



# Wellbeing and Blue Spaces

## Using creative methods to explore connections to blue spaces and build resilience

### KS3 PSHE

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## Specialist knowledge for teachers

### Overview

There is an increasing amount of mental health issues amongst young people and spending time outdoors within The Bay area can help with enhancing wellbeing and resilience. The use of creative methods can enable young people to explore and reflect on the mechanisms through which the interaction with blue spaces can enhance their sense of place and connection to the natural environment and build resilience. Such methods can include photography, sketching or mental mapping, depending on interests and abilities.

### Evidence

Research has revealed that spending time outdoors benefits health and wellbeing. In recent years, there has been an increase in studies demonstrating the positive impacts that exposure to blue spaces (water-based environments, from the sea to lakes and rivers) can bring to physical and emotional health, and across different age groups (for example, reducing the risk of anxiety and depression). Considering the increasing amount of mental health issues amongst young people, visiting blue spaces constitutes a valuable therapeutic intervention.

These benefits have been recognized by a broad range of researchers, stakeholders and influential organisations. For example, the Environmental Agency conducted workshops to gather personal and professional perspectives on the subject and published its findings in a report that highlighted the health benefits that blue spaces can bring.

In a 2021 report, the World Health Organisation (WHO) highlighted the positive relationship between green and blue spaces and mental health.

It is also acknowledged that a greater recognition of the services provided by nature, and a further engagement with nature, can facilitate pro-environmental behaviours, hence feeding into the sustainability imperative.

This activity links to the environmental and social dimensions of sustainability. It focuses on young people's wellbeing and demonstrates the need to value and protect the natural (blue) environment.

### Activities based in research

#### 1. In class

Discussion on the topic of outdoor space and wellbeing and the use of creative methods

#### 2. Outdoor

Use photography or sketching to capture the features of the blue space around

#### 3. In class

Exploring and reflecting on the activity, e.g:

- How the place made them feel
- How photography/sketching made them feel
- What did they enjoy in these places, and in the art activity
- How can they use this experience in future

#### 4. Follow-up task



# Examples in Practice

## Toolkit for pupils

### 1. Rationale

There is an increasing amount of mental health issues amongst young people and spending time in green and blue spaces benefits health and wellbeing.

### 2. Overview of the session and activity

Using creative methods (photography, sketching) to explore and reflect on the mechanisms through which spending time in blue spaces can enhance the sense of connection to the natural environment, build resilience and benefit mental wellbeing.

### 3. In-class discussion

- How much of your time do you spend outdoors?
- When is this?
- What activities do you do outdoors?
- Do you feel any differently when you have not been outdoors all day?
- Tell your partner about the last time that you spent a whole day outdoors

### 4. Self-reflection

- Can you come up with 5 things that you do when you feel stressed or sad?
- How much time do you spend in 'blue space'? How does it make you feel?



### 5. Outdoor activity

- Take your time to pick a place(s)/ a view(s) that you enjoy or that means something to you
- Capture it using either photography (you can use a camera or a mobile phone) or sketching
- You can pick more than one place

### 6. In-class reflection

- Why did you take this picture(s)/decide to draw this place(s)?
- How would you describe this place in a few words?
- What does it mean to you?
- How does this place make you feel?
- How did this activity make you feel?
- How does looking at this picture(s)/sketch(es) make you feel?





# Curriculum aims and objectives

- KS3
- Year 7 & 8
- PSHE
- In this work we are going to explore the benefits and importance of time spent outdoors in blue spaces on mental wellbeing and happiness.

## Head

This resource will support students in engaging with the growing research field that demonstrates the link between blue spaces and positive wellbeing. By developing awareness of the psychological and scientific evidence base, students will be in a better position to understand more fully the positive impacts which nature can have on their lives.

## Heart

The key to our approach is developing a positive relationship with outdoor blue spaces and thus recognise the need to care for and protect these.

## Hands

The approach offers plenty of scope for hands-on, creative experiences in the local environment, where arts-based activities can develop a deeper sense of connection to place and inspire the production of creative outputs.

The World Health Organisation defines 'health' as: 'a complete state of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing not merely the absence of disease'.

If this is the definition of health, how would we define mental health?

What is the link between emotional, physical and mental health?

# What is Mental Health?



## Blue spaces: why time spent near water is the secret of happiness



People who visit the coast at least twice weekly tend to experience better general and mental health,' says Dr Lewis Elliott. Composite: Getty Images  
Coastal environments have been shown to improve our health, body and mind. So should doctors start issuing nature-based prescriptions?

Spend some time reading this article about Blue Spaces – highlight where it mentions the benefits of being near water

Blue spaces: why time spent near water is the secret of happiness  
Health & wellbeing, The Guardian

## Adaptations to extend impact

- This activity can be adapted to a wide range of places and outdoor spaces
- The activity can include the use of other creative methods in addition to photography and sketching (e.g. mental mapping, video, etc.)
- This activity could be given to staff members to do as a well-being activity

