12 Top Tips TO SUPPORT MENTAL WELLBEING THROUGH NATURE Online and Offline

ONLINE

1. Give something back to nature
   A swift internet search should bring up details of any local conservation projects you could volunteer for, or litter-picking events that you could enrol the family in. It doesn’t have to be a long-term commitment; most schemes are grateful for every bit of help!

2. Tranquil streams
   Search your preferred music player for some soothing natural sounds. A few minutes’ gentle audio of rainfall, ocean waves or birdsong are all great ways of unwinding at the end of the day to get you ready for an excellent night’s sleep.

3. Give geocaching a go
   If you’ve not heard of it, geocaching is a modern twist on the traditional treasure hunt. Participants look for items hidden in outdoor locations, using a GPS-enabled device like a mobile phone or tablet. We’d recommend that an adult accompanies young adventurers!

4. Share what you see
   While you’re out exploring nature, take a photo or video of anything you find that inspires you. Not only will it be a nice memory for you to look back on, but you could also share it safely on social media and maybe motivate others to engage with the natural world!

5. Watch the stars
   Looking at the night sky can be incredibly calming. There are some comprehensive stargazing websites and apps to help you locate and recognise different stars. It can take 20 minutes or so before you can see stars fully in the dark, even on clear nights, so allow your eyes time to adjust.

6. Wildlife on the web
   A Google search will bring up lots of sites that stream webcam footage of nature. From seals to barn owls, rabbits to badgers, you can get an intimate, heart-warming view of all kinds of animal communities from inside the comfort of your own home.

OFFLINE

1. Ditch the phone
   Now the weather’s improving, go for a walk in a green space nearby. If you’re already familiar with your chosen route, you could always leave your phone at home to be completely free of the usual distractions and notifications.

2. Put down some roots
   Planting flowers, shrubs, herbs or vegetables can be extremely rewarding. Not only does it help us to connect with nature — it also provides an ongoing project to draw pleasure from. If your home doesn’t have a garden, no problem: a window box will do the job just as well!

3. A different kind of tweet
   Most gardens in the UK attract a wonderful variety of birds, and just watching them for a few minutes can be immensely therapeutic. There are some excellent apps and sites to help you name any species you don’t already know or even play a game: identifying bird song, like bird song bingo!

4. Feed your feathered friends
   Hang a bird feeder where you can easily see it from a window. Then enjoy the feelgood factor of saturated avian visitors perching where you can see them. For something more advanced, you could try building a nesting box to fix onto a fence or under a windowsill.

5. Park your worries
   If you’re lucky enough to live within easy travelling distance of a park, you’d benefit from using it! Whether it’s to play ball games, get on your bike, walk the dog or just get some fresh air into your lungs, the potential bonuses for mental health are enormous.

6. Art and soul
   Younger children will enjoy drawing or painting animals or nature scenes, or writing a poem or song lyrics about nature. For extra fun or crafting fun, you could collect natural materials — leaves, feathers, tree bark or seeds, for example — to use in your creations.

Meet Our Expert

Anna Bateman is passionate about placing prevention at the heart of every school, integrating mental wellbeing within the curriculum, school culture and systems. She is also a member of the advisory group for the Department for Education, advising them on their mental health green paper.


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