

# MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

*Mental Health and Wellbeing Newsletter*



## Connecting with Nature

*Mental Health Awareness Week 10th-16th May 2021*

**Why nature?** During the pandemic research showed that walking outdoors was the top coping strategy for mental health, with 45% reporting being in a green space as vital for our mental health. Websites show footage of wildlife from webcams increased by 2000%.

Nature is a central part to psychological and emotional health. It has a unique ability to bring consolation in times of stress as well as increasing creativity, empathy and sense of the world. It's how we open up with nature which can show its powerful benefits by reducing social isolation, preventing distress and protecting our mental health.

Nature is **not a luxury** and here is some ways you can make the most of nature in the upcoming weeks/year.

INSIDE THIS  
NEWSLETTER

MENTAL HEALTH  
AWARENESS WEEK -  
CONNECTING WITH  
NATURE. PAGE 1 & 2.

CANT SEE THE WOODS  
FOR THE TREES? PAGE 2  
& 3.

NEW TEAM MEMBER.  
PAGE 4.

Joined Up Care  
Derbyshire



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**What can you do?** During this week as a club or organisation why don't you challenge people to connect with nature in new ways they haven't before. To then take the time to notice the impact this connection with nature could of had on individuals mental health.

**How can you do it?** Stories are a great tool to influence change, share how nature supported your mental health with the people around you, myself or your club/organisation.

This can be something as simple as tending to a house plant, listening to the birds, smelling flowers, writing a poem about your favourite nature sport or just running around in a big open space. However you do it, share with **#ConnectWithNature**.

**Experience, Share and Talk about Nature this Mental Health Awareness Week.**

## Can't see the wood for the trees?

...it's a phrase we all know. Can't quite work things out? Unsure of the way forward? Maybe the answer is close by. All around us in fact.

Ancient pagans believed that benevolent spirits dwelled in trees and that if you "knocked" on one a friendly spirit would come to your aid if needed. "knock on wood" or "touch wood" - many of us still do it now. (Think Lord of The Rings).

**Next Page to learn more...**

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Tree “spirits” may or may not exist but what can’t be denied is that **TREES ARE GOOD FOR US** – trees can make you happier. Who doesn’t like a walk through some trees? The sounds, smells and sense of being connected to something else. Here are the researched reasons trees make us feel good:

- **Trees help us feel less stressed**

A study in Japan showed 15 minutes walking reduced anxiety, fatigue, hostility and symptoms of depression.

- **Trees improve your health**

Research has evidenced that walking in trees and woodland improves heart health. Blood pressure, cortisol levels, pulse rates can be lowered simply by being in the company of trees

- **Trees make us kinder**

Say what? How does that work? Well, more than one study has shown that engaging with trees and green spaces contributes to us interacting more positively with other people. Trees help us feel physically and mentally better. We feel kinder to ourselves, less stressed, allowing us to show kindness to others. Some studies have even shown clear links in the power of trees to reduce some aggressive crimes.

So let's appreciate trees, and good news we don't have to go far to find a wood that's waiting for you to visit. Use the link below to find a wood near you with The Woodland Trust wood locator:

**[Find A Wood - Visiting Woods - Woodland Trust](#)**

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# NEW TEAM MEMBER

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Hi all. I'm Sean and am new to the team at EVA and looking forward to the challenge.

I've spent over two decades in the voluntary sector most of which has been in the provision of front line services for the homeless here in the UK and in the Republic of Ireland. Alongside this I have more recently been involved in initiatives to tackle food poverty and social isolation throughout the East Midlands and most recently have been working with vulnerable EU nationals including the Roma, Gypsy and Travelling communities to secure their status in the UK post our leaving the EU.

Much of my work therefore has been in a direct public facing role where I have encountered so many in our community struggling with their mental health. Sadly, in my work with those in housing crisis I have had significant first-hand experience of suicide and also on a personal level. My brother Chris took his own life ten years ago.

I hope that through our project we will be able to reach more people in our community who need support with their mental health, to let them know what help is available and where to go, and ultimately to reduce suicide.

Outside of work I am married to Aileen who has also had a long career in the voluntary sector. We enjoy walking throughout this beautiful part of the country we live in and, when we can, we love to get to the coast for some solitude, peace and whatever the weather holds. My hobbies include reading, listening to music and watching a variety of sport. I'm also a keen gardener (with a particular interest in Clematis) and an enthusiastic bird watcher – it's all good for my mental health!

**For information on Mental Health Training or Action Plans/Policies Contact Either:**

**Christie** - [christie@erewashcvvs.org.uk](mailto:christie@erewashcvvs.org.uk)

OR

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