



The slide features a stylized tree icon on the left with a dark green trunk and a circular canopy of light green leaves. In the top right corner, the 'Wellbeing College' logo and 'Health in Mind' logo are displayed. The title 'Natural Wellbeing' is centered in a large, bold, dark green font. Below the title, contact information is listed with icons: a telephone for the phone number, an envelope for the email address, a globe for the website, and a location pin for the physical address. At the bottom right, the tagline 'Exploring resilience and recovery in the Scottish Borders' is written in a smaller, dark green font.

Wellbeing College Health in Mind

Natural Wellbeing

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- wellbeing.college@health-in-mind.org.uk
- www.wellbeingcollege.org.uk
- The Hive, Low Buckholmside, Galashiels, TD1 1RT

Exploring resilience and recovery in the Scottish Borders

Hello and welcome to the Wellbeing College.

Our aim at the college is to help you learn how to best take care of your mental wellbeing. We do that by providing learning opportunities where people can come together and explore resilience and positive mental health in the Scottish Borders.

My name is Annette Murray one of the personal tutors at the College and today I'm going to take you through a course called Natural Wellbeing.

The idea behind this presentation is similar to a course we've run at the College called Walking Naturally where we go for a walk in the local area and experience the benefits of being in nature for our mental health.

You can find out more about our courses on our website:
www.wellbeingcollege.org.uk

You can also make an appointment with a personal tutor to better understand how the College can help you. If this is something you think might benefit you, please get in touch.

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Aim

To inspire you to think about how you can better connect with nature to benefit your wellbeing - whether you are outdoors or in!

Top Tip: Check out 'Finding Wellbeing amid Yorkshire Fog' in Our Blogs and Articles Section on the Website.



Natural wellbeing

I'm someone who regularly turns to nature to feel a sense of calm, connection and perspective. This is something I've done since childhood.

My hope is to inspire you to think about how you can better connect with nature to benefit your wellbeing – whether you're outdoors or in.

This course was inspired by a humble plant that used to grow in the fields next to the house where I grew up. It's probably one of the most common plants in the UK, but you've probably never heard of it, nor ever stopped to look at it closely. It's not obviously colourful or exotic, it doesn't have a beautiful scent and unlike Wordsworth's daffodils, I doubt anyone is ever going to write poems about it. But it's something I love and it's called Yorkshire fog.



Yorkshire Fog image used with kind permission from Peter Hillman

Unless you're a farmer, or someone with a particular interest in meadows, you might not know that Yorkshire fog is a type of grass.

Unlike the coarser, sharper blades of marram grass, I also remember from days by the sand dunes as a child, Yorkshire fog is covered in tiny, downy hairs making it very soft to the touch, lending it another common name, velvet grass.

(photographer <https://petehillmansnaturephotography.wordpress.com>)



Yorkshire Fog images used with kind permission from Peter Hillman

Like many grasses, it also flowers. When opening to the sun, the crowns of flowering spikelets are reminiscent of a field of oats. Each stem is like a plump chord of grey-green velvet, ornamented with these lovely soft purple tassels, tickly to the touch.

If you were to ask me what I first remember about being in nature, I would say the feel of Yorkshire fog as I run it through my fingers. It's a feeling so familiar and comforting to me that whenever I see a bit of Yorkshire fog, I have to touch it. And it just takes me right back - in the sunshine, playing in the fields near my childhood home; and it brings a smile to my face.

All that comfort from a simple blade of grass.

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It's our senses -
what we see, hear, smell
and feel in nature - that
can turn an ordinary stroll
outdoors into something
naturally therapeutic.



Natural wellbeing

Like the touch of Yorkshire fog, it's our senses - what we see, hear, smell and feel when in nature - that can turn an ordinary stroll outdoors into something naturally soothing and therapeutic.



Natural wellbeing

It could be the explosion of colour from a bed of flowers.



Natural wellbeing

Or the pattern on a pebble that catches the eye.



Natural wellbeing

The sound of sea washing over pebbles.



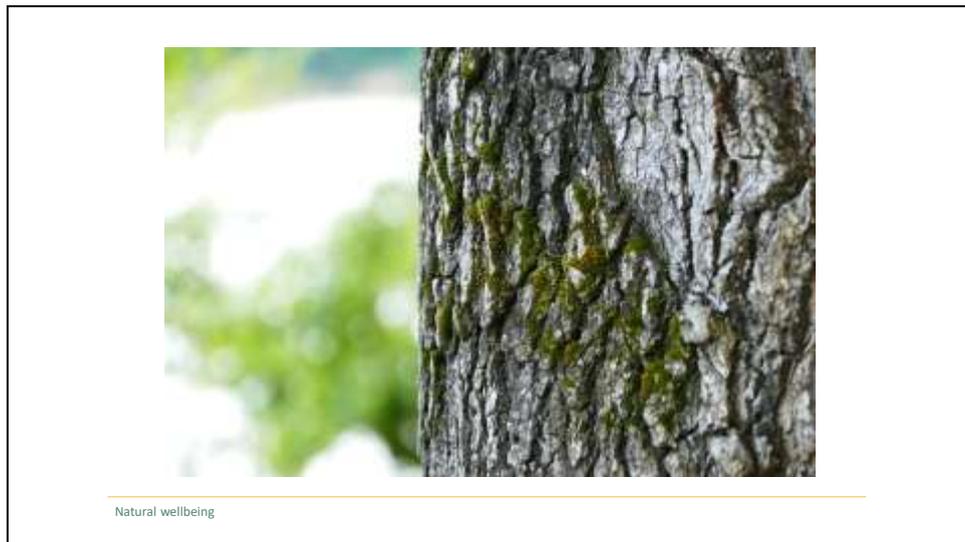
Natural wellbeing

Or the sound of bird song.



Natural wellbeing

The scent of wild garlic.



Or the deep, rough ridges of tree bark.



Nature, with its ability to capture our attention, can be a source of constant curiosity in life – as well provide endless opportunities for connection.

How many of us upon seeing an image like this, naturally want to tell others about it?



Natural wellbeing

That said, I don't need to talk about nature to feel a sense of connection. Just watching it, even everyday nature in the most ordinary of settings, reminds me I'm surrounded by life of all kinds and I feel instantly uplifted.



<http://www.bbc.co.uk/earth/story/20160420-how-nature-is-good-for-our-health-and-happiness>

I know I'm not the only one who has fond memories of nature or feels better for having spent time in it.

Simply going for a walk is something many of us instinctively do to relax and unwind.

In fact, research has proven that spending time in nature can indeed make us feel healthier and happier. If you search online for 'How nature is good for our health and happiness' you can find out more.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/earth/story/20160420-how-nature-is-good-for-our-health-and-happiness>

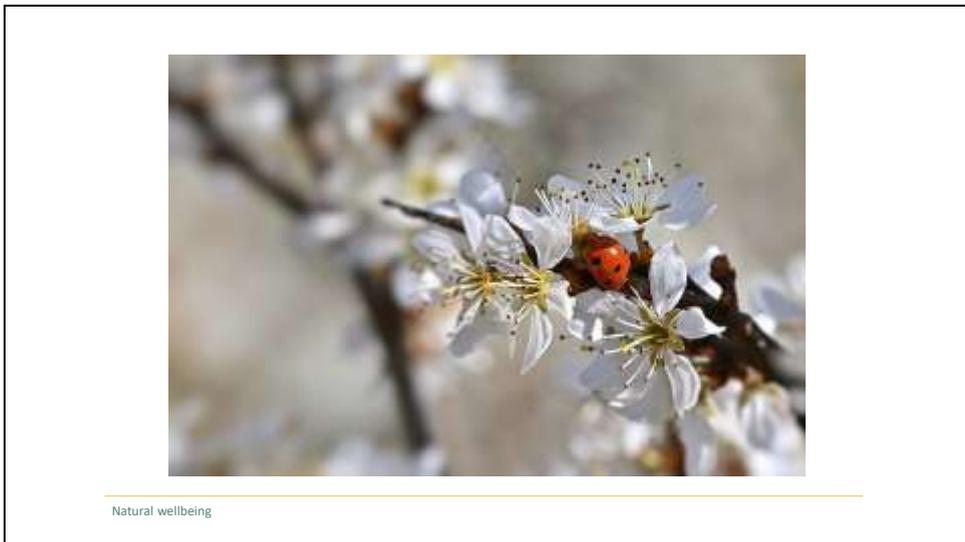
But I imagine your own experiences are evidence enough.

I wonder, the next time you go out for a walk, what favourite memory of nature you will revisit? Or maybe there's a favourite memory you've yet to create?



We don't all have to be in the middle of a National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to enjoy nature.

Nature, like this grey squirrel here, can be found in even the most urban of environments, if you're paying attention.



I wonder, what might you see if you really look? All too often we rush past nature and don't pause to see what we can find.



Natural wellbeing

What might you feel? Maybe it's as simple as running your fingers through some grass.



Natural wellbeing

What might you smell? I love the smell of lavender in parks and gardens – and I always try to literally stop and smell the roses!

Next time you smell something pleasant, or even just new to you, can you stop and really notice it?



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What might you hear? The buzz of a bee? Bird song? Wind in the trees perhaps?



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What might you discover that you didn't know before? Can you have childlike curiosity about your surroundings?



Natural wellbeing

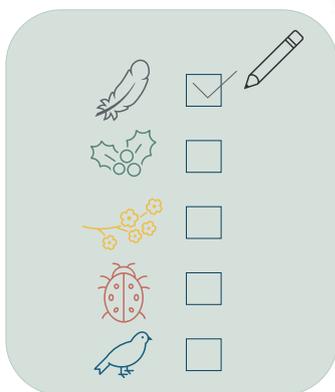
When you discover something new or have a nice experience in nature, that's satisfying in itself. But if you would like to share it, have a think - who can you share it with?

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Scavenger hunt anyone?

For children of all ages!

See the Woodland Trust's blog for ideas.



<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2020/01/nature-scavenger-hunts/>

Perhaps you can go on a scavenger hunt? Conservation organisations like the woodland trust might have ideas to inspire you.

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2020/01/nature-scavenger-hunts>

Or make up your own hunt – simply decide before you go out what 5 things you’re going to find, for example a feather, a spikey leaf, a spring blossom, an insect and a songbird.

I don’t see why activities like these should be just for children!

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Prefer to stay closer to home? Here are some ideas...



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If you'd rather not go too far afield, there are ways you can enjoy nature closer to home - or even indoors:

If you have garden, spend time in it pottering or just sitting. Or perhaps put flowers where you can see them from a window.

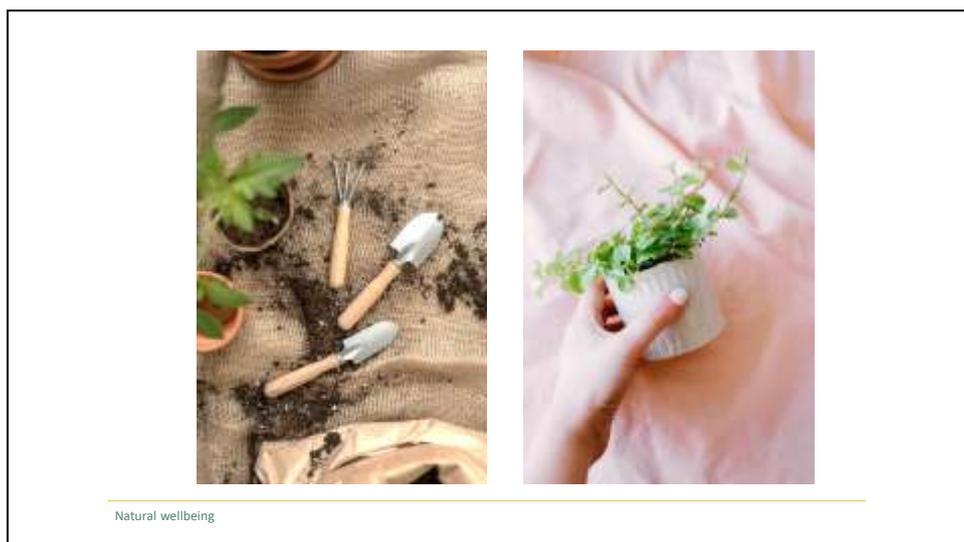


<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/how-you-can-help-birds>

Can you feed the birds or put out some water for them? The RSPB website has some great tips on how you can help birds



Can you daydream out of a window and see the clouds in the sky? What shapes are they making? Perhaps you can see the moon or the stars at night where you live. The podcast Star Signs is a great introduction to stargazing: <https://starsigns.live>



Do you have a house plant you can tend to? Can you grow something from seed? Try looking at a plant from different angles and notice what patterns you can see.



<https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/campaigning/let-nature-sing/birdsong-radio>

Perhaps you can open a window and hear bird song outside?

Or why not listen to the RSPB's Bird Song radio - <https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/campaigning/let-nature-sing/birdsong-radio>

While you are there, how about learning to recognise some common birds by their song?

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Remember

Stay safe and enjoy the countryside responsibly



<https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot>

Remember, if you do go out and about, stay safe and enjoy the countryside responsibly. The website dedicated to the Scottish outdoor access code should have all the information you need on this:
<https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot>



Natural wellbeing

And also remember, whenever times are uncertain, rest in the certainties that nature offers. Nature will always provide opportunities for us to engage our senses, awaken our curiosity and create fond memories.

And winter is *always* followed by Spring.



Natural wellbeing

Now we'd really love to hear from you...

Next time you're spending time with nature, whether indoors or out, why not take a photo and tell us what you have found or perhaps share your tips?

You can share them on Health in Mind's social media or send us an email at the Wellbeing College.

Stay In Touch

Wellbeing College 

Contact

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www.wellbeingcollege.org.uk

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If you're not already on our email list, please sign up to receive our newsletter called 'In Touch' so we can stay in touch.

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Thank you

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Thank you for listening, enjoy your time with nature - and we look forward to hearing from you.