

# Community Wellbeing and Mental Health

## Connecting with Nature to be Well

Connecting with nature has been shown to have profound impacts on mental and physical health, particularly for young people. Engaging in activities like **forest therapy**, **outdoor play**, and **earth connection practices** can reduce anxiety, boost self-esteem, and provide physiological benefits such as improved immunity and lower blood pressure. Research has shown that access to green spaces is associated with a reduction in mental health disorders, with studies demonstrating a **decrease in stress levels** and **improved emotional resilience** when nature is regularly incorporated into daily routines.

### Youth

For **youth**, nature-based activities offer creative outlets that foster not only physical development but also emotional wellbeing. **Outdoor play** has been linked to enhanced cognitive abilities and social skills in children, as well as reduced symptoms of hyperactivity and anxiety. In fact, spending time outdoors has been shown to improve attention spans and reduce the risk of mental health disorders later in life. For teens, activities like **gardening** or **forest walks** create opportunities for mindfulness, encouraging reflection and stress relief in an increasingly digital and fast-paced world. **Youth engagement** in community garden projects or conservation efforts also promotes leadership, environmental awareness, and a sense of belonging.

### Nature-based therapies

Integrating these practices into **community mental health services** creates holistic and accessible support for both adults and youth. Programs that offer **nature-based therapies**, such as **Wayapa Wuurrk**, which draws on Indigenous Australian traditions, help young people develop a stronger connection to both land and culture. These therapies are shown to improve mental health by encouraging mindfulness, fostering emotional resilience, and providing a deeper sense of purpose. By incorporating nature-based mental health strategies into youth services, we create opportunities for personal growth, healing, and stronger community connections for all ages.

