



EcoPsychology

The Healing Power of Nature



Holistic Psychiatrist

& artist, writer, healer, yogi, astrologer

About the Author

Kayse Budd, MD

Nature as Healer



Table of Contents

- Why This Topic
- Quotes
- About EcoPsychology
- Examples & Research
- Ecotherapy Stories
- Applying This to Your Life
- Guided Imagery Exercise
- Conclusion

Why this topic?

Nature, the original healer, is our our mother & our home. Because it IS our foundational energy on this planet, nature is inherently balancing. It's free, readily available (even as a houseplant), and eager to harmonize our energy back to a more peaceful state.





Beauty is soothing.

Purpose of this book:

Inspire you to
connect more to
nature and
experience more
happiness, joy, and
peace as a result.

“

Thoughts to ponder...



LOOK DEEP INTO NATURE,
AND THEN YOU WILL
UNDERSTAND
EVERYTHING BETTER.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

“

Thoughts to ponder...



IF ONE WAY BE BETTER
THAN ANOTHER, THAT
YOU CAN BE SURE IS
NATURE'S WAY.

ARISTOTLE

“

Thoughts to ponder...



THE EARTH LAUGHS IN
FLOWERS.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON



We are nature

EcoPsychology can be defined as the study of the intersection between humans and the natural world.

It is an extension of Environmental Psychology, which is the study of how environments impact human thought and behavior.



We are nature _____

EcoPsychology can be thought of as a fusion of ecology (the study of living organisms and the environments they inhabit) and psychology (the study of the human mind & its functions).



Let's start with
something easy...



Psychologist Craig Knight at U of Exeter in England

Proved that houseplants
in the office

Improve productivity (15-38%),
reduce sick days, enhance
purpose & reduce stress.

Personalizing one's workspace with art and PLANTS

- Increases creativity 45% and wellbeing by 47%
- Reduces anxiety
- Enhances commitment to the company/employer
- Increases focus, concentration, and enjoyment



This data came from experiments conducted at the famous Chelsea flower show.

Plants



Connect us to nature in a real but portable way.



Inspire us with their beauty and vitality.



Remind us of who we are at a deeper level. We are of the earth & also beyond it.

Do you live near a Green Space?



GREEN SPACES

HAVE SIGNIFICANT MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS

Reduce incidence and severity
depression, anxiety, stress, & psychosis.

REDUCE VIOLENCE IN NEIGHBORHOODS

Promote a sense of community and
reduces isolation.

ENHANCE HEALTH & OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE

Reduce cardiovascular mortality and
obesity. Increase physical activity.

M Gascon, et al. Mental health
benefits of long-term exposure to
residential green and blue spaces: a
systematic review

[Int J Environ Res Public Health.](#)

2015 Apr 22;12(4):4354-79.

Visiting a forest is even better!!



Shinrin Yoku

"FOREST BATHING"

Extensively studied and very popular in Japan.

IMMUNE & HEALTH BENEFITS

Increases NK cells, reduces allergies/asthma, increases anti-cancer proteins, reduces incidence of cold/flu. Lowers BP and heart rate. Improves pain. Reduces blood glucose in diabetics.

ENHANCES MOOD & REDUCES STRESS

Reduces cortisol. Increases serotonin. Improves sense of wellbeing & subjective sense of one's beauty/appearance.

M Hansen, et al. Shinrin-Yoku (Forest Bathing) and Nature Therapy: A State-of-the-Art Review. [Int J Environ Res Public Health](#).2017 Jul 28;14(8):851.

EcoTherapy

APPLIED ECOPSYCHOLOGY -CAN BE MANY THINGS

Walks in parks, plants in an office, living near a green space, vacations in remote spots, forest bathing, camping, shamanic ceremonies & healing rituals, psychotherapy outdoors, & living more aligned with nature in any way.

The point is to connect more with nature.

EcoTherapy

APPLIED ECOPSYCHOLOGY -CAN BE MANY THINGS

Ayurveda and really all ancient healing modalities were ecotherapy. They were/are natural and connected with plants, cycles of the earth, food, animals, patterns in nature, etc. Aligning ourselves with nature, we align with balance.

Balance is HEALTH.

Physiologic Benefits



INCREASED IMMUNITY

Increase in IgA and
NK Cells

REDUCED CORTISOL

Significant drops in
cortisol from
looking at nature,
hearing it, and/or
being in it.

INCREASED SEROTONIN

Increased
serotonin from
spending time in
nature, including
parks & especially
at beaches.



Emotional Benefits.

People who spend even 20 minutes with nature or in a green space are less reactive & less anxious. They report feeling more satisfied with life and (interestingly) more likable.

Social Benefits

People who have spent time in nature are more generous. They are more likely to smile at and stop to help a stranger. This has been studied and is true even after people look at photos of nature.

J Zhang et al. An Occasion for Unselfing: Beautiful Nature Leads to Prosociality. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 2014. (37): 61-72.



M. STIER-JARMER,
ET AL.
(A recent review)

The Psychological and Physical Effects of Forests on Human Health: A Systematic Review of Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2021 Feb 11;18(4):1770.



11 REVIEWS, 131
DIFFERENT
INTERVENTIONS:

BENEFITS:

- Cardiovascular system (lower BP/heart rate, increased heart rate variability)
- Immune system (increased NK cells)
- Mental health (improved mood, stress, anxiety)

RESEARCH



ADDITIONAL
BENEFITS:

- Some benefits for atopic dermatitis/allergies & asthma
- Induction of intracellular anti-cancer proteins

Just looking at photos of nature is healing

- Reduced activity in right orbito-frontal cortex (hyperactive in anxiety and depression)
- Increased feelings of "comfort" & "relaxation"

R Yamashita, et al. The Mood-Improving Effect of Viewing Images of Nature and Its Neural Substrate. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2021 May 20;18(10):5500.





Listening to sounds

Sounds of nature are restorative. Mood is improved & focus/cognition enhanced.

Smelling the smells - aim for a full sensory experience in nature. Interact with nature. Appreciate it. Create a gratitude loop, and look for signs that nature receives your love. Things may look brighter, sounds could become clearer. You could find a feather on your path. Butterflies may land on your hand. If you feel blissful by the end of your time in nature, ECOTHERAPY was achieved!



Interesting Stories

EARLY ECO-THERAPY IN THE DESERT WITH
A BORDERLINE PD PATIENT AND TWO
BIPOLAR PATIENTS.

As I was getting interested in the power and potential of ecotherapy I did a few experiments. I took three different patients in my holistic psychiatry practice in Tucson out to this spot (separately) for special nature-based sessions. We walked along a nature trail, meditated, and had a modified psychotherapy session on a large, flat boulder. I suggested the patients connect with several different animals, reptiles, cacti, and trees to feel the distinctly different energies of each. I encouraged them to reflect on how different plants, animals, etc. bring out subtly different energies in us, depending on the fundamental characteristics of the plant or animal. This is part of Native American spirituality and shamanism.

We also explored how much calmer and more receptive the patients felt out in nature vs. in my office. Each of these patients suffered from significant anxiety, and each of them was notably calmer during their nature session compared to the norm. The nurturing impact of nature made it significantly easier for me to do my job. I "prescribed" returning to this same spot at least once a week for all three of them. I believe the sessions made a lasting impact that inspired confidence in the healing power of just being in and connecting to nature.



THINGS YOU CAN DO for RX "NATURE TIME"



BEACH DAYS

If you live on the coast, there are evidence-based improvements in mood and anxiety by spending even 20 minutes by the ocean. Streams, rivers, and lakes are good alternatives if you live inland.



BOTANICAL GARDENS

Flowers have been proven to improve mood and make people feel happier and more hopeful. Mid-week trips to a nearby botanical garden is a wonderful way to experiment with the healing power of flowers.



HIKES

Time in the mountains is invigorating, elevating, and inspiring. If you live in an area with access to mountains, climbing one is definitely therapeutic. Walks in the woods along nature trails (at neutral elevations) are also beneficial, though less stimulating.



GUIDED IMAGERY EXERCISE

Let's journey to the jungle...

Please join me in this guided imagery journey into the rainforest in Costa Rica. Read through the script first, then do the meditation from memory. If you want to find jungle or rainforest sounds on Spotify or another streaming service, that may accentuate the experience.

Sit upright in a quiet place, close your eyes, and take a few deep breaths. Begin to imagine that you are walking along a jungle path through a beautiful, tropical forest. Everything is green in all directions. You can hear the sounds of birds and insects all around you. There are bird songs you've never heard before. It is inspiring and uplifting to your spirit! The ground is moist under your feet, and every step opens up a fresh aroma of earthy smells. Occasionally you see patches of colorful flowers in places where the sunlight dapples through the trees.

You come to a place where there are mossy rocks by a small stream. Sit by this stream. Listen to the sound of the water cascading over the rocks. Feel yourself getting calmer and filled with gratitude at the simple pleasure of hearing the sound of water. Rest here in quiet meditation for several minutes. If there are any worries on your mind, bring them into your awareness and bring your hands to your heart. Offer your concerns to the Spirit of the water and to your own higher self. Release them with an outbreath and with intention to surrender to the wisdom of the Universe.



Nature teaches both harmony and surrender. The practice of surrender will heal even the most severe anxiety. Learning to trust the Universe to support what is meant to happen and block what is not brings profound peace and cultivates true happiness.

Further Directions to Explore:



Ayurveda

A nature-aligned system of medicine



Herbalism

Plants are medicine



Nutrition

Eat as close to the earth as possible



Shamanism

Connect to the rhythms of the earth

If interested in developing a personal healing relationship with nature, consider diving deeper with these topics.

Final Thoughts to Ponder

Human beings are a part of nature; thus, connecting to nature will always be a homecoming. Spending time in nature is a way to reset and restore your nervous system, immune system, cardiovascular system, and mood. Really, all systems of the body are benefited by time in nature or natural approaches, including whole foods and herbs.

Astrology, which is one of my greatest passions, is a sort of applied ecotherapy. It explores the influence of star and planetary patterns on our minds, bodies, and lives. Stars and planets are nature! Understanding how we fit into the world of biology and ecology is taken just a few steps further in understanding how humans interact and fit into the cosmos.

I hope you allow this little ebook to reinforce your own connection and commitment to the healing power of nature. All of life's energies are illustrated in nature. The principles that operate in the natural world also operate in our own bodies and lives. If studied, they can make our lives better. At the minimum, looking at beauty is soothing, hearing birds is calming, smelling flowers is inspiring, touching trees is grounding, and tasting farm fresh food is invigorating.

Orienting towards nature will nearly always bring peace.

Thanks for Reading!!

Connect with me!

ONLINE

www.kaysebudd.com

INSTAGRAM

@mysticmandala

EMAIL

mysticmandala@gmail.com



Green Blessings to You!

