



# Wild Wellbeing

Your guide to connecting with nature to take care of your wellbeing





# Your wellbeing guide

**We believe that people are a part of nature, and that everyone should have the opportunity to experience the joy of wildlife and wild places in their daily lives.**

The steps in this booklet will help you to discover more about your own physical and mental wellbeing, and how nature can have a positive impact on them.

Save this guide as a pdf document onto your desktop, and or mobile, and refer to it weekly to help you to monitor how you're doing. You'll notice that the suggested activities on each of the Five Ways to Wellbeing have tick boxes. Try to tick at least one box on each of those pages every week.

**Top tip!**  
Set yourself a weekly diary reminder to check this guide

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# Wellbeing matters

## What is wellbeing?

Wellbeing is how happy, healthy and comfortable we are. It describes how satisfied a person is with their life as a whole, including having a sense of purpose and feeling in control.

There are two elements to wellbeing: feeling good and functioning well.

## Why is nature important?

Evidence has shown that a thriving, wildlife-rich environment benefits both physical and mental health. People with nature on their doorstep are more active, mentally resilient and have better all-round health. By making socialising, exercising and even volunteering in natural places central to your daily life, you can feel these benefits, too.

We all lead busy lives and it can be hard to fit it in sometimes, but getting outdoors and being with nature can have a profound impact on all of us and make us happier and healthier. Seeing birds near our homes, walking through green spaces filled with wildflowers and along rivers that are clean and clear, reduces stress, fatigue and anxiety.



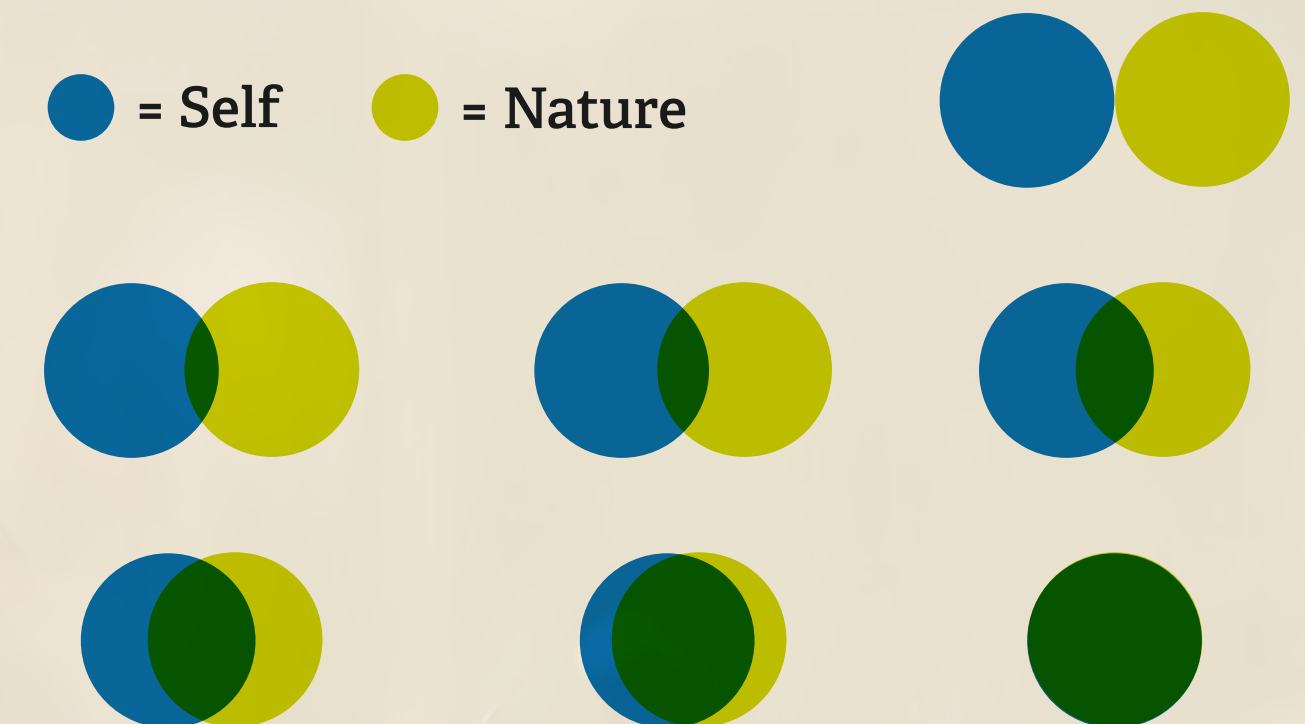
### Top tip!

Try taking this test regularly, at the same time of day, and make a note of your scores. Does anything change? Do you feel happier when you identify as more connected with nature? You could even try taking the quiz before and after spending time outdoors, such as on a walk.

## A simple test

Do you want to test your own wellbeing, and how nature impacts on it? There are robust ways of doing this, but for a quick and simple overview, answer these two questions honestly.

- In general, on a scale of 0-10, how happy do you feel?
- Which picture below best describes your relationship with the natural world? How interconnected are you with nature right now?



**Our work with the University of Derby** has shown that when people increase their nature connection, they see the biggest improvements in happiness.

Image credit: Jon Hawkins



Wellbeing matters

The Five Ways to Wellbeing

Connect

Take notice

Give

Be active

Keep learning

Ready to get started?

Discover wild places





# The Five Ways to Wellbeing

As human beings, we thrive when we are part of a social group, are physically active and have a purpose. Our bodies are meant to be active and we're designed to be connected with nature.

Even a small improvement in our wellbeing can allow us to flourish, and we know that spending time in nature can have a positive impact on wellbeing.

The Five Ways to Wellbeing are evidence-based ways that can improve personal wellbeing and are endorsed by the Government. These include 'Connect', 'Take Notice', 'Give', 'Be Active' and 'Keep Learning' – and are particularly effective when practised outdoors!

There are lots of ways to include the Five Ways to Wellbeing in your working and home life and we explore these in the following pages. Regularly practising the Five Ways is beneficial for everybody, regardless of personal circumstances.



**Remember that our tips are just that.**  
They're not prescriptive and it's important that you find what works for you. We'd love to hear, as well! **You can email us** to share what you find improves your wellbeing.

## Connect

Practical ways to connect

## Take notice

How to take notice

## Give

Ways to give

## Be active

Tips to staying active

## Keep learning

How to keep learning





# Connect

Connecting to the natural world is important, and feeling close to, and valued, by other people is something we all need too. Social connection increases confidence and makes us feel more able to face difficult situations, regardless of age.

The impact of loneliness on our physical and mental wellbeing can be huge; by including others in your activities, both indoors and outdoors, you can help to combat this.



## Ideas to help you to connect

### If you've only got a few minutes

- Have a walking meeting outdoors (either virtually or in person)
- Take the time to share wildlife that you've spotted in your garden with a work colleague
- Check out the latest wildlife movements through our [webcams](#)

### If you've got a bit more time

- Ask how somebody is, and actively listen to their answer
- Explore a new place outdoors with a friend or family member. Perhaps a **Wildlife Trust nature reserve?**
- Have a mass outdoors tea-break with work colleagues

### If you want to take it a step further

- Try a new hobby that involves other people. Perhaps a weekly run? Or a new course?
- Found something else that works for you? Tick this box!

### What to avoid?

It can be easy to do, but don't rely on just texting, messaging or emailing people. In order to maintain connections it's important to physically speak to others.





# Take notice

Stopping and taking notice of the natural world - 'savouring the moment' - has been proven to help people to make positive choices. Paying more attention to the present moment, to our own thoughts and feelings and to the world around us, boosts our wellbeing.

Take some time to enjoy the natural environment around you, using all your senses. Focus on the small wonders of nature, such as hearing a bird, noticing a fern growing out of a wall, or spotting a ladybird delicately walking along a leaf.

## Top tip!

Focus on one thing such as the feel of a stone, or the smell of a flower. You could even keep objects like this on your desk to help you to connect with nature when you're indoors.

## What to avoid?

Try not to hurry. Set time aside for noticing nature. If you only have five minutes sit in one area and pay attention, rather than trying to rush.

## Ideas to help you take notice

### If you've only got a few minutes

- Start your day with a cup of tea in the garden, or watching the wildlife outside your window. Even in an urban area, there are often signs of wildlife if you look closely
- Listen to **bird song** or the sounds of the ocean
- If you struggle to get outdoors bring some greenery into your workspace with a plant or two

### If you've got a bit more time

- Look more closely. How many different colours and shapes can you spot in nature?
- Take the time to smell flowers. Which are the most pungent? Which smell most sweetly?
- Go for a walk on your lunch break in a green space. It doesn't have to be a special area, it could simply be your local park

### If you want to take it a step further

- Set yourself a weekend challenge to explore a new **nature reserve**
- Found something else that works for you? Tick this box!





# Give

Getting involved in social and community life has been shown to improve wellbeing. People who have a genuine interest in helping others, and the local environment, are more likely to rate themselves as happy.

Research has even shown that committing one act of kindness every week, over a 6-week period, is associated with increased wellbeing.



## Ideas to help you give

### If you've only got a few minutes

- **Feed the birds** especially over the winter when food is scarce
- **Take personal action** for nature by signing a petition or a pledge to protect wild places
- Donate a plant to a neighbour's garden

### If you've got a bit more time

- Talk to your neighbours and start a group to help green your community. Our **Action for Insects community guide** can help!
- Offer to help somebody with their gardening

### If you want to take it a step further

- **Volunteer** your time to support a local cause/ community project
- Found something else that works for you? Tick this box!

**What to avoid?**  
An expectation of return



Image credit: Peter Cairns/2020VISION



# Be active

Regular physical activity and raising your heart rate is associated with better physical health – but it also lowers rates of depression and anxiety. Exercise is also essential for slowing age-related cognitive decline, meaning it's particularly important as we age.

Exercising in natural spaces has been proven to benefit mental health and wellbeing - and it doesn't need to be intense. Slower-paced activities, like regular walking, are also really effective, as well as allowing us to connect with other people. Being active can give you real purpose, and it's also a great tool for setting a personal challenge.

## What to avoid?

Trying too much at once. Start small and celebrate every goal you reach!

## Top tip!

Why not set a group challenge, such as virtually walking a mountain? Or walking a marathon distance as a group?

## Ideas to help you be active

### If you've only got a few minutes

- Take the stairs instead of an escalator or lift, or park your car a little further way than you usually would. Better still - use public transport or walk
- Start small – try 5 minutes of yoga or stretching before work and build up from there

### If you've got a bit more time

- Go for regular walks with another person, even if it's just around the block or to the shops
- Try running or cycling in a natural space, rather than in a gym

### If you want to take it a step further

- Organise a virtual work physical activity. It can help to have a group to hold you accountable!
- Make a personal, achievable challenge. It doesn't have to be big, just meaningful to you
- Found something else that works for you? Tick this box!





# Keep learning

Continued learning throughout our lives actually helps with our self-esteem, encourages us to interact with others, and can lead to a more active life both physically and mentally.

Evidence shows that work and activities that educate broaden the mind.

When working with others, setting challenging but achievable goals is associated with improved wellbeing.

## What to avoid?

Cramming too much in to begin with. It's easy to put too much pressure on yourself. Choose one suggestion and try that first.

## Ideas to help you to keep learning

### If you've only got a few minutes

- Set manageable targets, such as **learning a new nature word or a species name each day**
- Use mobile apps to submit wildlife recordings. iRecord is a great place to start!
- Take a photo a day of things that interest you. You could even use the photos afterwards to identify wildlife

### If you've got a bit more time

- Learn about nature and discover new Wildlife Trust nature reserves close to you – our **website** can help!
- Learn to **make something new that benefits wildlife**

### If you want to take it a step further

- Start a gardening club with work colleagues and learn from one another
- Sign up for a class – the internet is awash with free courses!
- Found something else that works for you? Tick this box!



Image credit: Amy Lewis





# Ready to get started?

There are a lot of ideas in this guide, but the important thing is to take it one step at a time, and apply these to your own lifestyle. How can you make small changes in your everyday life that will make positive changes to your wellbeing?

## Make the most of your activities

You don't need to look at them in isolation. For example, by going for a lunchtime walk with a colleague or friend and taking the time to spot wildlife along the way, you will be connecting, staying active and taking notice.

## Start small – don't try to conquer all

Start within your comfort zone. This will allow you to learn more about what works for you. Over time you can start to stretch yourself to try new things.

## Set yourself a challenge

Setting a challenge, whether big or small, can help to keep you on track. Understand your own motivations. Are you internally motivated? If that's the case, then a solo challenge may work for you. If you like others to help to hold you accountable then get your friends, family or work colleagues involved with a group challenge.

## Test your wellbeing

Use the simple test on [page 3](#) to regularly test your wellbeing by monitoring your nature connection and happiness. For example, if you do this monthly then try to spot any differences.





# Discovering wild places

Wild places don't have to be remote and rural. They don't need to be mountain tops, or rock faces. Wild places are actually closer than you think! It could be the small nature reserve on the edge of the city centre, or the copse of trees leading into a park.

There are over 2,300 Wildlife Trust nature reserves across the UK – that's more than the number of McDonald's! Most people live within just a few miles of a nature reserve, and some are lucky enough to have these special places right on their doorsteps.

You can find your local reserve on our [website](#) or using our Nature Finder App!

## Walk it out

Walking can be a great way of finding hidden gems. There could be a park around the corner that you haven't seen before, or a cycle path that allows for a beautiful bike ride through the countryside. By lacing up your boots and getting outdoors, you can get active and find new favourite walking spots for future adventures.

## Your own back garden

If you have garden space, you can turn it into your own wild retreat. It's easier than you think. With some wildflower seeds, and a more lax approach to gardening, you can create an area that's great for wildlife, and great for you. There are lots of wildlife gardening tips and guides to help you get started on our [website](#).



The Wildlife Trusts is on a mission to restore **a third of the UK's land and seas** for nature by 2030. We believe **everyone, everywhere, should have access to nature** and the joy and health benefits it brings.

No matter where you are in the UK, there is a Wildlife Trust inspiring people about nature and **standing up for wildlife and wild places**. Each Wildlife Trust is an independent charity formed by people getting together to make a positive difference for wildlife, climate and future generations. Together we care for 2,300 diverse and beautiful nature reserves and work with others to manage their land for nature, too.

