



**Naturally Flourishing**

**Nature Connectedness**

# Learning Outcomes

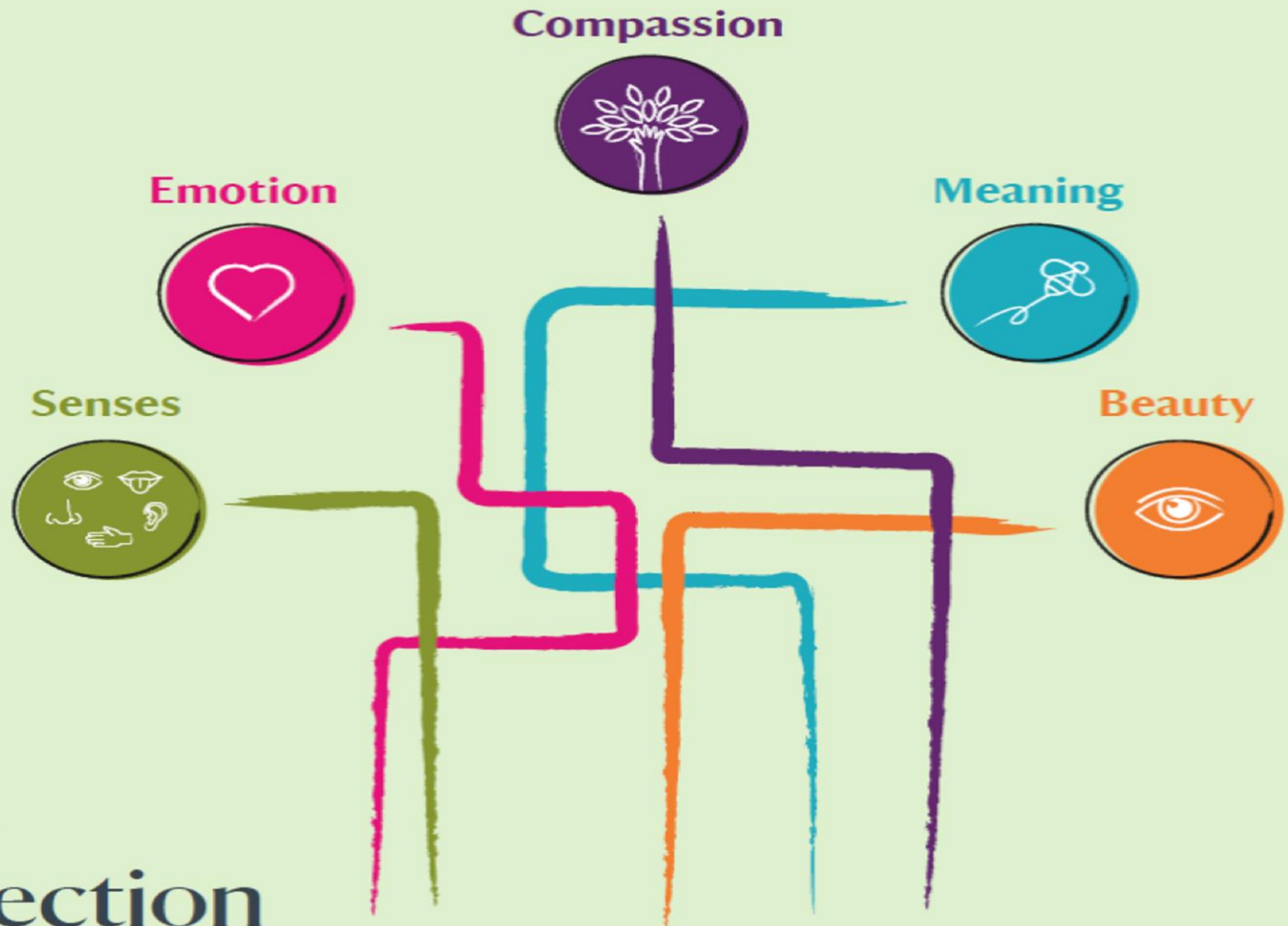
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- **Develop awareness of how connectedness with nature can promote flourishing**
- **Learn how to measure your sense of connectedness with nature**
- **Create a toolkit of interventions to increase your connectedness with nature**





National  
Trust



The five  
pathways to  
nature connection

**“Our story is nature.**

The human relationship with the rest of nature matters for our **well-being**, yet the climate and environment emergency shows that the human relationship with the rest of nature is broken.

To fix it we need a new more **connected relationship** that recognises that we are part of nature. This is a relationship that will bring both **pro-nature behaviours** and **improved mental wellbeing**.

**Nature connectedness** captures that relationship between people and the rest of nature.

Nature connectedness is a **measurable psychological construct** that moves beyond contact with nature to an individual's sense of their **relationship with the natural world.**

(Miles Richardson)



## The biological basis for human values of nature' (Kellert, 1993)

Value	Brief Definition	Function
Utilitarian	Practical and material exploitation of nature.	Physical sustenance, security.
Naturalistic	Direct experience and exploration of nature.	Curiosity, discovery, recreation.
Ecologistic/Scientific	Systematic study of structure, function, and relationship in nature.	Knowledge, understanding, observational skills.
Aesthetic	Physical appeal and beauty of nature.	Inspiration, harmony, security.
Symbolic	Use of nature for language and thought.	Communication, mental development.
Humanistic	Strong emotional attachment and "love" for aspects of nature.	Bonding, sharing, cooperation, companionship.
Moralistic	Spiritual reverence and ethical concern for nature.	Order, meaning, kinship, altruism.
Dominionistic	Mastery, physical control, dominance of nature.	Mechanical skills, physical prowess, ability to subdue nature.
Negativistic	Fear, aversion, alienation from nature.	Security, protection, safety, awe.
Theistic	Nature reflects the will of supernatural forces or deities who govern destiny; fatalistic belief.	Order, meaning, security, awe.

## **Beyond Knowing Nature – Five Pathways to Nature Connection (Richardson, 2017)**

- **The research started with two online surveys (total n = 321) of engagement with, and valuing of, nature activities structured around the Nine Values of the Biophilia Hypothesis (Kellert, 1993).**
- **Contact with nature, emotion, meaning and compassion, (resulting from engagement with natural beauty), increased nature connectedness.**
- **Interestingly: knowledge based activities (observing nature and increasing understanding), utilitarian (growing veg and hunting) and dominionistic activities (using nature for sport) did not increase nature connectedness.**



## The Results

- **Contact** – The act of engaging with nature through the senses for pleasure e.g. listening to birdsong, smelling wild flowers, watching the sunset.
- **Beauty** – Engagement with the aesthetic qualities of nature, e.g. appreciating natural scenery or engaging with nature through the arts.
- **Meaning** – Using nature or natural symbolism (e.g. language and metaphors) to represent an idea, thinking about the meaning of nature and signs of nature, e.g. the first swallow of summer.
- **Emotion** – An emotional bond with, and love for nature e.g. talking about, and reflecting on your feelings about nature.
- **Compassion** – Extending the self to include nature, leading to a moral and ethical concern for nature

## Regular Contact with Nature

- Contact with natural environments has been identified as a pathway to connecting with nature
- Having regular access to natural spaces, both wild and managed,
- Physical and adventurous activities in nature have also been found to promote nature connection.
- There is a need to consider how more ‘mundane’ or ‘nearby nature’ can be valued and provide an everyday route for people to better understand their connection to nature. Embracing of the “mundane nature” found within human landscapes. Mundane nature can remind us of our direct connection to larger ecosystem functions.

**“Many naturalists start their journeys on ditch banks and in empty lots.”**

**(Nabhan, 1994)**



## Engaging with Nature's Beauty

- The aesthetic appeal of nature plays an important role in promoting nature connectedness.
- Appreciation for natural beauty includes: noticing and noting to capturing nature's beauty in various artistic forms (e.g. mindfulness).
- Spend some time each day noticing three beautiful things in the nearby natural environment, and discussing them with others.

## Developing Compassion for the Non-Human

- Compassion is a complex mental state that begins to develop in childhood and continues to develop throughout the lifespan, includes nurturing compassion towards non-human nature.
- Developing compassion for nature includes: contact with nature and care for non-human nature, quiet observation of animals in their natural environment, perspective taking (which is the first step towards developing empathy) and anthropomorphising nature (the process of attributing human qualities to non-human entities).



## Practising Mindfulness

- Significant links have been found between mindfully engaging with nature and nature connectedness.
- Links have been found between mindfulness with sustainable behaviours.

### Mindfulness:

- Promotes better self-world connection and awareness of actions,
- Leads away from automaticity, resulting in a greater ability to regulate one's behaviour,
- Encourages openness in thinking and perspective taking associated with an increase in nature connectedness,
- Provides the skills to appreciate nature's beauty more deeply.

# Emotion

- **Nature Connectedness can lead to:**
  - **Increased effective interpersonal communication**
  - **Stronger, deeper emotional bonds**
  - **Deeper emotional attachment**
  - **Increased empathy**
  - **Reduced conflict and aggression**
  - **Improved psychological well-being: emotional regulation, increased attention, positive thinking**
  - **Improved stress management and resilience**
  - **Improved mood**
  - **Deeper sense of self**
  - **Increased gratitude**
  - **Increased insight into the negative and positive aspects of life.**



## Measuring Nature Connectedness

**Mayer & Frantz (2004) The connectedness to nature scale: A measure of individuals' feeling in community with nature**

**Nisbet, Zelenski and Murphy (2009) The nature relatedness scale: Linking individuals' connection with nature to environmental concern and behavior**

Please answer each of these questions in terms of *the way you generally feel*. There are no right or wrong answers. Using the following scale, in the space provided next to each question simply state as honestly and candidly as you can what you are presently experiencing.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly agree
___ 1.	I often feel a sense of oneness with the natural world around me.			
___ 2.	I think of the natural world as a community to which I belong.			
___ 3.	I recognize and appreciate the intelligence of other living organisms.			
___ 4.	I often feel disconnected from nature.			
___ 5.	When I think of my life, I imagine myself to be part of a larger cyclical process of living.			
___ 6.	I often feel a kinship with animals and plants.			
___ 7.	I feel as though I belong to the Earth as equally as it belongs to me.			
___ 8.	I have a deep understanding of how my actions affect the natural world.			
___ 9.	I often feel part of the web of life.			
___ 10.	I feel that all inhabitants of Earth, human, and nonhuman, share a common 'life force'.			
___ 11.	Like a tree can be part of a forest, I feel embedded within the broader natural world.			
___ 12.	When I think of my place on Earth, I consider myself to be a top member of a hierarchy that exists in nature.			
___ 13.	I often feel like I am only a small part of the natural world around me, and that I am no more important than the grass on the ground or the birds in the trees.			
___ 14.	My personal welfare is independent of the welfare of the natural world.			



## **nature relatedness scale – short form (nr-6)**

name:

date:

**instructions:** For each of the following, please rate the extent to which you agree with each statement, using the scale from 1 to 5 as shown below. Please respond as you really feel, rather than how you think 'most people' feel.

		disagree strongly	disagree a little	neither agree nor disagree	agree a little	agree strongly
1.	My ideal vacation spot would be a remote, wilderness area	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I always think about how my actions affect the environment	1	2	3	4	5
3.	My connection to nature and the environment is a part of my spirituality	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I take notice of wildlife wherever I am	1	2	3	4	5
5.	My relationship to nature is an important part of who I am	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I feel very connected to all living things and the earth	1	2	3	4	5

NR-6 score is calculated by averaging all 6 items (total score divided by 6) =

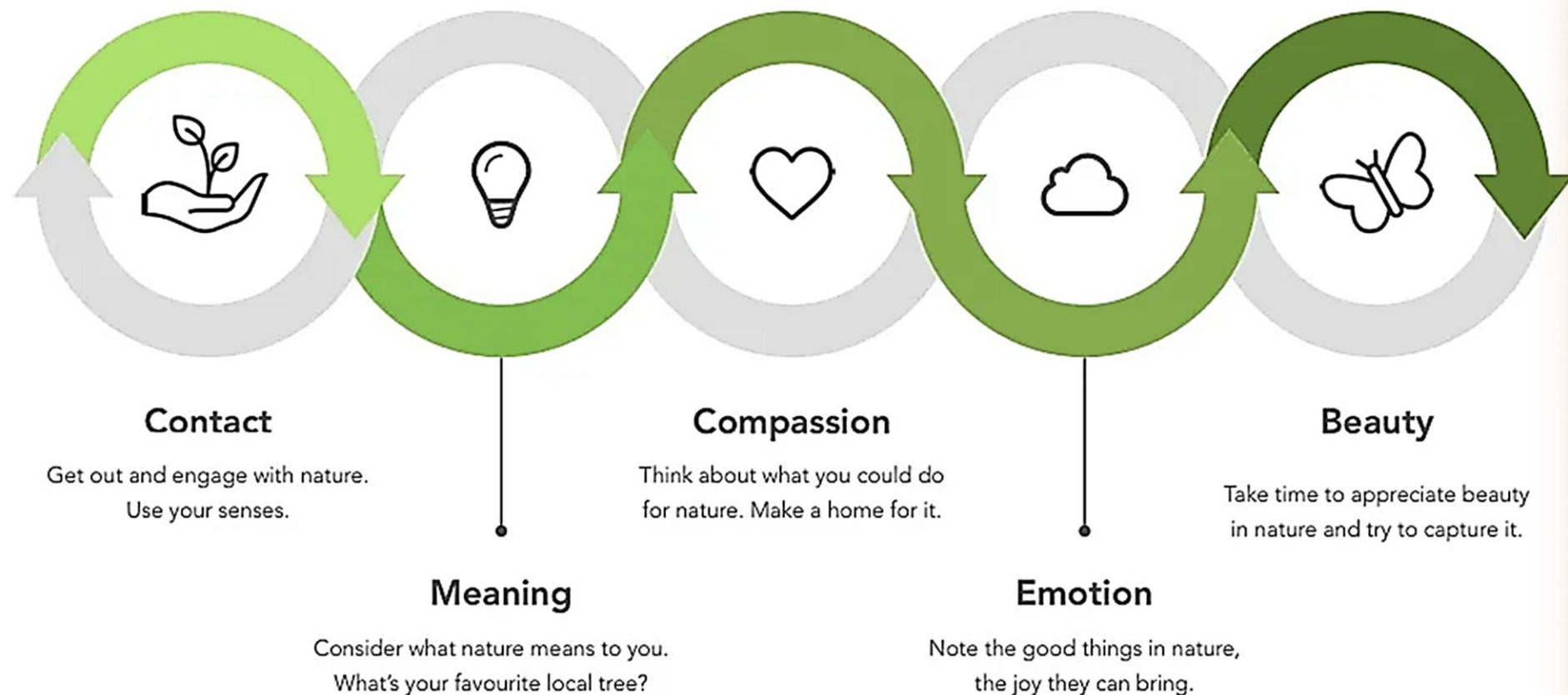
In 7 surveys involving about 1,000 people, average scores ranged from ~3.0 to 3.5, with 70% scoring between ~2.2 to 4.3.

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Nisbet, E. and J. Zelenski (2013). "The NR-6: a new brief measure of nature relatedness." *Frontiers in Psychology* 4(813).

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# 5 ways to get nature connected





## **Senses**

**Take the time to pause and notice the world around us:**

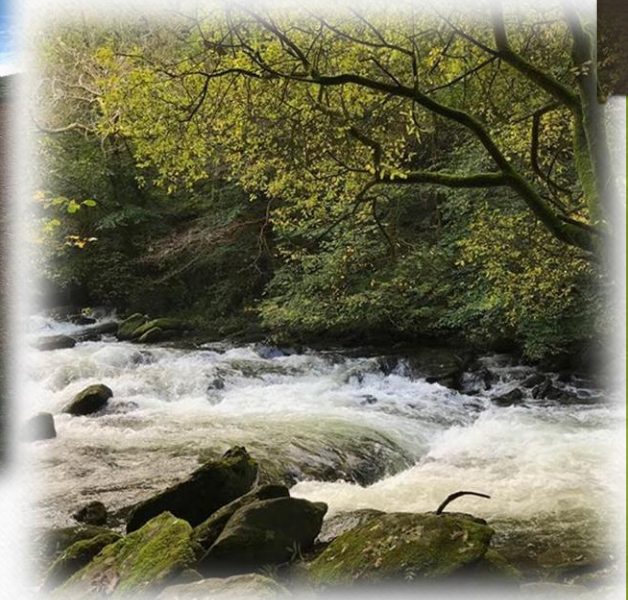
**Listen to birds (Mute swans; Egyptian, Greylag and Canadian geese) water lapping against the shore...**

**Smell the wild flowers, pine needles, geosmin...**

**Touch the soft leaves, the cold water, the wind at your face...**

**Taste a rain drop, wild garlic or freshly picked apple...**

**Appreciate the vivid greens, subtle greys and colourful Mallards**





## Meaning

Our minds continually extract meaning and nature inspires the greatest poetry and art – nature clearly means a great deal to us.

Gregory Bateson noted that when finding meaning we're engaged in thinking that is most in tune with nature – metaphor is the language of relationships, the language of nature.

Meaning can include the properties of a place, natural symbolism to represent an idea and the signs of nature.

Meaning can pull together the other pathways – birdsong is what emotions sound like.

Prompt people to consider what nature means to them. What's their favourite local tree & why?





## Compassion

**When connected to nature our sense of self can be extended to include nature.**

**This leads to a moral and ethical concern for nature as harming nature is harming ourselves.**

**Compassion can range from making ethical product choices to being directly concerned with animal welfare; consider what you could do why not make a home for nature?**



## Emotion

Foster an emotional bond with, and love for nature.

There are many creative ways to achieve this, but it can include talking about, and reflecting on your feelings about nature.

Helping people find wonder in nature, the joy and calm it can bring.

Simply highlighting the pleasure people find in nature, rather than the setting out the facts and figures.

Further guidance comes from our work into what people find to be the 'good things in nature' – the sensations, changes over the seasons. changing weather, active wildlife, colours and beauty.





## Beauty

Activities that engage people with the aesthetic qualities of nature.

Appreciating natural scenery or simply noting the beauty of a beetle before labelling it – trying to capture nature's beauty through art or in words.

Research shows that the wellbeing benefits of nature connectedness are significant for those people attuned and engaged with nature's beauty.





## Interestingly...

- Facts, figures, identification and knowledge does not lead to nature connectedness. After all, what types of lasting relationships are based on facts and figures? However, knowledge based activities are often used in an attempt to engage people with nature.
- Latest research has revealed there is a need to go beyond activities that simply engage people with nature through knowledge and identification, to pathways that develop a more meaningful and emotional relationship with nature.
- There is a need to move beyond superficial contact with nature or focussing on knowledge and identification when fostering a relationship with nature.





As humans our story is nature. Our relationship with the rest of nature matters for our well-being, yet the climate and environment emergency shows that the human relationship with the rest of nature is broken. To fix it we need a new more connected relationship that recognises that we are part of nature. A relationship that brings both pro-nature behaviours and improved mental wellbeing. The pathways to nature connectedness provide a route for people to develop that new relationship. A new relationship with nature that moves away from utility and control, beyond knowledge and identification. A new closer, healthier and more sustainable relationship with nature comes through noticing, feeling, beauty, celebration and care.





Pathway	This pathway is about...	We're encouraging everyone to...	Things you can try...
<b>Contact</b> 	Tuning in to nature through the senses.	Notice and actively engage with nature, spending time fully experiencing nature with all their senses.	Listening to birdsong, smelling wild flowers, watching the breeze in the trees, going barefoot, tasting the fruits of nature.
<b>Emotion</b> 	Feeling alive through the emotions nature brings.	Engage emotionally with nature. To find happiness and wonder in nature. To note the good things in nature, the joy and calm that they can bring. To embrace nature at times of sorrow.	Finding joy in wildlife at play, taking a moment to feel calm with nature. Find wonder in a spiders' web. Reflect and share your feelings about nature with others.
<b>Beauty</b> 	Noticing nature's beauty.	Find beauty throughout the natural world. Every day, take time to appreciate beauty in nature, engage with it through art or in words.	Create some wild art, paint the amazing colours of insects, take a photo of a flower, visit a place with an amazing view.
<b>Meaning</b> 	Nature bringing meaning to our lives.	Explore and express how nature brings meaning to their lives. To notice how nature appears in songs and stories, poems and art. How special places are natural spaces. To celebrate the mystery, signs and cycles of nature.	Create a story about a tree, map the journey of a bee, find folktales about nature, celebrate the longest day, the first swallow of summer or the first fall of leaves. Let nature be your story.
<b>Compassion</b> 	Caring and taking action for nature.	Think about what they can do for nature. To take actions that are good for nature. Recognise shared life stories and be part of the community of nature.	Feed the birds, plant some wildflowers, take part in a beach clean, dig a pond, put up a nest box, watch a wild family grow. Support conservation charities or buy eco-friendly products.



# The Positive Effects Of Nature On Your Mental Well-Being

Chowdhury (2021)

“Staying close to nature, observing all the little and significant elements of it, and appreciating it from the very core, is therapeutic and self-healing.

Even by saying and doing nothing, we can learn so much from connecting to our natural surroundings. It gives us the perspective for healthier living, the motivation to carry on, and the energy to keep trying. For there is no bond more primitive and ingrained in us than our love for nature and nature’s care for us.”

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