



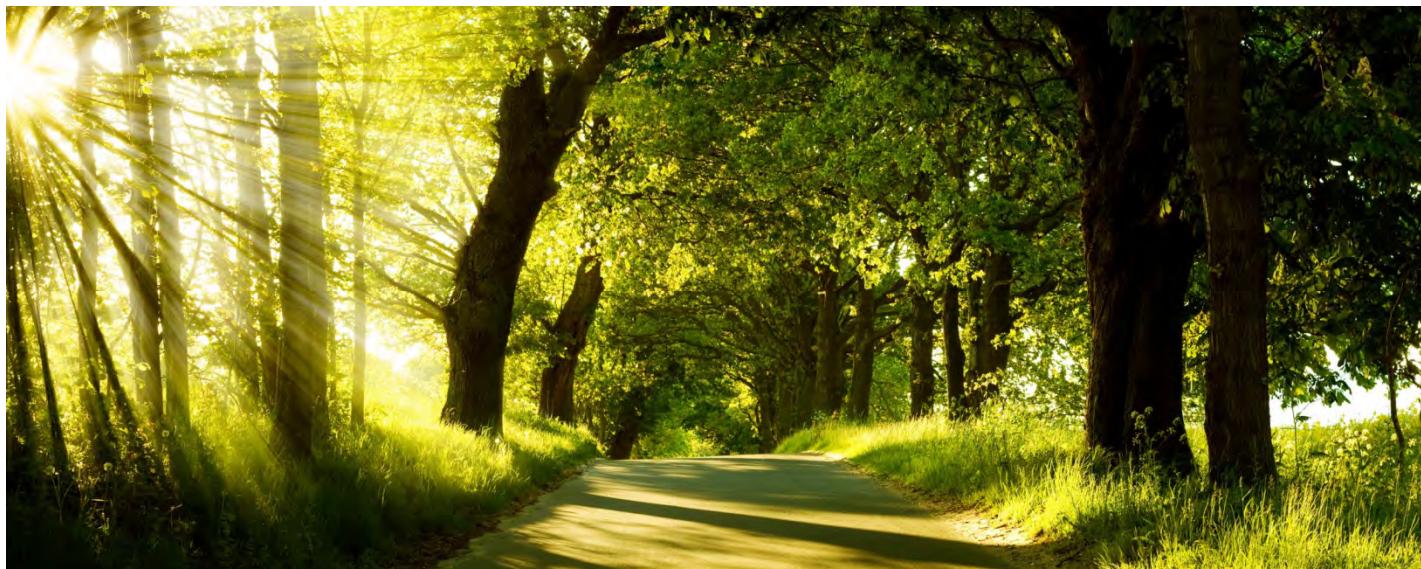
Ecotherapy with Dementia Clients

Andrew Waterhouse
Occupational Therapist

Hammersmith and Fulham
Cognitive Impairment and
Dementia service

West London Mental Health
NHS Trust

What is Ecotherapy?



How we developed it?

Ecotherapy training + herb training workshop (PlantaSeed) + Mindfulness (existing expertise) + needs of dementia clients + social and therapeutic horticulture knowledge + resource availability

Aims and objectives

- To stimulate memory and increase concentration
- To improve overall mental and physical wellbeing
- To reduce stress and improve coping strategies
- To reconnect our clients relationship with nature in an otherwise urban environment.
- To encourage Mindfulness as a vehicle to self-management of mental health.
- To facilitate collective learning, peer support and reduce the sense of social exclusion



What we did

- **Week 1: Introduction to Nature therapy**

Name games- Mindful movement. Explain Nature therapy, experiences of nature therapy. Quality of life assessment. Wild Geese poem

- **Week 2: Mindfulness Part One**

Mindful walking, getting to know another living thing, I appreciate... Intro to Mindfulness. Mindful eating. Cookie of childhood reading

- **Week 3: Mindfulness Part Two**

Seated Tai Chi in garden. Tree meditation. Mindfulness of sound. Lost poem

- **Week 4: Gardening**

Mindfulness of herbs and planting. Planting herbs. Discussion re: benefits of gardening.

What we did (continued)

- **Week 5: Ravenscourt Park trip**

Wild Geese poem. Tree appreciation. Four elements. Mindful walk. I appreciate. Interconnectedness reading

- **Week 6: Herbs**

Exploring herb garden. Herb tasting (3 teas and lavender biscuits). Mountain meditation. You reading this be ready poem.

- **Week 7: Kew Gardens Trip**

Tai chi/ structured public lesson. Palm House, Lily House and Princess of Wales glasshouse.

- **Week 8: Reflections/ Group review**

Web of life. Summer day poem. Overview of group. Quality of life assessment. Feedback discussion. What's next?/ moving on. Harmony reading

Strengths

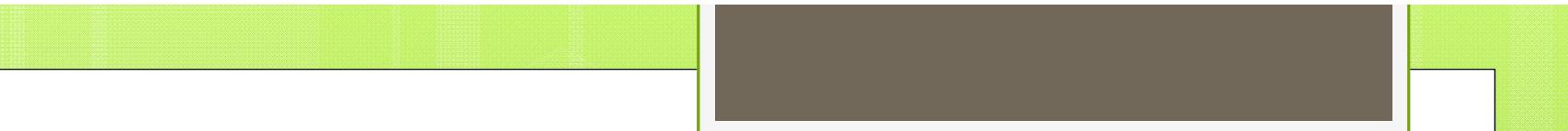
- Variety and originality of activities to participants
- Whole body/ multi sensory (smells, touch, taste etc)
- Focussed on being, non-striving (not goal orientated)
- Inclusive/ levelling, allowed choice/ freedom
- High consistent attendance (8) and active participation
- Experiential
- Reversal of expert/learner dynamic
- Encouraged physical activity in fresh outdoor air
- Allowed space to reflect/ no 'right or wrong'
- Facilitator's knowledge of Mindfulness
- Community venue was beneficial (social inclusion)
- Appealed to all genders



Weaknesses



- Lack of follow on groups in community
- Time consuming to develop/ plan (especially due to being new)
- Mobility excluded some clients
- English language exclusions
- Some sessions lacked enough reflective space
- Training needs for the facilitators (Ecotherapy/ Mindfulness/ Horticulture)= complicated group to facilitate
- Weather dependant!
- Memory clients limited ability to retain information post session



Participants view

- "I never get to go outside, I look forward to being outside in the garden"
- "Before I felt grey, heavy and tense... now I feel relaxed and light"
- "I get it, its like not worrying about the future, not thinking about the past, but being here now"
- "I felt a sense of quietness"
- "I like meeting other people with similar problems, so I don't feel alone"
- "I'd like to carry this on when I get home"
- "It makes my worries seem small, when the world seems so big"
- "Its been years since I've done anything like this"
- "My favourite thing was the mindful walking"
- "I appreciated hearing the sounds of birds"

Next Steps

- Facilitating future Nature Therapy groups- next group planned for July 2015 in CID Hammersmith and Fulham
- Facilitators receiving more training in Mindfulness
- Clinical trials involvement in evaluating study in Hammersmith and Fulham

Clinical Research Proposal

- Question asked: 'Does ecotherapy improve the quality of life for dementia clients?'
- Plan to collect data on 3 cohorts of 8 clients starting from July 2015.
- Outcome measures:
 - EQ-5D-3L (quality of life scale)
 - Zarit Burden Interview
 - Qualitative feedback on improvements to Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms



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