



Seasonal Affective Disorder

As we move through the shorter winter days, many of us will find that it's becoming harder to get outside. However, getting fresh air, at least once a day, is essential to our wellbeing and mental outlook.

Spending time outdoors in nature has been found to help with multiple mental health problems, including anxiety and depression. Often this is due to combining regular physical activity and social contact with being outside in nature.

Being outside in natural light can also be helpful if you experience seasonal affective disorder (SAD), a type of depression that affects people during particular seasons or times of year.

Spending time in green spaces or bringing

nature into your everyday life can benefit both your mental and physical wellbeing. Running, walking, hiking or gardening can help to improve your mood, reduce feelings of stress or anger, and help you to feel more relaxed.

Getting out and doing regular exercise, even if this is only walking, will also improve your physical health and should also impact and improve your confidence and self-esteem too. Likewise getting out for walks with a friend or neighbour can also help forge new connections and ensure you are not feeling isolated during lockdown.

Try this today

1

Don't feel like getting active outside? Why don't you try wrapping up warm and doing some journalling on a picnic bench in the park or in your garden?

2

To start a journal, you just need to be willing to write. You don't even need to be able to write well; you just need to want to do it.

3

Try sitting down outside with a warm coat or a blanket (or both!) and see what words start to flow. You might just surprise yourself. mental outlook.



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If you really don't want to get outside or can't go out for whatever reason. Here are five ways you can feel closer to nature from inside your own home:



Buy flowers or potted plants for your home

Apart from being aesthetically pleasing some plants, such as Mother-in-laws tongue (Sansevieria Trifasciata), are actually rated by NASA for their air purifying qualities and are credited with removing benzene, formaldehyde and other harmful toxins out the air.



Decorate with nature

Leaves, flowers, feathers, tree bark or seeds and use them to decorate your living space or use them for art projects. Where possible, involve and bring together the family to do this. It will be a great bonding exercise too.



Take photos of nature

Use them as backgrounds on a mobile phone or computer screen or print them out and put them up on your walls.



Listen to natural sounds

Recordings or apps that play birdsong, ocean waves or rainfall can be great to reconnect us with nature. They can be great sleep aids too.

The one thing we ask you to do today if you do nothing else... be kind to yourself this month.

Accept that you it's OK to feel anxious or low even if everyone else around you is full of the festive cheer. Try to be self-compassionate and allow yourself the room to experience these feelings.

It is often easier to deal with difficult feelings if you recognise them and accept them. And remember you are not alone, just because others aren't talking about being stressed or sharing their anxieties, doesn't mean you are the only one feeling like this.



