



The Great Outdoors and Nature Therapy

by Emma Sims, Holistic Therapist

'Let's go for a walk and blow away the cobwebs' my mum would say when I was younger and off we'd go for a biting winter walk by the sea. Other times she'd say 'look at that beautiful sunset' and my sister and I would roll our eyes and laugh.

My Dad loved the North Wales countryside and would take us bilberry picking, which I 'grumped' about; I'd rather have been playing with my friends 'down the stream' or at the beach on a sunny day. We all have a different way of connecting with the natural world.

Shin Rin Yoku

Studies, including of the Japanese practice **'Shin Rin Yoku'** or Forest Bathing, have highlighted the long-suspected measurable benefits of being out in nature. These benefits include **a decrease in blood pressure and a reduction in stress hormones**, which may also help immunity.

The seaside has long been a recuperative place for the physically ill. An atmospheric tunnel of trees can feel like harmony as it soothes the soul and I love the phrase **'the green gym'**. Then there's the glimpse of wildlife or a bird which always surprises, delights or inspires us. Taking photos of nature can open our perception as we look at the enlarged flower or bee through macro photography.

Choose only one master – nature. (Rembrandt)

Nature Soothes and Nourishes

Many years ago, as I worked through my mental health issues, **I came to a place of deep appreciation and respect** for the role that nature seemed to be playing in helping my well-being. I felt better for it and came to love walking. Another mood dip two years ago nudged me to take an extra self-care day off weekly and walk up and down **the Llangollen canal.**

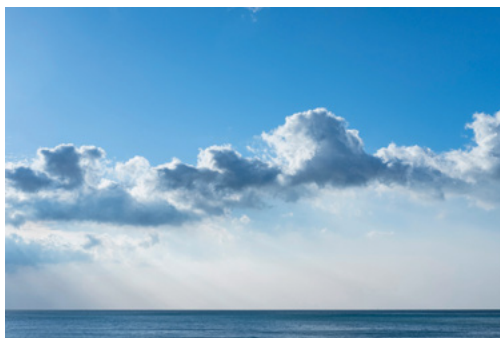
Nature soothes and nourishes our inner stillness. We can then begin to experience cognitive quiet as our mind chatter decreases. The Japanese word 'Yugen' means **'a profound, mysterious sense of the beauty of the universe'**. Many people find that deep appreciation of nature is one that touches and inspires them.

A Silver Lining

The silver lining to this year is seeing so many more people, who hadn't previously considered the benefits, enjoying nature.

Our relationship with nature is a reciprocal one so, if walking isn't for you, there are other ways:

- Perhaps a litter pick with organisations such as Keep Wales Tidy to help improve our area?
- Can we help out a local group such as the 'Friends of



Moss Valley' to maintain and give something back to our community and environment?

- Gathering blackberries or sloes (but leave some for the wildlife!)

Enriching our lives with a relationship with nature **can help us to feel more whole, balanced and grounded.** I frequently look 'through the eyes of a tourist' when I see our local countryside and feel extraordinarily blessed to live in such a beautiful part of the world. Those of us who already engage in life in this way can appreciate it, but for others who are just opening the door to it, come on in and let Mother Nature welcome you!

Emma has written a book about self-care which is available through [WordWorx Publishing](#). You can obtain more details from [emmasims.co.uk](#).

Emma is a complementary holistic therapist, intuitive practitioner and Reiki teacher with 20+ years' experience in this field. She is based at the Community Resource Centre in Gwersyllt.