

Mental Health
Awareness
Week



Mental Health Awareness Week 2021

10th - 16th May

This year's theme: Nature



@sanctus

What is Mental Health Awareness Week?

MHAW is a UK-wide event that runs every year. It does exactly what it says on the tin; this week is all about increasing the awareness around mental health.

Each year has a specific theme, with this year's theme being **Nature**.

Perhaps one day this week will no longer be needed. But while the conversation around mental health lags behind where it needs to be, this week is an important date in the calendar.



Why is it important?

After a year in which most of us have been locked away, and as we begin to see restrictions lifted, the theme of **Nature** couldn't be more relevant.

Nature plays a fundamental role in supporting our mental health. One study back in the 1960s found that patients who were treated in hospitals with a view of nature recovered faster than those who didn't.

Of course, this week isn't just about nature, but about mental health in general. So however you want to engage in the conversation this week, it'll be a step forward for yourself and those around you.



What to do / actions / ideas?

How can you get involved in the week?

Take part in fundraising for the Mental Health Foundation.



Visit <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week>

Download free resources from Mind.



Visit [<https://www.mind.org.uk/get-involved/mental-health-awareness-week/>]

Read and share stories from Rethink Mental Illness.



Visit [<https://www.rethink.org/get-involved/awareness-days-and-events/mental-health-awareness-week/>]



The benefits of nature

Getting in touch with nature has powerful effects on your mental and physical health. Interestingly, you don't necessarily have to be out in nature - simply having scenes of nature can have an impact on your mind and body.

Nature can:

- reduce anxiety, stress and anger
- increase pleasant feelings
- reduce your heart rate & blood pressure, muscle tension and stress hormones
- increase the release of healthy immune cells





Get out into nature.

Even just going for a short 10-20 minute walk can help soothe your nervous system. When you walk outside, see if you can also bring your awareness and attention into the environment. Be present to the sounds of the birds, the feeling of the air, the colours and textures of the natural space around you.

Bring nature in to you.

Even just a few pot plants in your room can impact your mood, giving you a sense of calm and ease. Taking care of plants is also a great way to reconnect with the natural rhythms of growth and development. The textures of natural elements, and the slow & steady growth of plants can help your mind and body adjust to more steady, calm pace of living.

Detox from digital.

Why not spend a weekend without any technology? Getting into nature is not just about the outdoors, but also about getting back in touch with your own body and mind's natural rhythms. Spend the weekend reading (physical) books, cooking, planting, building puzzles, playing boardgames, walking, drawing, writing. Get bored! It's a great way for your mind to shift gear to a slower, nourishing tempo.



What can I do for my mental health if I'm struggling?

Sometimes feeling better takes more than a walk in the park. If you're in a really tough place, you may not have the motivation or energy to take yourself outside. Or, even if you do, you may still feel anxious, blue, demotivated or stressed.

There is support available! Why not reach out to a counsellor / therapist, and talk to them?

Here are some places you can find qualified professionals who can give you a non-judgemental space to listen:

- BetterHelp: An app with therapists around the world, ready to give you a supportive space. Anytime, anywhere. [<https://www.betterhelp.com/>]
- Craving face-to-face contact as lockdown eases? Then find a therapist near you here: [<https://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/>]
- NHS:
[<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/talking-therapies-medicine-treatments/talking-therapies-and-counselling/nhs-talking-therapies/>]
- Why not combine emotional support with community and nature, by joining a GreenGym, or a CarryOn Gardening
<https://www.tcv.org.uk/health/>
<https://www.carryongardening.org.uk/about-this-website.aspx>



Immediate Help

If you or someone you know is in immediate need of help, then here are some resources that may help.

- **Sanctus Directory**
(<https://sanctus.io/directory/>)
A list of free and paid resources for mental health
- **Mind**
(<https://www.mind.org.uk/>)
Mental health charity with resources and support line
- **Samaritans**
(<https://www.samaritans.org/>)
Helpline for those struggling with suicide

