

A photograph of a dirt path winding through a lush forest. The sun is shining brightly from behind the trees in the center, creating a lens flare effect. The path leads towards a wooden signpost in the distance. The foliage is dense and green, with some leaves showing early autumn colors.

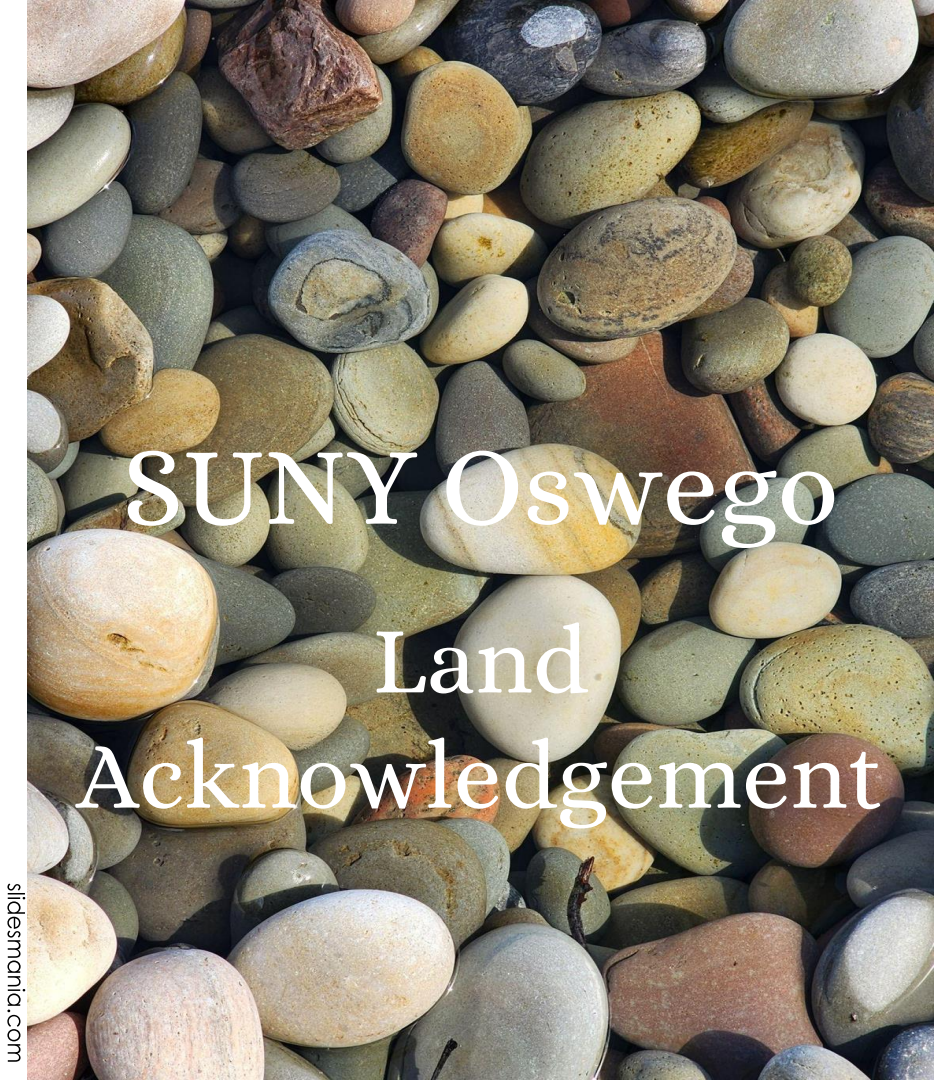
The Nature Connection:

How Ecotherapy, Nature-Based Interventions, and
Connection to Nature Can Impact College Mental Health

Cory Brosch, MS, LMHC, NCC
SUNY Oswego Counseling Services

Check in





SUNY Oswego
Land
Acknowledgement

The State University of New York at Oswego would like to recognize with respect the Onondaga Nation, the “people of the hills,” or central firekeepers of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Indigenous peoples on whose ancestral lands SUNY Oswego now stands.

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the impact of mental health by time spent in nature with implication of sense of belonging, academic functioning, and overall wellness.
- 2.. Examine marginalized students' attitudes towards nature.
3. Introduce ecotherapy interventions college counselor can utilize.

A little about me.

she/her

LMHC

Senior Counselor/Training
Coordinator

EMDR

Mindfulness-Based
Ecotherapy

Mother, Wife, Daughter



What is nature?

What does nature bring up for you?

What is your current relationship to nature?

Benefits of time spent in nature

Stress Reduction

- lower cortisol levels
- less muscle tension
- lowers heart rate and blood pressure



Improved concentration, memory and cognition

- focus & attention span
- creativity
- short-term memory



Improved sleep

- better quality
- influence of natural light



Decreased anxiety and depression symptoms

- regular access to green space
- paired with physical activity
- loneliness and isolation



Connection and Belonging

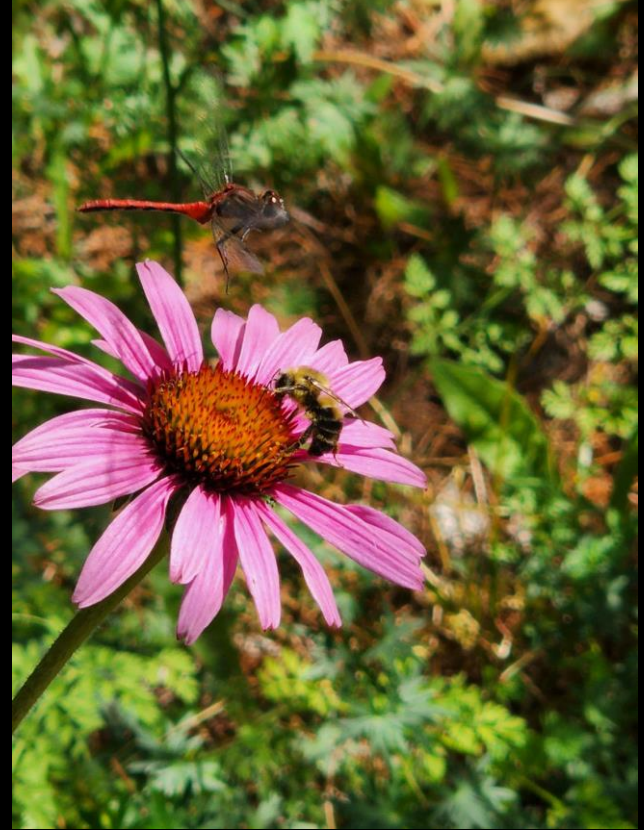
- Place Identity
- Connection of Naturalness and Wellbeing

(Knez et al, 2018)



Nature for all?

- Attitudes of BIPOC towards nature-
Situation Fear not Fear of Nature
- Accessibility issues
- Decolonization of Nature



(Taylor 2018)

Time in Nature
vs.
Connection to
Nature



Biophilia

- human instinct to connect with nature and other living things
- Not only biological, but linked to psychology and identity.



Connection

What does it mean to have
a connection?

- Knowledge
 - Care
 - Understanding
 - Value
 - No judgment
-

Mindfulness

Being in the present
moment, with awareness
and engagement

Seven Attitudes of Mindfulness

1. Non-judging
 2. Patience
 3. Beginner's mind
 4. Trust
 5. Non-striving
 6. Acceptance
 7. Letting go
-

Connected to Nature

Quality counts!

- Contentment, purpose, compassion, belonging
- Reciprocity
- Biodiversity
- Close relationship and emotional attachment



Ecotherapy

Start where you are...

3 Facets

1. Being in nature is therapeutic
2. Nature as the counselor
3. We are affected by what is happening to the environment

(Buzzell & Chalquist, 2010)

Let's Get Out!



Ecotherapy @ SUNY Oswego

Examples

Small Steps on Campus

Dip your toe in

- Components of My Office
- Campus Nature Rx
- Events Calendar
- Campus Committees
- Accessible Trails



Workshops & Outreach

Get them outside!
Meet them where they are
at.

- Hammocks
 - Outdoor Games
 - Fresh Air, Fresh Start
 - Lessons From Nature
 - Guided Meditations
 - Meditation Walks
 - Tree Hugging
 - Expressive Arts
-

Individual Counseling

Nature as the counseling
space

- Informed Consent
- Confidentiality
- Safety
- Access/Transportation





“Nature is not a place to visit, it is home.” –Gary Snyder

How to connect to nature?

What if I am stuck inside in a room with no windows?

- What senses can you attend to? Bring the outdoors in.
- What is a relaxing landscape? A relaxing soundscape?
- <https://timberfestival.org.uk/soundsoftheforest-soundmap/>
- <https://www.oswego.edu/rice-creek/visit-rice-creek/virtual-visit-portal>
- <https://www.tree.fm/>

Yay, I found a window!

- Bird feeders
- Cloud gazing
- Observe regularly, , what is the same? What has changed?
- Plants
- Open the window, what do you feel, what do you hear?



I can get outside but only have 5 minutes.

- “I notice”
- Snowflake or Leaf breathing meditation
- Nature Moment
- Grounding

We have the time to be outside, now what ?

- Lessons from nature
- Questions for nature
- Use all of your senses
- Nature journaling
- Gardening
- Get to know your space
- Zoom in/Zoom Out



What is your connection to nature?



Questions? Comments? What's next?

References

- Brabyn, S. (2021). Nature-based outdoor activities for mental and physical health: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *SSM - Population Health*.
- Buzzell, L., & Chalquist, C. (2010). *Ecotherapy: Healing with nature in mind*. Catapult.
- Ibes, D., Hiram, I., & Schuyler, C. (2018). Greenspace ecotherapy interventions: The stress-reduction potential of green micro-breaks integrating nature connection and mind-body skills. *Ecopsychology*, 10(3), 137-150.
- Knez, I., Ode Sang, Å., Gunnarsson, B., & Hedblom, M. (2018). Wellbeing in urban greenery: the role of naturalness and place identity. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 491.
- Kras, N. (2021). Exploring the benefits of ecotherapy-based activities at an urban community college. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 45(2), 117-123.
- Meredith GR, Rakow DA, Eldermire ERB, Madsen CG, Shelley SP, Sachs NA. Minimum Time Dose in Nature to Positively Impact the Mental Health of College-Aged Students, and How to Measure It: A Scoping Review. *Front Psychol*. 2020 Jan 14;10:2942. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02942. PMID: 31993007; PMCID: PMC6970969.
- Rakow, D. A., & Ibes, D. C. (2022). Campus Nature Rx: How investing in nature interventions benefits college students. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 960370.
- Taylor, D. E. (2018). Racial and ethnic differences in connectedness to nature and landscape preferences among college students. *Environmental Justice*, 11(3), 118-136.