



Eco-Therapy

Eco-therapy is based on the emerging field of eco-psychology, which looks at the relationship between mind, body, spirit and our culture's increasing disconnection from the natural world. Eco-therapy helps people find balance, connection, guidance, and healing through deepening their relationship with nature.

Many people encounter emotional or heart-based feelings when exposed to nature, and the Eco-therapist can build on these feelings to strengthen an inner 'spiritual' connection with their environment.

The practice of eco-therapy helps us to see our personal needs and wants within the web of life—to find ways to honor all our relations. Eco-therapy aims to break down and heal the disconnection between nature, to de-fragment our lives and reconnect ourselves to the systems upon which we depend for life and meaning. This is done through direct, guided experience of nature, which provides both a mirror for reflecting on the human condition and a tactile reminder that we depend on the Earth's biosphere for our very existence.

Eco-therapy works on two levels: The first is Earth-bound or Earth-centered, and is focused primarily on living sustainably for the benefit of the planet as a whole. On this level, being immersed in nature reminds us that we are simply a small part of a bigger picture, rather than a separate and dominant force. When we begin to see the earth and ourselves as one, it becomes natural for us to act sustainably. Only then do we realize that feelings of guilt, anxiety and despair result from our failure to act.

The second level is person-centered. The process of Eco-therapy focuses primarily on providing benefits to the individual. Contact with nature becomes restorative, a place for reflection and, for many, creates a place of spiritual connection grounded in a wider sense of belonging and presence. The beauty of Eco-therapy is that it usually leads to a feeling of interconnection and relationship and to a consciousness that recognizes that a healthy planet and a healthy individual are part of the same process - the process of sacred and authentic living.

Excerpts from H. Clinebell, *Ecotherapy: Healing Ourselves, Healing the Earth*. Fortress Press, 1996.