

CLAHRCBITE

Brokering Innovation Through Evidence

TITLE: Does a Mindfulness-Based Connection to Nature Intervention Reduce Stress and Improve Wellbeing?



To identify whether attendance of an 8-week mindfulness-based connection to nature (MCN) intervention can improve stress and wellbeing in comparison to an 8-week walking in nature, active control group (ACG) intervention.

Background

Inequalities with regards to access to urban greenspace are often associated with socio-economic deprivation, which in turn is linked with poor mental health. Greenspace in general can provide many direct and indirect benefits to health and wellbeing. Accessing parks and local greenspace can improve mental health and wellbeing for the general population. Mindfulness-based interventions have also shown reductions in stress levels across both clinical and non-clinical populations.

Who was involved?

Sessions were ran and recruited through community centres, charities, local groups, hospitals and GP surgeries. A member of the public who had experience of mindfulness, and a previous service user, was involved in all areas of development of the intervention and questionnaires used.

What did we do?

An adapted Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) intervention was developed to include elements of the natural environment in an 8-week guided meditation programme. Participants attended a weekly 2-hour MCN session for eight consecutive weeks, outside in local greenspace, parks, forests and nature reserves. The interventions took place across five different locations within the North West of England.

Participants attended a weekly walking group for eight consecutive weeks, outside in local greenspace, parks, forests and nature reserves. Sessions were led by volunteer walk leaders.

Questionnaires were completed at baseline, post-intervention and 8-week follow-up, to capture data on stress levels, wellbeing, mindfulness, connection to nature and mental health.

What we found and what does this mean?

Perceived stress levels reduced from baseline to post-intervention for both groups, with long-term effectiveness being reported for MCN. Participants in the MCN intervention showed significant long-term effects for the improvement of wellbeing, whereas the ACG only showed a significant post-intervention effect. A significant intervention x time effect was found for connection to nature when controlling for baseline scores.

What next?

MCN sessions are continuing to run across the North West Coast through Mersey Forest within the Natural Health Service.

Partners / Stakeholders

Mersey Forest, Nature4Health, Natural Health Service, Big Lottery, Mindfulness Matters, Macmillan and Active Sefton.

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What is NIHR CLAHRC NWC?

The mission of the NIHR CLAHRC NWC is to work collaboratively with Partner organisations and other stakeholders including members of the public to co-produce and conduct high-quality, leadership enhancing, applied research designed to decrease health inequalities and improve the health of the population of the North West Coast.

Find out more

<http://www.clahrc-nwc.nihr.ac.uk/index.php>

info-clahrc-nwc@nihr.ac.uk / 0151 795 5342