

Trees are good for you

In a report announced today Scottish Forestry has confirmed that getting out to the woods and forests is good for you.

Wellbeing of the Woods (WOW) is a photography project using as its subject urban tree scenes. Each person who took part in the three year long project had mental health conditions from anxiety to PTSD. They were sent out to take part in 250 photography sessions in green spaces across the country so that they could learn to use cameras in woodland environments.

Everyone who took part said they felt their wellbeing improved and that they enjoyed the experience so much they would go back again. While their photography skills improved, so did their ability to identify nature and work in groups.



Comments from participants :

Mental illness is still stigmatised, which can make people introverted. Projects like this get us out...into the woods,

being creative.. it makes such a difference."

"Being out, taking pictures of trees.. This helps with my wellbeing. Yes, it definitely does."

"The Wellbeing Of the Woods Project helped me to see things differently. Being creative in the woods... It allows you your own interpretation of the world.."



"I like the relativity and the depth: the huge tree and the really small person next to it. Makes you think of how insignificant we all are."

"I think I look at the trees more now..and I think about them.. instead of them just being there. I actually think about them. It's peaceful."

"The WOW project helped my confidence. I'm more confident in groups. And with a camera. And I can find my way around the park more now!"

“This was a great project. One designed to make you feel good. Not many other refugee services are designed to do that. It was very unusual. But good.”



Romena Huq, Engagement Programme Manager for Scottish Forestry, said: “The Wellbeing Of the Woods photography project has been running for three years now and it’s been amazing to hear that every one of the participants has reported improved states of wellbeing. It’s fascinating to see the positive impact that a woodland setting can have on a person’s mental health. With our lives now being more hectic than ever, we would encourage people to take advantage of this natural therapy, take a break and visit their local woodlands over the holidays.”



The research was developed and led by 'Open Aye', which operates participatory social action research projects for the public and third sector, with the support of Scottish Forestry. Becky Duncan, Director at Open Aye, said: "Our WOW project has shown that everyone can benefit from being creative in a woodland environment. Taking photos in nature enables us to see things differently, makes us slow down, pay attention to our senses and encourages us to really appreciate our surroundings. Photo walking in the woods is a gentle activity, open to all and it's free! It will relax and invigorate in equal measure. A great thing to do in the woods, whatever the weather."

