

Reconnect Children (and Adults) with Nature

Process to conduct the outdoor activity

Why is this important?

Several studies have shown that nature offers various benefits to humans, both physically and mentally: stress relief, improved short-memory, improved mental health. The urban population tends to lose contact with nature, thus keeping them out from the numerous health benefits of interacting with nature. It is even more important for children and young people to keep this link with nature because of their personal development and particularly on early brain development: discovery, creativity, problem-solving and STEM education are some benefits provided by nature.

It is also important to raise awareness of the future generations on environmental issues. The current impacts of climate change must be shown to young people in order to make them aware of this threatening situation and to help them be agents of change.

What are nature-based interventions?

Nature-based interventions are programmes, activities or strategies that aim to engage people in nature-based experiences with the specific goal of achieving improved health and wellbeing ([National Library of Medicine](#)). Research demonstrates that they have consistent improvement on health when individuals engaged with a natural outdoor environment.

Process

Organise a Nature outing

The aim of this activity is to reconnect members of your community with nature, with a particular focus on children and young people.

It is about organising an outing to a natural area to introduce an urban audience to nature and its benefits. This activity will also raise awareness of environmental issues, particularly climate change. Raising awareness of these issues among the younger generation from an early age will make them proactive agents of change to minimise the impact on the environment in the longer term.

This involves organising a trip to the nearest green space or natural area. As a frontline worker, you will have to adapt the size of your group according to the possible supervision capacity to allow the activity to run smoothly.

Before organising the outing, you should prepare a checklist (*fig1*) similar to the one provided below, including local natural elements (vegetation, animals, insects, etc.) present in the natural area you will be visiting. This checklist can be prepared using photos you have taken at the location or online. Print this checklist and give them to the participants (at least one for 3 participants). You should also have some basic knowledge of the environment, especially of the natural area you are going to visit, in order to inform the public about its functioning and evolution. Ideally and if possible, you should choose a place where climate change has had an impact, or a protected natural area where nature has regained its rights thanks to protection measures.

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It could be interesting to prepare a short document comparing old and recent photos illustrating the negative impact of climate change or anthropogenic effects on biodiversity. This activity should be conducted as a scavenger hunt to add entertainment and thus allow for greater motivation and support from the group for the environmental awareness and education part.

Table 1 Fig1

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When carrying out the activity, ask participants to tick the boxes of the items illustrated when they encounter them.

Observe their reactions and encourage discussion and debate. Your knowledge of the place should help to answer their questions and raise their awareness of environmental issues. But above all, it is about introducing them to nature and allowing them to enjoy its benefits and to thrive.

To complete the activity and if you have enough time to do it, you should create an e-portfolio (e.g., using [Canva](https://www.canva.com)) in order to collect all the photos, knowledge, and tools used during the activity to keep a record of the experience. This could allow the children to review their knowledge and serve as an outreach tool to raise awareness about the importance of protecting nature.