

Review of Nature Connection well-being sessions at Southmead Hospital – Spring 2021

Project Outline

A series of open and team based sessions were run during Spring 2021 on the Southmead Hospital site for staff to explore the benefits of mindfulness interventions in outdoor spaces that encouraged staff to take breaks in green spaces on site and use the natural surroundings to enhance their well-being.

These sessions were planned and promoted to staff across the site and were booked on-line in advance. These were offered as engaging, fun and accessible nature connection activities where participants would use their senses to ground themselves in the green space and take notice of the things growing and living there. Creative activities were also used such as making collages on the ground from natural found materials and creating small mosaic badges.

The mindfulness approach of the activities encouraged staff to leave behind any distractions and to step away from their current work challenges. Those attending were also asked to come together at the end of some of the activities to share their experience with each other to support staff interaction and connectedness.

The team sessions had the additional focus of supporting colleagues to work together on some activities such as observing and then creatively describing a tree they had chosen as a group.

All those attending were asked to fill out a quick self assessed well-being measure before and after the activities as well as providing any further comments they wished to make.

Finally for those not able to attend sessions and to support teams and individuals that want to repeat activities in a flexible way a series of easy to use guides have been developed.



In Pictures



Teams working together to explore the look and feel of a chosen tree.

Exploring the smells of plants



Natural art work



Outputs and Outcomes

- 14 sessions on site
- 54 staff engaged
- 2 outdoor green spaces used
- Series of self led guides developed

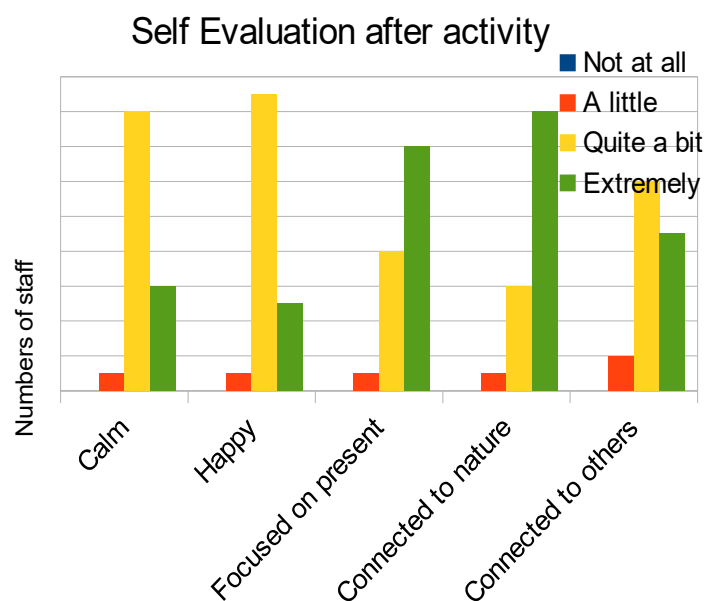
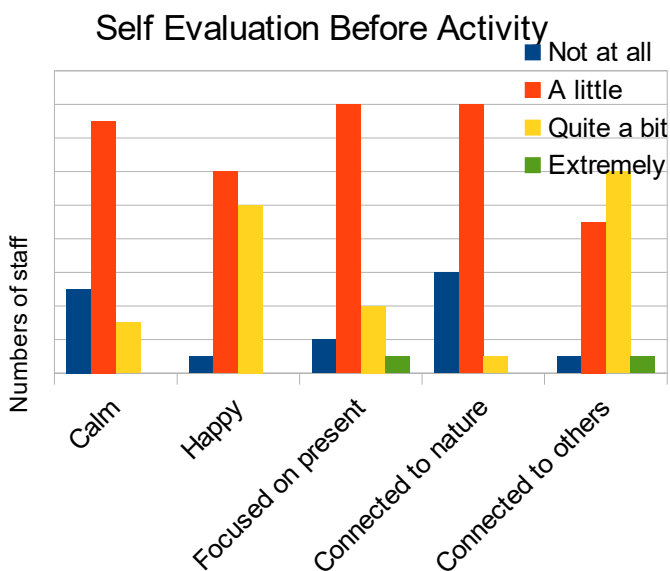
Self evaluation & Feedback

Staff were asked to self assess how they were feeling before and just after the nature connection activity using the table below.

Q. How are you feeling now?

	Not at all	A little	Quite a bit	Extremely
Calm				
Happy				
Focused on the present				
Connected to natural surroundings				
Connected to others				

The results from these showed some significant changes in the well-being measurements as shown by the two graphs below.



Key Outcomes:

- The majority of staff before undertaking the activity reported that they only felt a little calm, happy, focused on the present and connected to nature.
- Following the activity the majority of staff reported that they felt quite a bit happier and calmer.
- Following the activity most staff reported they felt highly focused on the present and highly connected to nature.
- Across all 5 areas of well-being measured there was an increase in how staff felt following doing the nature connection activity.

Additional Feedback

The following demonstrates the range of feedback left on the self evaluation forms and given in person at the end of the session:

‘I arrived feeling tense with a bad headache I could not shift. I am leaving feeling calmer and with no headache.’

‘It gave me time to stop and focus on things you would not normally see.’

‘It was really grounding.’

‘I found it mindful and relaxing.’

‘It was great to be reminded to focus on the present more often.’

‘Jon has a very good style. Calm and interesting. Knowledgeable but approachable.’

‘I have now discovered an even more relaxing outdoor space than the one I previously knew of and will come here again.’

‘I was impressed how natural areas of our grounds are.’

Some staff reported significant shifts in how they felt moving from the lowest end of the well-being scale on to the extreme top end. One commented ‘It was really relaxing.’ - they reported that they felt they were not at all happy or focused on the present and left feeling significant improvements on both of these.

Some people reported that they would not typically go out in to green spaces on the site and it was not their kind of thing and that they had been encouraged to come as part of a team activity. They reported that they felt significantly better on their well-being assessment and that the experience was ‘Surprisingly relaxing!’ and that they would want to do it again.

Almost all those that attended said they would want to do more sessions if possible and that they would recommend them to a colleague.

One person commented on why it would be useful for colleagues to try it - ‘Because we all need to take time out, even when we think we don’t have the time to – that’s when we need it most.’



Learning & Future Development

- Engagement of staff was dependant on successful promotion. This was achieved through continuous flagging of the project using multiple channels to maintain high visibility across the trust.
- Successful engagement of teams was dependant on a flexible approach offering times and dates that linked in to team meetings or CPD.
- The outdoor space was significant and staff enjoyed discovering and using spaces that they did not know. Spaces that provide easy connection to nature and some degree of privacy were key to supporting this type of activity.
- To encourage staff to undertake this on a regular basis short courses/programmes should be structured to look at the benefit of a higher level of engagement.