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Epitome of Nature

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GREEN RESILIENCE: UNLOCKING THE NATURE'S HEALING TOUCH

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Ecopsychology, a field that explores the relationship between humans and nature and its impact on human health, has gained significant attention in recent years. The concept of nature-deficit disorder, introduced by Richard Louv in his book "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder", highlights the negative consequences of reduced exposure to nature, especially in children. This theory is further supported by Chawla (2011), who emphasizes the importance of human restoration through the "Nature Principle" and the adverse effects of nature deficit disorder. Cervinka et al. (2011) also contribute to this concept by discussing the indicators of well-being and connectedness with nature, emphasizing the relevance of nature to human health. The following literature review supports the theory of ecopsychology, demonstrating the significant impact of nature on human health and well-being. The evidence presented underscores the importance of nature in promoting psychological restoration, well-being, and connectedness, emphasizing the need for

further exploration of nature-based interventions in promoting mental health.

Interestingly, the psychological and physiological benefits of nature are very well-documented and widely reviewed. Jiang et al. (2020) discusses the relaxation induced by nature, while Franco et al. (2017) reviews the multifaceted benefits of nature experiences, emphasizing the psychological benefits derived from feeling connected to nature. Pritchard et al. (2019) conducted a meta-analysis, establishing a positive

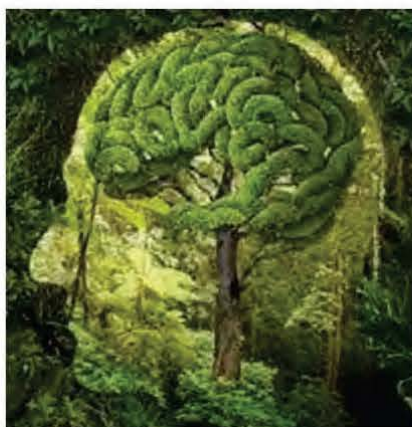


Image 1: Nurtured by nature
(Source:

<https://www.earthharmonyinstitute.com/ecopsychology-eco-therapy-course>)

relationship between nature connectedness and eudaimonic well-being, further supporting the idea that nature plays a crucial role in human flourishing – the ability to live a good life.

The Biophilia Effect

The Biophilia Hypothesis is an idea proposed by American biologist and naturalist Edward O Wilson, who is also a pioneer in evolutionary biology. The idea is that humans possess an innate tendency to seek connections with nature and other forms of life. E.O. Wilson's (1984) biophilia hypothesis suggests that humans have an innate connection to nature, which has implications for mental and physical well-being. This hypothesis has been supported by research demonstrating the restorative effects of natural environments on cognitive function and stress reduction (Hartig et al., 2014). Additionally, the Attention Restoration Theory (ART) proposed by Rachel and Stephen Kaplan in 1995 posits that exposure to nature can replenish cognitive resources and improve attention, providing further evidence of the positive impact of nature on human health (Kaplan, 1995).

The integration of biophilic design principles in healthcare facilities, workplaces, and educational settings can create environments that support mental health and cognitive function. The systematic review by Coon et al. (2011) highlights the potential added beneficial effects of performing physical activity outdoors in natural world

Nature Exposure Equals Happiness

In addition to the existing literature, further research has been conducted to further explore the impact of nature on human health. For example, Yu et al. (2017) investigated the effects of a short forest bathing program on autonomic nervous system activity and mood states in middle-aged and elderly individuals, providing insights into the physiological and emotional benefits of nature immersion. In another study, Lawton et al. (2017) examined the relationship between the physical activity environment, nature relatedness, anxiety, and the psychological well-being benefits of regular exercisers, shedding light on the complex interplay between nature, physical activity, and mental health.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought attention to the potential of nature in addressing psychosocial issues. The increase of

depression and mental health associated cases during this time emphasized the need for a more natural and effective approach. Rajoo et al. (2021) discusses nature therapy as a technique to improve physical and mental health using natural surroundings, while Jackson et al. (2021) highlights the positive impact of connection to nature on adolescents' mental well-being during the pandemic. Furthermore, Chin et al. (2022) found that a weaker connection to nature was associated with greater fatigue, depression, and anxiety, emphasizing the protective role of nature in mental health. The concept of nature immersion and its psychological and physiological benefits are explored by Lim et al. (2020), providing evidence of the positive impact of nature on mood and social connectedness. Furthermore, Ryff (2021) discusses the link between spirituality, well-being, and the connection to nature, emphasizing the nurturing power of nature in promoting human flourishing.

Nature-Inspired Urban Design and Modern Living Spaces

The evidence for the positive effects of exposure to natural environments on cognitive function and mental health, as discussed by Bowler et al. (2010) and Bratman et al. (2012), can guide the design of green spaces and outdoor recreational areas to maximize their therapeutic benefits. Urban gardens, parks, and green infrastructure can be strategically planned and designed to provide accessible and inclusive spaces for individuals to connect with nature and experience its positive effects on well-being. The findings highlight the potential of nature-based interventions in addressing public health challenges, particularly in the context of urbanization and modern lifestyles. The positive effects of nature on mental health, cognitive function, and emotional well-being underscore the importance of integrating natural elements into urban planning and design to create healthier and more sustainable environments for individuals and communities.

The importance of urban green spaces and botanical gardens in promoting connectedness to nature and psychological restoration is evident in the works of Luck et al. (2011) and Mohamed et al. (2022). Additionally, Fleming and Shwartz (2023) highlight the association between connection to nature and well-being, emphasizing the role of different types of green spaces in enhancing this relationship.

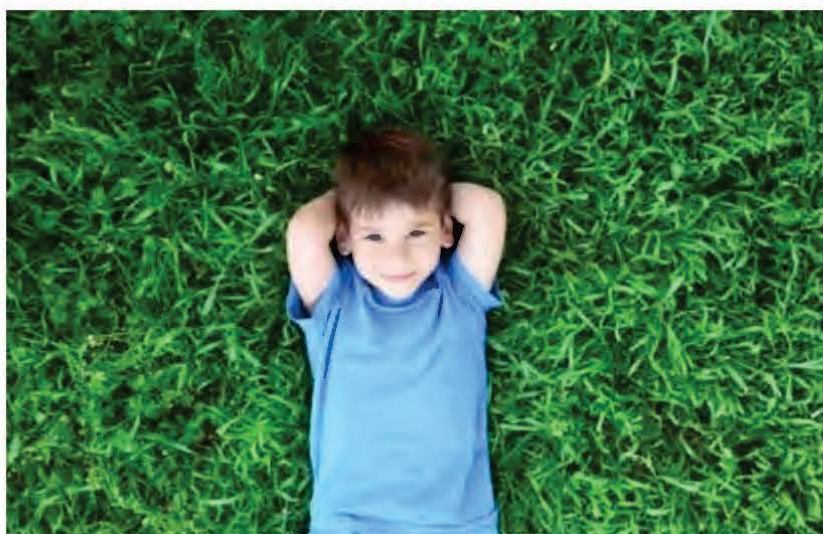
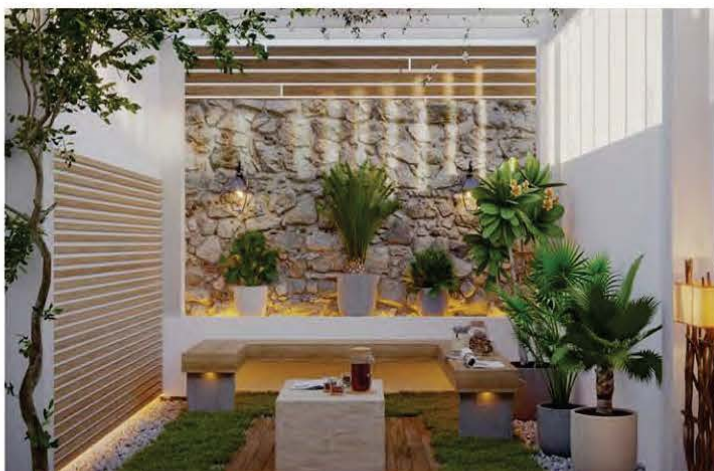


Image 2: Immersed in nature (Source: shutterstock.com)



Nature-inspired design ideas that go beyond indoor plants
(Source: <https://www.designcafe.com/blog/home-interiors/nature-inspired-interior-design-ideas/>)

To benefit from these research findings, it is essential to integrate the principles of ecopsychology and the biophilia hypothesis into various domains, including urban planning, architecture, healthcare, and public health policies. Mehaffy (2012) discusses the theoretical foundations of biophilia and the evidence-based methodology for its application, providing insights into the practical implementation of biophilic design principles in architectural and urban planning practices. By incorporating natural elements and green spaces into urban environments, cities can create healthier and more sustainable living spaces that promote human well-being.

Conclusion

The implications of ecopsychology extend beyond individual well-being to encompass broader environmental and societal benefits.

By fostering a deeper connection to nature ecopsychology may contribute to promoting environmental stewardship, sustainable behaviours, and a greater appreciation for the natural world. This, in turn, can have far-reaching implications for environmental conservation, biodiversity preservation, and the overall health of the planet. These discoveries provide insights into the diverse ways in which individuals interact with nature, from nature immersion and outdoor activities to therapeutic interventions such as forest therapy. Understanding these interactions can inform the development of targeted interventions that leverage the restorative and healing properties of nature to support mental health and well-being across different populations and settings. These exhaustive research findings can inform the development of nature-based interventions and therapeutic programs aimed at

improving mental health and well-being. Richard Louv's book emphasizes the importance of addressing nature-deficit disorder in children and highlights the potential of nature-based interventions in promoting healthy child development. Ultimately, the numerous research findings on ecopsychology, the Biophilia Hypothesis and Attention Restoration Theory provide valuable insights that can be translated into practical applications not just for human health, but across various sectors, including urban planning, healthcare, education, and environmental conservation. By leveraging these insights, it is possible to create environments that promote human well-being, foster a deeper connection to nature, and contribute to the overall health of individuals and communities. Hence, in light of the growing body of evidence supporting the positive impact of nature on human health and well-being, it is imperative for policymakers, urban planners, healthcare professionals, and community leaders to consider the integration of nature-based approaches in public health strategies and urban development initiatives. By recognizing the intrinsic link between human health and the natural environment, it is possible to create environments that not only support physical and mental well-being but also foster a harmonious and sustainable relationship between individuals and the natural world.