

Green Space for Mental Health: Ecotherapy for College Students

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Please Check In

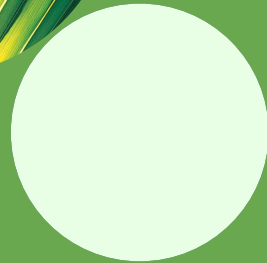
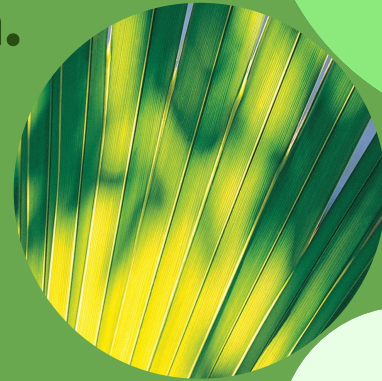
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Land Acknowledgement

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

- Identify three components of ecopsychology.
- Describe three ways time spent in nature impacts mental health.
- Discuss ecotherapy interventions to employ on your own campus.



Who am I ?

**Role and
Training**

Identity

Relationally

Place

Let me introduce you to Oswego

- New York, United States, North America
- Lake Ontario, Oswego River
- Rich History
- Seasons
- What Happens here

Introduce yourself and your place



How About Our Students?

- What year are you?
- What is your major?
- Where are you from?
- On campus, commuter?
- Major events
- Anything else?

What is Nature?

- What colors?
- What sounds?
- What is present?



Biophilia-Erich Fromm

- Human instinct to connect with nature and other living things
- Not only biological, but linked to psychology and identity.
- What are you drawn to in nature?

Ecopsychology-Theodore Rozsak

- Ecological Unconscious
- Human Nature Connection
- Synergy of Planetary and Personal Well being
- Healing and Restoration
- Sustainable Living and Environmental Ethics
- Re-evaluation of Cultural Narratives

All My Relations, Kith and Kin

- Holistic and Interconnected approach to understanding and interacting with the world
- Not only related to family and other humans but other living beings and the earth itself
- Shared responsibility

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3 Pathways of Ecotherapy

Nature has
Therapeutic
qualities

Nature as
Co-Counselor



Response for what is
happening to
nature-awareness,
advocacy, activism



Being in Nature is Therapeutic



Stress Reduction

- Increased relaxation
- Lower cortisol levels
- Decreased muscle tension
- Lowered heart rate
- Lowered blood pressure

Better Sleep

- Natural light influence in circadian rhythms
- Better quality sleep

Reduction of Anxiety and Depression Symptoms

- Decrease of loneliness and isolation
- Nature is restorative and effortless attention vs directed attention
- Best paired with physical activity and at least 30 minutes of exposure

Improved Cognitive Function

- Improved attention span, focus and concentration
- Creativity
- Improved short term and working memory

Increased Place Identity

- High Naturalness correlates with increased place identity
- Place Identity predictor of well-being, especially emotional component

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What is your favorite, relaxing, restorative nature space?

Where on campus can be therapeutic, relaxing, restorative?

Work with Nature to promote holistic well-being.

- How to facilitate connection?
- What is your theoretical orientation?

Mindfulness and Engaging the Senses

- Sensory experiences foster connection to nature and deepen emotional responses
- Be present
- Foster curiosity

Nature as Co-Counselor

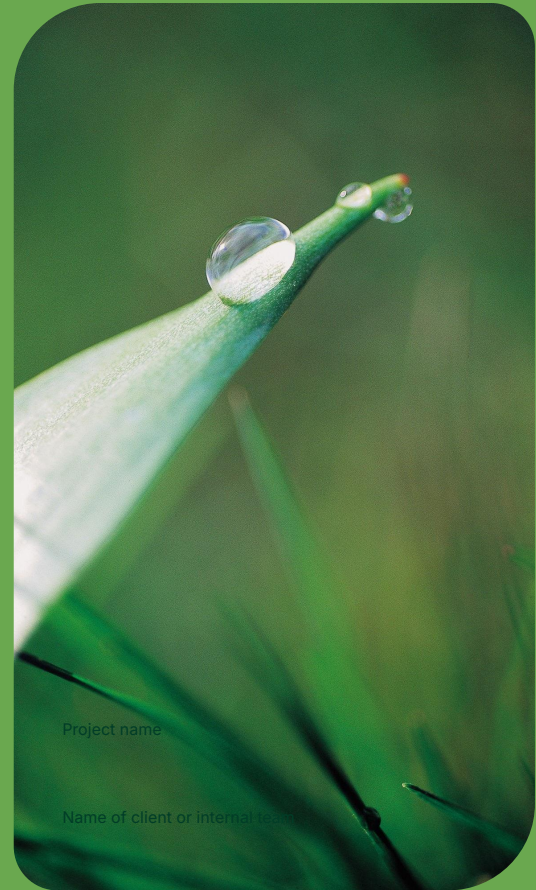
- Lessons, metaphors,
- Resiliency and success
- Animal-assisted therapy
- Horticulture therapy
- Adventure therapy



Beyond Touch Grass

- What does that mean?
- Go deeper, more complex

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Why do we need more than just exposure? What happened during COVID?

- Increase in getting outside, but not with the connection
- Crowded natural areas
- Littering, destruction of ecosystems

Move from transactional to relational framework. What is present in a healthy relationship?

- Respect
- Gratitude
- Reciprocity
- Time
- Communication
- Knowledge and Understanding
- Value and Appreciation

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What do you appreciate about nature close to you?

How about on campus?



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What do SUNY Oswego students appreciate? What do your students appreciate?



Attending to response of what is happening to nature...

- Eco-Feelings
- Awareness, Advocacy, Activism

What Emotions?









Now let's bring it back to your self and place...

- How is climate change affecting your nature connections?
- How is current administration impacting it?
- Check in with your emotions, thoughts, physical reactions?

Connection to Nature is the solution

- Hope and Optimism
- Finding Meaning
- Effective Coping Skills
- Connection to Nature and Coping with Environmental Change-Mutual Reinforcement (Chawla 2020)

How does ecotherapy show in my work?

- My office
- Intakes-Hope, Screen Time
- Individual Counseling
- Group Counseling
- Outreach
- Campus Committees

Fresh Air, Fresh Start

- Multi-Department Collaboration
- Multi-dimensional programming to connect with nature
- Collateral skills built-goal setting, getting around campus
- Introduction to campus nature

Earth Day 2025 @ SUNY Oswego

- Shining Waters
- Tarp Talk
- Eco-Feelings



What are you doing, What does your campus have to offer?

- Shameless plug...Consider Campus Nature Rx

What I hope stuck, absorbed, resonated, planted...

- Get outside
- Go deeper for connection
- Unplug and be present
- Get curious
- Gain awareness and understanding

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Thank you! Please check out.



Want to chat further?
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