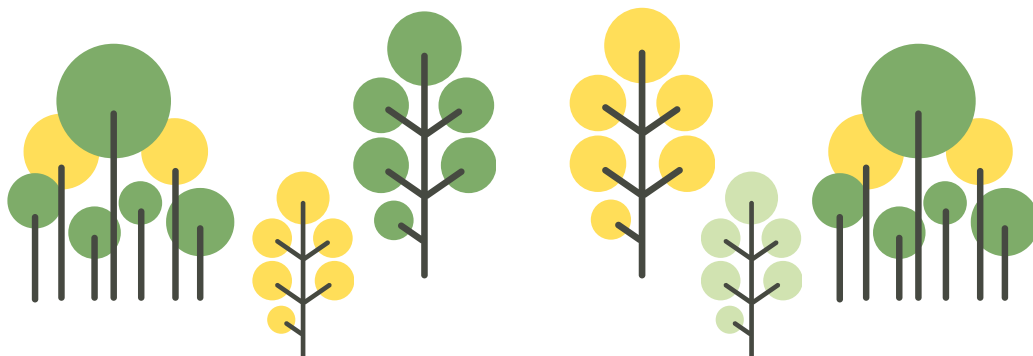
Play with pattern

Fractals are repeating patterns and they are found throughout nature, for example the veins on leaves, breaking waves on a beach and the arrangement of seeds in a sunflower head. Humans are drawn to fractals because they're easy to process, and looking at them gently distracts the brain into a semi-meditative state. It is said that looking at fractal patterns for 20 minutes can have a significant stress-reducing effect.

7

Get dirty

Playing in, breathing in and foraging in dirt is good for us! It helps us to access the chemical serotonin, which affects mood, appetite, memory and social behaviour. It has recently been found that tiny bacteria (mycobacterium) found in soil act as a natural antidepressant and promote the release of serotonin in parts of the brain. This is just one of a number of examples that support the 'hygiene hypothesis' which suggests that our modern lifestyles are 'too clean' and exposure to beneficial bacteria naturally present in the environment is helpful to our immune system.



8

Earth to humans

Could the solution to chronic illness, immune disorders, and inflammatory disease be right beneath our feet? The idea is that modern lifestyles (such as wearing insulating rubber soled shoes and walking on interior floorings) have separated humans from the electrons on the surface of the Earth. When we reconnect with them through earthing (or grounding), there is a beneficial health effect. Research is starting to show that direct physical contact with the Earth by walking barefoot or leaning against a tree can bring a number of benefits including better sleep and reduced pain.

9

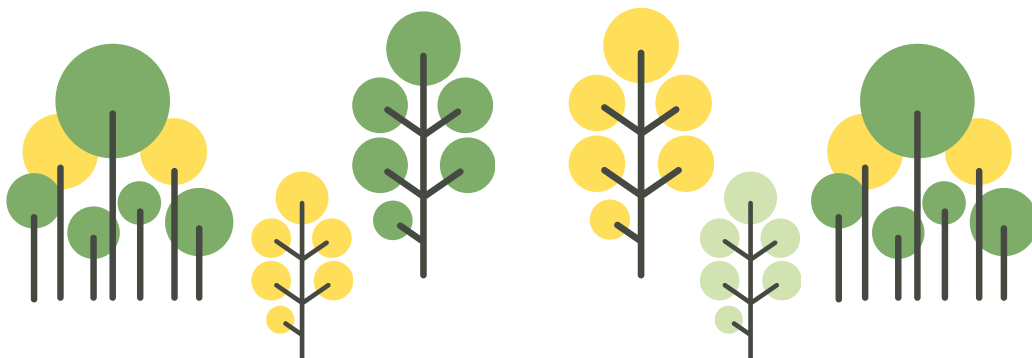
Plain simple

When you are next admiring a particularly beautiful landscape, look carefully at its components and you will likely note that it includes open views, water, scattered trees and you may be viewing from a high vantage point. The 'Savannah Theory of Happiness' suggests that we feel most comfortable in environments containing these features because they would have helped us feel safe during our hunter-gatherer days living on the plains of East Africa. This adaptation remains deeply ingrained today and such landscapes still trigger a sense of happiness and wellbeing.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is about placing yourself in the present moment and being aware of yourself and everything around you. It is a popular and accessible technique to help quiet a stressed mind and re-direct stressful thoughts. Nature is a brilliant aid for mindfulness as there is so much to pay attention to - tiny details like the pattern of petals on a daisy or arrangements of seeds on a grass head all offer ways to 'hook' yourself into thinking mindfully. Walking, sketching or journaling in nature can additionally help you slip into a 'flow state', immersing you fully in the present and away from the daily stresses and strains.

Why not place yourself in nature and see what happens?



FEELING INSPIRED?

I hope you enjoyed this guide and are feeling inspired to start bringing nature into your life. Why not have a look at some of my courses and workshops, or if you have an idea of your own, I would love to discuss it with you!

Find out more or contact me at: www.natureswaysuk.com



Teen Breathe. **Walking** **Journeys for** **Teenagers.**

My walks for teenagers provide the chance to escape, refresh and experience nature in a fully inclusive and safe environment.



Outdoor **Doubt-Buster.** **Online course** **(four weeks)**

This online course covers all the basics, giving you everything you need to be able to step out safely and with confidence.



Finding Nature **Near You.** **(one hour** **online course).**

This quick online course gives you the skills to locate natural places and to look for (and find) nature in your local area.



Three Walks to **Freedom.** **Tailored** **walking series** **for beginners.**

These tailored beginners walks travel through stunning landscapes and get progressively more more challenging in order to build skills and confidence.

