



Peer  
Education  
Project



Mental Health  
Foundation



Assembly

## Assembly script:

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This assembly has been developed from the Mental Health Foundation's Peer Education Project (PEP) - a secondary school-based, educational programme that aims to give young people the skills and knowledge they need to safeguard their mental health and that of their peers.

PEP is a carefully researched, effective approach to mental health education whereby older pupils within school or college deliver mental health lessons to younger pupils.

For more information about PEP and how your school can get involved, [click here.](#)

## Assembly aims:

- To understand how connecting with nature can be good for our mental health and wellbeing.
- To understand how we all have different levels of access to nature.
- To explore how to connect with nature in our own way.

## You will need:

- Assembly script
- PowerPoint slides

## Estimated delivery time:

- 20-30 minutes
- The assembly script can be divided into smaller sections and delivered across multiple assemblies, form times or lessons to fit into your timetable.

**To ensure the content is most relevant, update the assembly script and PowerPoint slides to reflect the opportunities for your pupils to connect with nature in school or college, and the local area.**

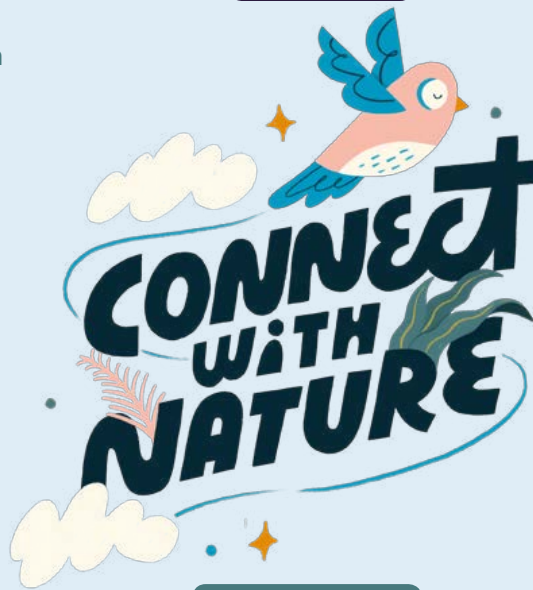
## Slide 1



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Assembly

## Script

Welcome to today's assembly on connecting with nature.



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## Slide 2

### Introduction



#### This assembly will cover:

- How connecting with nature can be good for our mental health and wellbeing.
- The ways we can connect with nature.
- The challenges we may face accessing nature.



SLIDE 2

### Script

From walking in the woods and sitting in the garden, to caring for house plants and even watching nature programmes, there are many ways we can connect with nature wherever we are.

Research shows that from as early as 10 years old, we become less connected with nature during adolescence and young adulthood – known as the ‘teenage dip’.

Therefore, this assembly is an opportunity to open our eyes to the power of nature and understand how connecting with nature can be good for our mental health and wellbeing. The assembly will also explore the ways we can connect with nature and the challenges we may face accessing nature.



### Slide 3

#### What do we mean by 'connect with nature'?



**Connecting with nature is noticing and becoming sensitive to the environment around us.**

SLIDE 3

### Script

Connecting with nature is not just about the amount of time we are spending outdoors; it is also about building a relationship with nature by noticing and becoming sensitive to what is around us.

We use our senses to do this – such as noticing the different cloud shapes in the sky, taking in the scents that flowers give off, and listening to the birds chirping in the trees. It can take time, and practice, to engage with nature in a meaningful way and develop our own connection with the natural environment.

Connecting with nature not only provides benefits for our physical health, but our mental health too!



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## Slide 4

### What is mental health?



## Script

Mental health is made up of our thoughts, feelings, moods, and behaviours. Mental health is not fixed throughout our lives. Just like physical health, mental health can change depending on experiences and circumstances, as people move through different stages of life.

Mental health is something we all have and need to look after. Each of us will find different things helpful for our mental health.

Bringing nature into our everyday lives is one way to improve both the health of our bodies and our minds.





## Slide 5

### How is connecting with nature good for our mental health?



#### Connecting with nature can have mental health benefits such as:

- Increased happiness
- Reduced stress
- More and better-quality sleep
- Reduced anxiety
- Increased life-satisfaction
- Increased self-esteem and self-confidence
- Improved attention and concentration



SLIDE 5

## Script

There are many benefits to connecting with nature for our mental health, including:

- increased happiness,
- reduced stress,
- more and better-quality sleep,
- reduced anxiety,
- increased life-satisfaction,
- increased self-esteem and self-confidence; and
- improved attention and concentration.

For example, one [study](#) found 65% of people agreed that they experience positive emotions from being in nature and 44% of people said that being close to nature makes them less worried or anxious.



## Slide 6

### The pathways to a new relationship with nature



## Script

There are five distinct pathways to connecting with nature in a meaningful way.

1. **Sensory contact with the natural world:** Noticing and actively engaging with nature through the senses, e.g. listening to birdsong, smelling wild flowers, or watching the breeze in the trees.
2. **Finding an emotional bond with, and love for, nature:** Experiencing the joy and calm nature can bring, e.g. talking about, and reflecting on, your feelings about nature.
3. **Taking time to appreciate the beauty of nature:** Simply taking time to appreciate nature's beauty, e.g. exploring the beauty of nature through art, music or in words.

*Continued...*



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## Slide 6 Script cont.

4. **Thinking about the meaning and signs of nature:** Exploring and celebrating how nature brings meaning to life, e.g. exploring how nature appears in songs and stories, poems and art, or by celebrating the signs and cycles of nature.
5. **Showing compassion and care for nature:** Taking actions that are good for nature, e.g. creating homes for nature, and making ethical product choices.



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## Slide 7

### Finding your own space in nature



**Bring nature in.** We can bring nature indoors by:

- Eating breakfast in front of the window, observing the nature outside.
- Watching a wildlife programme.
- Growing vegetables from your windowsill.
- Opening a window and listening to the different sounds.



SLIDE 7

## Script

Here are some ways that we can connect with nature to support good mental health and wellbeing:

### Bring nature in

If going outside isn't possible or feels difficult at the moment, you could explore ways of bringing nature indoors by:

- eating breakfast in front of the window, observing the nature outside.
- growing vegetables from your windowsill.
- watching a wildlife programme.
- opening a window and listening to the different sounds.



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## Slide 8

### Finding your own space in nature



Explore your local nature spaces.



SLIDE 8

## Script

### Explore your local natural spaces

From a squirrel searching for food in the park to the movements and colours of the clouds, no matter where you are and what access you have, there is so much to observe and interact with in nature. Finding special places and ways to engage with nature locally will mean you can go to them in moments of stress or low mood and give yourself a bit of a boost. It could become something you use when coping with difficult feelings.

*Use this slide to highlight local natural spaces pupils can go and explore.*



## Slide 9

### Finding your own space in nature



**Stay active.** We can stay active by:

- Going for a walk, run or cycle.
- Playing football with friends.
- Stretching or practising yoga outside.



SLIDE 9

## Script

### Stay active

It is important that we keep active every day to look after both our physical and mental health. By being active outside in nature we can experience extra benefits to our health, and we don't even need to do it for long!

Research have found that exercising in green spaces such as parks or forests for as little as five minutes can improve mood and self-esteem.

Why not try:

- Going for a walk, run or cycle.
- Playing football with friends.
- Stretching or practising yoga outside.






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## Finding your own space in nature

**Take a moment to be mindful.**

You could take a mindful moment as you:

-  Walk in your local natural space.
-  Water indoor or outdoor plants.
-  Draw or paint the view from your window.



SLIDE 10

**Script****Take a moment to be mindful**

Mindfulness is the skill of paying attention to what is happening in your mind and body right now, without judgement. Thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations can come and go – being mindful is simply taking notice of them passing through your mind, and not getting caught up in them.

Taking time to practise mindfulness in our natural surroundings can reduce feelings of stress and increase feelings of self-compassion and empathy.

You could take a mindful moment as you:

- walk in your local natural space.
- water indoor or outdoor plants.
- draw or paint the view from your window.

## Finding your own space in nature



**Get creative.** Creative activities you could try:

Writing creative sentences about a natural object or landscape.

Playing music outside.

Doing a sketch of a natural object.

Writing a poem or song lyrics about your favourite nature spot.



Collecting natural objects and making a handmade card for a loved one.



Taking photographs of landscapes and natural objects.



SLIDE 11

## Script

### Get creative

Many people find nature inspires them to get creative! Creative activities can reduce stress and improve mood and wellbeing.

Here are examples of creative activities you could try:

- Writing creative sentences about a natural object or landscape.
- Doing a sketch of a natural object.
- Writing a poem or song lyrics about your favourite nature spot.
- Taking photographs of landscapes and natural objects.
- Playing music outside.
- Collecting natural objects and making a handmade card for a loved one.



### Connecting with others



**Nature often provides a great space to connect and socialise with family, friends, and the wider community.** You could:

- Have a picnic.
- Go for a group walk.
- Do gardening with others.
- Visit local heritage spots.



SLIDE 12

### Script

Having strong, healthy and supportive relationships with those around us is important for our mental health and wellbeing.

Nature often provides a great space to connect and socialise with family, friends, and the wider community.

You could:

- Have a picnic.
- Go for a group walk.
- Do gardening with others.
- Visit local heritage spots.

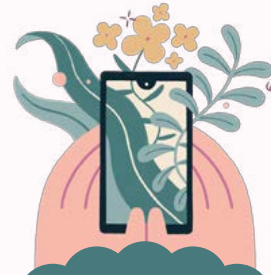
## Slide 13

### Connecting with others



**It is not always possible to connect with nature and meet with others outdoors.**

Here are ideas of how we can connect with others through nature from inside our own homes:



**Run a competition with your friends – who can grow the tallest sunflower or the most tomatoes.**

**Watch live webcams from zoos across the UK.**

**Follow a nature-focused social media account like @bbccountryfile.**

SLIDE 13

## Script

However, it is not always possible to connect with nature and meet with others outdoors. Sometimes we need to get our creative hats on and think about how we can connect with others through nature from inside our own homes.

You could:

- Watch live webcams from zoos across the UK from the comfort of your sofa.
- Run a competition with your friends – who can grow the tallest sunflower or the most tomatoes.
- Follow a nature-focused social media account like @bbccountryfile.



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## Slide 14

### Connecting with others



#### We can also connect with nature together as a school by:



- Going on a class nature walk in the local area.
- Organising a big litter clean-up.
- Signing up to the RSPB Big Schools' Birdwatch.

SLIDE 14

## Script

We can also connect with nature together as a school by:

- going on a class nature walk in the local area.
- organising a big litter clean-up of the school or college grounds or a local park.
- signing up to the RSPB Big Schools' Birdwatch.

*Add to the slide anything you are currently doing in school.*



## Slide 15

### Being part of something bigger, taking action



**We all have the potential to make a difference to the nature around us. We could:**



- Put a birdfeeder in the garden or leave seeds on windowsills for the birds.
- Use reusable drink bottles.
- Recycle as much as possible.
- Grow flowers on windowsills that are good for bees.
- Pick up litter.
- Sign and share a petition or campaign about protecting our environment.

SLIDE 15

## Script

We all have the potential to make a difference to the nature around us, and beyond, by getting involved in activities that create positive environmental change such as campaigning for zero plastic waste.

**Studies** have found a link between taking part in these types of activities and increased empathy, self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as an increased sense of community.

Examples of how you can be part of something bigger include:

- Putting a birdfeeder in your garden or leaving seeds on the windowsill for the birds.
- Using reusable drink bottles instead of buying plastic bottled drinks.
- Recycling as much as possible, whether at home, in school or outdoors.

*Continued...*



## Slide 15 Script cont.

- Growing flowers on your windowsill that are good for bees.
- Picking up litter when you are out for a walk.
- Signing up and sharing a petition or campaign about protecting our environment.



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## Slide 16

### Connecting with nature and inequalities



**There are many circumstances that can limit people's level of access and opportunities to connect with nature in a meaningful way.** Some of these include:



- Health conditions or disabilities.
- Living in an area with limited or no access to green or blue spaces.
- The cost of taking part in different nature-based activities.
- Living in an urban location where the air is more polluted.
- The nearby outdoor spaces might not feel safe.

SLIDE 16

## Script

There are many circumstances that can limit people's level of access and opportunities to connect with nature in a meaningful way.

Some of these include:

- Health conditions or disabilities that may limit how we move around, how long we can spend outside or how independent we can be.
- Living in an area with limited or no access to green (garden, park, woods) or blue (river, sea, lake) spaces.
- The cost of taking part in different nature-based activities, including the cost of travel and the cost of appropriate clothes and accessories.
- Living in an urban location where the air is more polluted from cars and factories nearby, so it is less enjoyable being outside.
- The nearby outdoor spaces might not feel safe, especially to explore on your own.

*Continued...*



## Slide 16 Script cont.

For example, [research](#) has found that 28% of people with long-term health conditions or disabilities which limit their daily life 'a lot' also said that they had been prevented from enjoying nature due to not feeling safe from harm when outside in local areas.

Similarly, 23% of respondents from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds (not including non-British white groups) said that this had limited their ability to enjoy nature as they wished, compared to 1% of white British respondents.

We will all have different experiences and circumstances; therefore, it is important to find our own ways to connect with nature, and support others to do the same.



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## Slide 17

### How can we help improve access to nature for everyone?



**If we come together, we can use our collective voice to campaign for changes such as:**

- Improving lighting in public spaces such as parks.
- Developing wheelchair accessible paths in natural spaces.
- Encouraging the use of public transport to limit air pollution from vehicles.



SLIDE 17

## Script

It is important to take time to listen to people's experiences and think creatively about new ideas or plans that could help improve everyone's access to nature. If we come together, we can use our collective voice to campaign for changes such as:

- Improving lighting in public spaces such as parks.
- Developing wheelchair accessible paths in natural spaces.
- Encouraging the use of public transport to limit air pollution from vehicles.





## Slide 18

### Final thoughts



Our relationship with nature is reciprocal, which means that we can protect and look after each other.



SLIDE 18

### Script

Nature offers many benefits to both our physical and mental health. When we build our connection with nature it is also important to think about what we can do to protect and nurture the natural environment around us.

Our relationship with nature is reciprocal, which means that we can protect and look after each other. Spend some time thinking about what nature can do for you, and what you can do for nature.



## Slide 19

### Further information and support



SLIDE 19

## Script

*Add to the slide opportunities to get involved with nature at school and in the local community.*

You can find out more tips on connecting with nature by reading the [MHF Tips for Young People on Connecting with Nature by the Mental Health Foundation.](#)

If you are interested in getting involved in youth-led action, why not join the #iwill campaign and sign up to be a #iwill champion – a chance to make a difference in your community and access different opportunities such as WWF's Youth Engagement Programme!





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