

BIOPHILIA

MENTAL HEALTH

Talking Points



Keywords: Nature; healing; biophilia; ecotherapy; mental health; self-esteem; dementia; children; mood; cognitive function; therapeutic horticulture.

Social Inclusion

Social inclusion and connection depends on four major factors: (Wilcock 2006)

Doing: engaging in a meaningful activity

Being: having self-regard and esteem

Becoming: building skills and self-efficacy

Belonging: having acceptance and interpersonal connection

Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH) facilitate social inclusion and connection through: (Diamant 2010)

- Affirmation: Gardening provides instant feedback, achievement (doing, becoming). Individuals receive affirmation from the group and the community, who share the experience (belonging).
- Choice and self-determination: Flexibility, adaptation. Activities and tools tailored to ability and needs of the user (doing), tasks can be carried out individually or collaboratively (becoming).
- Private and community space: allows solitude (being), but also allows the opportunity for social interaction (belonging).
- Physically and emotionally safety: Boundaries reinforce a sense of community within in the wider context. Private spaces discussed potentially enhance this safety (belonging).

Ecotherapy

- Access to nature teaches children empathy, stewardship of nature, increases self-esteem, buffers against stress, and makes healthier adults. (Chalquist 2009)
- Animals help children who are highly emotionally disturbed calm down and cooperate more while showing less antagonism and greater social competence; enable social interactions and less physiological stress; increase vitality, extraversion, and alertness (Chalquist 2009)
- Animal-assisted therapy decrease special care unit (SCU) Alzheimer's patients' agitation and aggression, produce better nutritional habits and weight management, increased alertness and social interaction, and decreased lethargy and agitation. (Chalquist 2009)
- Aromatherapy is a prolific complementary treatment for agitation, with significantly less risk or expense found in neuroleptics (Burns 2002)

Self-Esteem and Mood

- Green exercise improves both self-esteem and mood irrespective of duration, intensity, location, gender, age, and health status. (Barton 2009)
 - Self-esteem describes a person's sense of worth or value, which significantly impacts health and performance.
 - Mood is a factor of daily life that indicates mental health and strongly influences one's feelings, ability to appreciate the moment, coping skills, and quality of life.
- Both urban and rural green environments simultaneously improve self-esteem and mood, the presence of water results in greater improvements. (Barton 2009)

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