



7 Ways to **reconnect with nature** living in a city

The draw of urban living is often the buzz of the city. However, the noise, chaos and culture can be as exhausting as it is exciting. Sometimes you just need to get away into nature. You needn't go too far to find natural and enriching spaces, as there are plenty of ways to connect with nature and boost your mental health – even in a city centre.

1. Seek out your local green spaces

According to psychologists, spending time in green spaces significantly reduces our stress levels, improves mood, and increases empathy. So, seeking out green spaces nearby is a great way to give your mind a much-needed rest. Find your local parkland, botanic gardens or even a city-centre arboretum for a green escape. Bring a picnic or yoga mat and soak up the scenery. Lie back, close your eyes and listen to nature.



2. Spend time on the water

If you're looking for a way to relax and de-stress, then head out on the water! A recent study from YouGov found that swimming reduces feelings of anxiety. Even just being around flowing waters improves our resilience to stress, similar to meditation. Head to your nearest kayaking or paddle boarding centre for added fun.

3. Plant your own garden indoors and out

You don't need a garden to plant your own flowers, herbs, or shrubs. A small balcony is also be a brilliant planting space. Studies show that caring for plants is deeply rewarding and helps with depression and anxiety. Consider potted olive trees or raised beds with herbs for smaller gardens and balconies. Get creative with decorative grasses and colourful red robin plants in larger spaces. Don't worry if you don't have any outdoor space, caring for house plants has similar benefits!



4. Get up early

Dawn is often when urban spaces are at their quietest, but nature has other ideas. Wake up early and get outside for a stroll and you might just hear a dawn chorus of birdsong or see resident city foxes slinking back to their dens before daylight breaks.

5. Take part in community gardening projects

There's nothing more fulfilling than getting together with your neighbours and participating in a community project. Whether it be on communal allotments or within parks, gardening projects give people the opportunity to work side-by-side while also improving their mental wellbeing! Each year, the Royal Horticultural Society hosts Britain in Bloom groups for community gardening initiatives.



6. Look up

Beyond the usual pigeons and gulls, you could see starlings, song thrushes, house martins, blue tits and jays. Keep an eye out for birds of prey like red kites and seabirds such as cormorants. Watching these elegant creatures circle the skies above can be an excellent way to escape the everyday and practise being in the moment.

7. Go foraging

Foraging for wild food is great for mental health and fitness. You might not realise it, but there's an abundance of wild produce just waiting to be found. Use wild nettles to make pesto, while elderflowers make a refreshing cordial. Summer brings blackberries on thorny bramble bushes, while October is the best time to look out for sloes, which can be added to gin (with sugar) to create sloe gin.



Contact us

If you're feeling bogged down by the city, take a break and head to one of these natural spaces. Validium is here for all your mental health needs, so please don't hesitate to reach out if you feel like you could use some support in this area.