

Spending time in nature to help reduce anxiety

Most people feel anxious from time to time. It's normal to experience some anxiety, especially when we are coping with difficult events, stressful situations or changes.

Anxiety does not discriminate against age, sex, religion or race. It affects people individually and in many different ways. It can affect the way we think, feel and act, and it can even impact on our physical health, if we let it get out of control.

Spending time in nature regularly can help to reduce levels of anxiety and improve wellbeing. By engaging the five senses we can quieten anxious thoughts.

Use this method regularly to help make lasting improvements to overall wellbeing



Listen - What can you hear?

Make a point to really listen. When tuning in and really hearing sounds around you, the brain switches modes and is gently brought to a state of relaxation. Explore which sounds make you feel calm. It could be bird song, the wind in the trees, a babbling brook or rustling leaves. Close your eyes and take a quiet moment to focus on one sound for a minute at a time.



Smell - What can you smell?

Using your sense of smell links to breathing deeply and enables you to focus on the moment you are in. Try to sniff slowly and let it become a breathing exercise. Embrace the smell and give it your full attention. As you breathe, think about how strong the smell is; is it nearby or further away? This will help calm your breathing and take your mind off some of your worries. Explore smells of different flowers and cut grass.



Touch - What can you feel?

Touch plays a pivotal role in our lives. The skin is the largest organ in the body and calming from comforting touch can help to reduce stress very quickly. Our sense of touch plays a special role in reducing anxiety and helps the nervous system to find a sense of calm. Putting a smooth pebble or a rough stone in your pocket can help to bring you back to the moment and regain focus. Try touching leaves, or the bark of a tree.



Taste - What can you taste?

Taste is not always the sense which comes readily to mind when thinking of ways to reduce anxiety, but it is not necessarily the taste of food, it is the health, energy and dietary benefits that come with particular foods. Taste can be associated with calming of the nerves. Some find growing and eating home grown produce a therapeutic way to connect with the world around us. Try a relaxing herbal tea - some are widely reported to ease anxiety, whereas caffeine rich drinks can increase anxiety.



Look - What can you see?

Try to give your full attention to time in nature, and take in your surroundings. Appreciate what you see. Look at little details as you walk or sit in nature. Perhaps a beautiful flower, or a majestic tree. Saving a picture from a time when the surroundings were relaxing and looking at it during a period of anxiety can help bring back that relaxing feeling. Watching the sun rise or set is a great way to slow down and relieve stress.