

Developing Green Care Wellness Program for Professionals with Highly Stressful Jobs

Project number: No. 2022-1-LT01-KA220-VET-000087600



ENERGY

Wellness Health Program

Toolkit for Implementing the **ENERGY** Program



**Co-funded by
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Project partners



Coordinator
Viesoji istaiga "Svietimo, tyrimu ir konsultaciju centras"
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Unit 3.2. Nature-Based Mental Health Tools for Facilitators

Integrating nature-based activities into mental health initiatives can significantly enhance the well-being of participants in the ENERGY Program. These tools exploit the healing power of natural environments to promote mental health and emotional resilience. Grounded in the concept of biophilia—the innate human connection to nature—these activities aim to reduce stress, improve mood, and promote overall health.

Here, we explore various ideas for nature-based mental health tools and how to effectively combine them for maximum impact.

Nature-Based Mental Health Tools

1. Forest Bathing (Shinrin-yoku)

Forest bathing, or Shinrin-yoku, is a practice that involves immersing oneself in a forest environment. This activity encourages participants to engage their senses by walking slowly, breathing deeply, and taking in the sights, sounds, and smells of the forest. Research has shown that forest bathing can reduce cortisol levels (a stress hormone), lower blood pressure, and enhance mood. Facilitators can guide participants through this practice, helping them to connect deeply with nature and experience its calming effects.

2. Nature Journaling

Nature journaling encourages participants to spend time in natural settings while documenting their sensory experiences, thoughts, and emotions. This practice fosters mindfulness and self-reflection, allowing individuals to process their feelings and gain insights into their mental state. By regularly engaging in nature journaling, participants can enhance their emotional awareness and develop a stronger connection to the natural world.

3. Outdoor Yoga and Meditation

Conducting yoga and meditation sessions in natural settings can significantly enhance relaxation and mindfulness. The serene environment of a park, garden, or forest provides a calming backdrop that amplifies the benefits of these practices. Facilitators can lead participants through gentle yoga poses and guided meditations, helping them to cultivate a sense of peace and well-being while immersed in nature.

4. Therapeutic Gardening

Therapeutic gardening involves participants in gardening activities, such as planting, weeding, and nurturing plants. This hands-on approach not only promotes physical activity but also provides a sense of accomplishment and purpose. Gardening has been shown to reduce

symptoms of anxiety and depression, and the act of caring for living plants can be incredibly soothing and fulfilling. Facilitators can create gardening projects that allow participants to engage with nature and experience its therapeutic benefits.

5. Eco-Art Therapy

Eco-art therapy combines the creative process with nature-based materials to foster emotional expression and healing. Participants use natural items such as leaves, stones, and flowers to create art pieces, allowing them to explore their feelings and release stress. This form of therapy encourages creativity, enhances self-awareness, and provides a unique way to connect with nature. Facilitators can guide participants through eco-art therapy sessions, helping them to express themselves and find solace in the natural world.



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Nature-based Tool

FOREST BATHING FOR STRESS RELIEF

Description	Forest Bathing, or Shinrin-yoku, is a nature-based mindfulness activity designed to reduce stress and promote mental health. Participants immerse themselves in a forest or natural setting, engaging their senses and practicing mindfulness to achieve a state of relaxation and connection with nature.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foster a deep connection with nature to reduce stress.• Develop mindfulness skills in a natural setting.• Provide stress management techniques that participants can apply in their professional and personal lives.• Promote a sustainable and healthy approach to managing stress and energy.
Green Care Connection	Forest Bathing is an effective nature-based activity that aligns with the goals of the Green Care Wellness Program. It introduces green care wellness practices and solutions to work-related stress, helping professionals manage their energy sustainably. This tool is relevant for VET trainers, HR and Health & Safety consultants, medical professionals, education and helping professionals, service industry professionals, SMEs managers, owners, and entrepreneurs, etc.
Resources & Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On-site setting: In a forest, large park, or nature reserve.• One trainer and one co-trainer• Small groups: Ideally 8-12 participants.• Comfortable clothing and walking shoes

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Nature-based Tool

FOREST BATHING FOR STRESS RELIEF

Tool Implementation

- **Step 1: Introduction**

The facilitator welcomes participants, explains the objectives of the activity, and the benefits of Forest Bathing for mental health. (Duration: 15 minutes)

- **Step 2: Breathing Exercise**

Guide participants through a deep breathing exercise to help them relax and be present. (Duration: 10 minutes)

- **Step 3: Mindful Observation**

Participants choose a spot in the forest and focus on observing their surroundings with all their senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch. (Duration: 20 minutes)

- **Step 4: Sensory Exploration**

Participants move slowly through the forest, focusing on different sensations like the texture of leaves, the sound of birds, and the smell of the earth. (Duration: 30 minutes)

- **Step 5: Silent Walk**

Participants walk in silence, integrating mindfulness and sensory observation practices. (Duration: 30 minutes)

- **Step 6: Reflection Circle**

Participants gather in a circle and share their experiences and feelings during the activity. The facilitator asks guided questions to encourage reflection and discussion. (Duration: 20 minutes)

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Unit 3.2. Resources for Promoting Nature-Based Activities and Mental Health

As a facilitator of the ENERGY Program, leveraging high-quality online resources can greatly enhance your ability to implement effective nature-based activities and support mental health. Below are three valuable resources, each explained in detail along with the rationale for incorporating them into the ENERGY training program.

1. Greater Good Science Center (GGSC) - Nature & Environment Resources

The **Greater Good Science Center (GGSC)** at UC Berkeley offers a comprehensive collection of research-based articles, practices, and videos that explore the connection between nature and well-being. This resource includes tools for practicing mindfulness in nature, fostering gratitude for the natural world, and understanding the psychological benefits of green spaces.

Link: <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/>

Why Facilitators Should Use This Resource:

- **Evidence-Based Practices:** The scientifically validated techniques align with the ENERGY program's emphasis on effective, research-backed methods. Facilitators can confidently integrate these practices knowing they are grounded in solid research.
- **Diverse Formats:** With articles, guided practices, and videos, facilitators can cater to various learning styles, enhancing participant engagement and retention.
- **Holistic Approach:** Covering topics from mindfulness to environmental stewardship, this resource supports the holistic goals of the ENERGY program, helping participants develop a well-rounded understanding of wellness.

2. Mindful.org - Nature and Mindfulness

Mindful.org is a leading platform for mindfulness practices, offering a dedicated section on nature-based mindfulness. It includes guided meditations, articles, and exercises designed to help individuals connect with nature, reduce stress, and enhance emotional well-being.

Link: <https://www.mindful.org/>

Why Facilitators Should Use This Resource:

- **Accessible Practices:** The easy-to-follow guided meditations and exercises can be seamlessly integrated into daily routines, making them practical additions to the ENERGY program.
- **Stress Reduction Focus:** Techniques for using nature to manage stress complement the ENERGY program's goals of enhancing mental health and resilience.
- **Community Support:** The community forum allows facilitators and participants to share experiences and tips, fostering a supportive and interactive learning environment.

3. European Network for Health Promoting Schools (ENHPS) - Health and Sustainability in VET Centers

The European Network for Health Promoting Schools (ENHPS) provides resources and guidelines for promoting health and sustainability in educational settings, including Vocational Education and Training (VET) centers. This resource includes practical tools for integrating nature-based activities and mental health support into VET curricula and environments.

Link: <https://www.schoolsforhealth.org/>

Why Facilitators Should Use This Resource:

- **Comprehensive Guidelines:** The detailed guidelines on creating health-promoting and sustainable environments can be adapted for workplace training programs, providing a robust framework for facilitators.
- **Focus on Education:** Although designed for VET centers, the resources can be adapted to workplace settings, supporting the ENERGY program's aim of fostering wellness in various environments.
- **European Perspective:** Ensures relevance to European contexts and standards, helping facilitators address regional needs and regulations effectively.

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Unit 3.2. Guidelines for Maintaining a Healthy and Sustainable Environment

Green Care involves nature-based interventions and activities designed to improve both physical and mental health. These guidelines aim to provide practical and actionable steps for facilitators to incorporate into the ENERGY Program, promoting a holistic approach to mental health and sustainability.

Regular Interaction with Nature

Regular interaction with natural environments has been shown to reduce stress, improve mood, and enhance overall mental health. Facilitators should organize training sessions and activities in parks, gardens, or other green spaces. Incorporating short, guided nature walks into the program schedule encourages mindfulness and relaxation. Additionally, ensuring that the training venue includes access to green spaces, such as gardens or indoor plants, creates a calming atmosphere for participants.



Nature-Based Mindfulness Practices

Mindfulness practices significantly enhance mental health by promoting relaxation, reducing anxiety, and improving emotional regulation. Nature-based mindfulness practices leverage the calming effect of natural environments. Facilitators can lead guided mindfulness meditations focusing on nature, such as listening to the sounds of birds or feeling the texture of leaves. Encouraging participants to spend time observing natural elements, like the patterns in leaves or the movement of clouds, fosters mindfulness. Natural settings are also ideal for facilitating deep breathing exercises, helping participants to relax and center themselves.



Fostering a Community of Support

A supportive community enhances mental health by providing social connections, emotional support, and a sense of belonging. Facilitators should organize group activities that promote teamwork and collaboration, such as gardening projects or outdoor team-building exercises. Establishing a peer support system where participants can share their experiences and provide mutual support is crucial. Additionally, fostering an environment of open communication where participants feel comfortable discussing their mental health and well-being can make a significant impact.



Educating on the Benefits of Green Care

Educating participants on the benefits of Green Care increases their understanding and motivation to engage in nature-based activities. Facilitators can conduct workshops explaining the science behind Green Care and its mental health benefits. Providing educational materials, such as articles and videos, on the positive impact of nature on mental health can empower participants. Sharing success stories and case studies of individuals who have benefited from Green Care interventions also inspires participants to engage in these activities.



Encouraging Sustainable Practices

Sustainable practices benefit the environment and contribute to the overall well-being of participants. Facilitators can promote eco-friendly habits, such as recycling, composting, and reducing waste within the program. Involving participants in sustainable projects, like planting trees or creating community gardens, fosters a sense of purpose and connection to the world. Educating participants on the importance of sustainability and how they can incorporate green practices into their daily lives further supports their mental health and well-being.





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Wellness Programs in organisations – Good Practices



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Employee wellness programs examples

- Yoga classes
- Lunch and snacks for better health
- Financial counseling
- Volunteer opportunities
- Wellness challenges
- Smoking cessation programs
- On-site fitness centers
- Flexible Working Hours
- Employee Activity Clubs
- On-site Gardening
- On-site Individual or Group

- Counseling
- Naps
- Remote Working
- Celebrating Employee Success
- Childcare Facilities
- Wellness Newsletter
- Nutrition Education
- Employee Field Days
- Workplace Library
- Games Room
- Ongoing Education
- Virtual Exercise Challenges



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PwC

Company Overview:

PwC one of the 4 largest professional services firms in the world that provides business advisory services (auditing, accounting, taxation, strategy management, human resource consulting, etc.)



Values and Behaviours:



Act with integrity



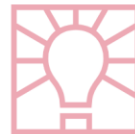
Make a difference



Care



Work together



Reimagine the possible



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Care

- Make the effort to understand every individual and what matters to them
- Recognise the value that each person contributes
- Support others to grow and work in the ways that bring out their best



PwC – Be Well, Work Well Program

Our Be Well, Work Well framework

The six well-being dimensions



Be Well, Work Well is about forming everyday healthy habits that help fuel our six dimensions of well-being – **Physical, Emotional, Mental, Spiritual, Financial and Social** – which are proven drivers of performance, fulfillment and engagement. This goes beyond the traditional employee wellness programs focused mostly on physical health; it's a holistic approach to a more happier and healthier life.



DeAnne Aussem

Well-being Leader and Managing Director, PwC US

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[Kim Black](#)

Well-being Director, PwC US

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“To be our best selves at work, home and everywhere in between, we encourage our people to speak up for what’s important to them and incorporate healthy habits into their routine.” - DeAnne Aussem (Well-being Leader and Managing Director)



PwC – Be Well, Work Well Program



Be Well, Work Well framework

What are our six dimensions of well-being?

My Well-being Assessment

How well are you feeling today?

Habit Bank

Withdraw a few employee-sourced, healthy habits to help fuel your well

Focus on mental well-being

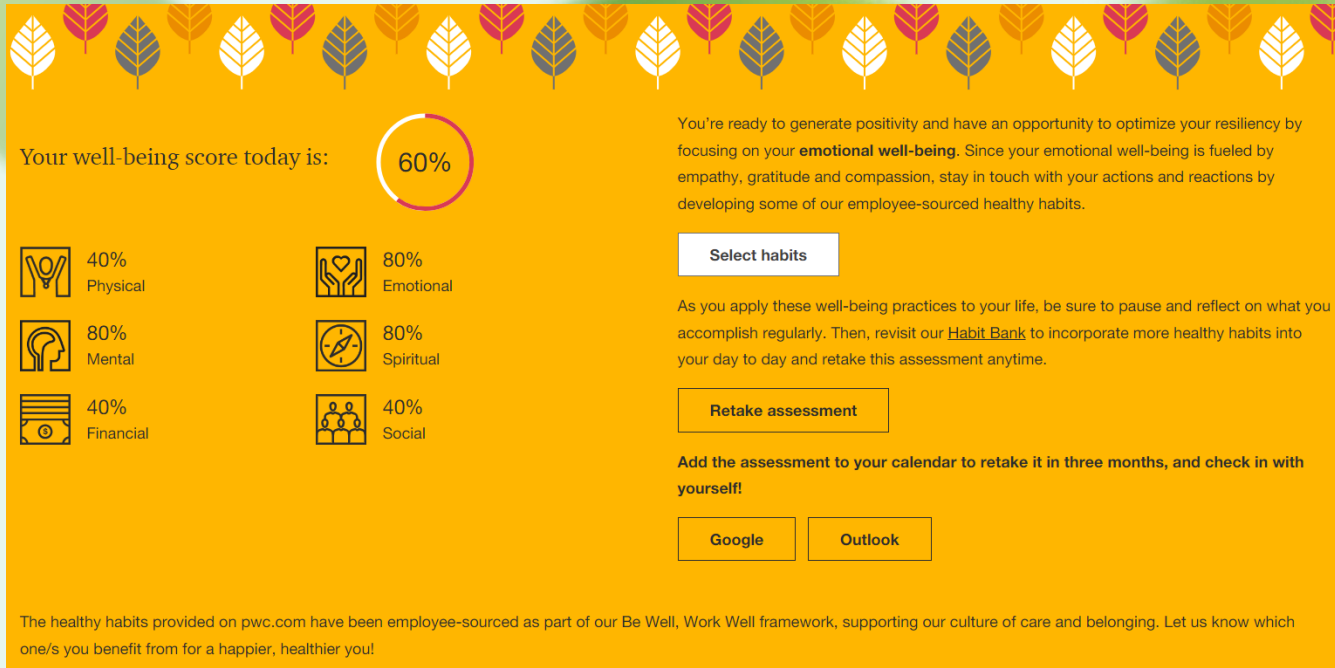
It's OK to not be OK - and it's OK to talk about it! Here's how.

https://www.pwc.com/us/en/about-us/purpose-and-values/be-well-work-well/habit-bank.html#dimensions_emotional

<https://www.pwc.com/us/en/about-us/purpose-and-values/be-well-work-well/mental-health-in-the-workplace.html>

PwC – My Well-being Assessment

<https://www.pwc.com/us/en/about-us/purpose-and-values/be-well-work-well.html#assessment>





PwC – Be Well, Work Well Program



Nutrition

PwC is committed to healthy eating, both in its cafeteria and in its vending machines, with healthy and organic products and sugar-free drinks

Flexibility

We promote flexibility at work and initiatives to facilitate work-life balance

Sports

The firm encourages its employees to practice sport through various initiatives, race sponsorships, sports clubs

Health & Benefits

PwC employees enjoy tailored advantages and benefits, such as a physiotherapist at work or the flexible compensation plan



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Madrid, 21 January 2021. PwC Spain has reached an agreement with the digital health insurer, Elma, to offer its more than 4,500 professionals its Digital Healthcare service, which they will be able to enjoy completely free of charge. This initiative is part of PwC's Be well, work well programme, aimed at caring for the well-being and protecting the health of professionals, which also includes actions in areas such as nutrition, sport, and flexibility at work, among others.

Mahou San Miguel

Mahou San Miguel, a leading Spanish beer company, and its innovative approach to employee well-being through the establishment of a **Happiness Area**. This strategic division, introduced in 2018 as part of the People & Organization team, aims to promote positive emotions among the company's professionals.

Company Overview:

Mahou San Miguel is a prominent Spanish beer company with a global presence in over 70 countries. Describes itself as a family of over 4,250 professionals dedicated to ensuring their brands are part of consumers' best moments.

Values and Human Factor:

Emphasizes the importance of the **human factor**, treating people as more than just resources. Decision-making considers the impact on individuals and their environment, not solely focused on results.



✧ ✧ Mahou San Miguel – Happiness Area ✧ ✧

- In 2018, Mahou launched the Happiness Area within the **People & Organization team**.
- Appoints a **Chief Happiness Officer (CHO)** to oversee the strategy and initiatives.

Evolution from Stress to Emotional Wellbeing

- Comprehensive strategy for enhancing **the emotional well-being of employees**.
- Previously focused on stress-related programs, Mahou shifted its approach to address **emotional imbalances**.
- Aims for "**stressed but happy**" individuals, acknowledging the role of stress as a useful tool in daily life.
- Mahou pioneers the concept of **Biological Happiness**, focusing on the development of individuals based on scientific knowledge about brain functioning.



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Mahou San Miguel

Chief Happiness Officer (CHO)



Dr. Paloma Fuentes, CHO in Mahou San Miguel

“a CHO doesn't make people happy; individuals achieve happiness through personal commitment and awareness”.

CHO Tasks:

- Measure and analyse the well-being of the company's employees.
- Actively listen to employees.
- Provide spaces for communication, recognition and proposals for improvement and information.
- Identify and promote organisational values and corporate culture.
- Facilitate training and development programmes.
- Build and encourage employee engagement.
- Promote appropriate performance evaluation.- Executive and team coaching.



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WELLY PROJECT

<https://welly-project.eu/>



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EUROPEAN PROJECT

WELLY

Introducing the Job Profile of a Manager for Work Well-being to Prevent and Combat Work-related Stress

Happiness measurement



TOOLS TO MEASURE INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL HAPPINESS:

- DILO Work climate survey: <https://www.mindtools.com/auiqv7/dilo-day-in-the-life-of-analysis>
- Energy levels (before and after a specific activity)
- CHEF® (Happiness Specific Skills Questionnaire), questionnaire - algorithm that measures the individual levels of the 20 primary happiness training competencies



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Impact on Health and Productivity

- Connection between health, happiness, and productivity.
 - Reduce ailments caused by emotional imbalances through training mental abilities.
-
- Employee Engagement and Productivity
 - Talent Retention
 - Foster creativity and innovation
 - Reduction in Absenteeism
 - Positive Health Impact (reduced stress, lower blood pressure, decreased cardiovascular risk, physical wellbeing, etc.)



Sporting facilities in Mahou's headquarters



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Zappos

Miss recess? Get it back at Zappos. Employees spend an hour a day in active fun. Plus, Zappos recently added a jam room to let employees relax with free music lessons and access to instruments.

Microsoft

Microsoft prioritizes employee wellness with health screening events, onsite health care services, and tons of physical activity like free Zumba classes, walking and running tracks, and sports courts. Onsite grocery shopping and cafes with healthy food options make eating healthy even easier for their team.

Motley Fool

Physical and mental wellness is of prime importance to the Motley Fool team. Along with free fitness classes and personal training sessions, they offer a 50% reimbursement for race enrollment fees.

Asana

Unlimited PTO, daily yoga programs, nap rooms, and an in-house culinary team serving three meals a day round out this tech company's impactful wellness program.



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Thank you!



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