
NATURE AND MENTAL HEALTH: TO WHAT EXTENT CAN NATURE AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES IMPROVE THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DEPRESSION?

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Background:

Mental health problems affects one in four people, with the most common being depression with anxiety. Such conditions can often be detrimental to the individual in their socialising, education, relationships, general demeanour and outlook on life.

In this poster we explore the effects of depression on young people (aged 16-25) and the self-management strategies used in overcoming depressive symptoms, with focus on the effectiveness of nature, outdoor activities and exercise.

Introduction:

In this literature review we specifically choose the age group 16-25. We believe these ages are important in a person's life, as many people in this age range attend school and university (especially true for developed countries), and use this period to create their identity. Depression experienced in this age range can influence an individual's characteristics and social interactions, and so shape their future friendships and relationships.

Method: We looked into papers dealing with Natural therapies as early intervention in people diagnosed of depression/anxiety.

Reliable information, relevant books, journals and websites were used, in addition to databases PsycINFO, Pubmed and ScienceDirect for online articles. We looked at effectiveness of self-management strategies. Song links have been made between exposure to natural environments and participation in outdoor activities.

Results: suggested that increasing exposure to natural environments helped alleviate depressive symptoms. Similarly, participation in outdoor activities- walking, cycling and organised group work proved successful. However, success in treatment was especially evident for the short-term, so in order to achieve long-term recovery from depression, such activities are best carried out regularly.