

Resources to Support Using Natural Environments to Support Young Children’s Mental Health

Have you ever noticed that you feel better after spending time in nature? Even a few minutes can make a difference. The same is true for young children: research evidence is demonstrating that spending time in natural environments can help children self-regulate, and also restore cognitive processes that are essential to executive functions and self-regulation. Here are some resources to get you started:

Natural Start Alliance:

The Natural Start Alliance is a project of the North American Association for Environmental Education that promotes quality and access to early childhood environmental education. The site includes many resources and opportunities for networking with other early childhood nature educators.

<https://naturalstart.org/>

https://naturalstart.org/sites/default/files/benefits_of_connecting_children_with_nature_infosheet.pdf

Nature Play Lifestyle YouTube channel and blog:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLPF7GOcvR7OxmOBgcUnu2Q>

<https://www.natureplaylifestyle.com/blog-1>

Children and Nature Network:

Founded by Richard Louv, author of Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder, the mission of CNN is to increase equitable access to nature so that children and the natural world can thrive. This site includes resources for families, schools, urban planners, and anyone working to connect children and youth to the natural world.

<https://www.childrenandnature.org/>

<https://www.childrenandnature.org/resources/family-nature-club-toolkit/>

@ChildrenNature

A few potential funding sources for greening schoolyards*:

<https://growingspaces.com/gardening-grants/>

<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools/resources-for-schools.html>

<https://www.playcore.com/funding/results?country=united-states&state=national&project=nature>

*Many organizations that fund activities to connect children with nature operate on a state or local level, so searching within your community may be a good place to start.