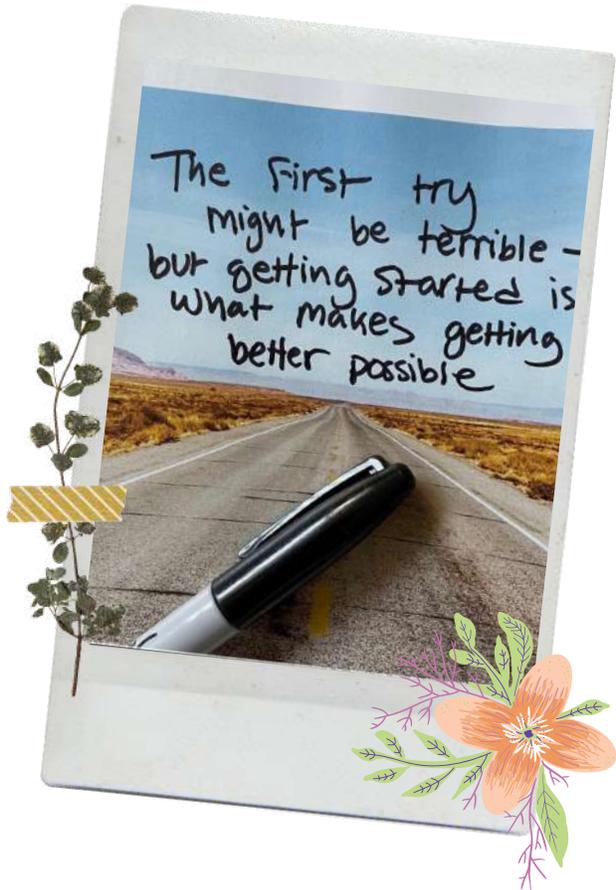


The Great Outdoors



CHOOSE A CAUSE & PARTICIPATE IN AN ACTIVITY THAT RAISES AWARENESS

THIS MONTH...

- Asthma & Allergy Awareness Month
- Correct Posture Month
- National High Blood Pressure Education Month
- National Mental Health Month
- National Arthritis Month
- May 9-15: Women's Health Week
- May 11-17: Bike to Work Week
- May 31: World No Tobacco Day



IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 **ECOPSYCHOLOGY: NATURE & YOUR HEALTH**
- 3 **TIPS TO INCORPORATE NATURE INTO YOUR WORKSPACE**
- 4 **BEST LOW-LIGHT OFFICE PLANTS**
- 5-6 **HEALTHY GARDENING TIPS**
- 7 **MINDFUL MOMENTS:**
 - 5 SUBTLE EMPLOYEE BURNOUT SIGNS
- 8 **NOURISH:**
 - RECIPE: CANNELLINI CASHEW BREAKFAST BARS

Newsletter Created By:
 Jordan Simone
 COTA/L, CHC, RYT-200
 ACM JIF Wellness Director

Ecopsychology

HOW NATURE BENEFITS YOUR HEALTH

A growing body of research points to the beneficial effects that exposure to the natural world has on health, reducing stress and promoting healing. Now, policymakers, employers, and healthcare providers are increasingly considering the human need for nature in how they plan and operate.

In a study of 20,000 people...

Found that people who spent 2 hours a week in green spaces (local parks or other natural environments) - either all at once or spaced over several visits - were substantially more likely to report good health & psychological well-being than those that don't.



Research done in hospitals, offices, and schools has found that even a simple plant in a room can have a significant impact on stress and anxiety.



It has been shown that time in nature is an antidote for stress: It can lower blood pressure and stress hormone levels, reduce nervous system arousal, enhance immune system function, increase self-esteem, reduce anxiety, and improve mood.

The studies point in one direction...

"Nature is not only nice to have, but it's a have-to-have for physical health and cognitive function."

Businesses are increasingly aware of the desire among employees for access to green spaces. "It's needed to attract a skilled work force," said Florence Williams, author of *The Nature Fix*.



Tips to INCORPORATE NATURE INTO YOUR WORKSPACE

Enhancing your office space with natural elements can make a big difference, elevating your mood and enhancing your productivity. Here are some tips on ways you can bring nature into your office space.

BRING PLANTS INTO YOUR OFFICE:

- Watch out for heavy pollinators: you don't want to set off your allergies, or those of your colleagues.
- Don't pick plants that are high maintenance: you need to be able to miss watering over the weekend or if you're on a vacation.
- Consider your available space: Hanging baskets or window sill potting can be good options if you're constrained by space.
- Pick your plants based on the amount of light they need to thrive. Even if you don't have a well-lit space, there are still plant options (like bromeliads and philodendron) that can help you keep your space green and your productive thoughts flowing.

HARNESS THE POWER OF WATER:

According to Feng Shui, water represents free flowing of ideas, and thus helps promote office communication. If you deal with many different people, having a small water fountain or perhaps even a fish bowl will help aid with your communication with them. If you are not able to use an actual water feature, glass can be used as a good substitute.

FIND SOME OUTDOOR SPACE:

If you can't bring the outdoors in with you, find a place where you can escape frequently and find a moment of respite during a busy or stressful day. Even finding a spot nearby where you can take a lunchtime walk can make a world of difference in your outlook.

FAKE IT:

Obviously, actually interacting with natural elements is best, but if it's not an option, you can still find a few workarounds that could create an oasis in your office space. Some of our favorite ideas include using relaxing, nature-based artwork in your office spaces; using mirrors or glass to create optical illusions of additional space; and cutting down on harsh, fluorescent overhead lighting.

If you have any outdoor or shared space available near your office, making it accessible to employees and encouraging breaks in these areas can give your team members a much-needed refresh and reset during a long workday.

THE BEST LOW-LIGHT Office Plants

SPIDER PLANT:

Extremely low maintenance, thrives in partial light/shade, and purifies the air.



SNAKE PLANT

Very hardy and hard-to-kill, require little to no sunlight, can go multiple days without watering, purify the air.



CACTUS

Needs lots of direct sunlight, require very little water, come in many different styles & varieties.



BAMBOO PALM

Needs very little sunlight, only needs to be watered once a week, provide lush green addition to your office space.



GERBERA DAISY

Needs very little sunlight, needs to be watered daily, come in a wide range of colors and they are small/can fit anywhere.



LEMON BALM

Does well in direct sunlight or low-light areas, needs to be watered daily, hardy, gives off a lemon scent that can boost your mood.



ALOE

Does well in direct sunlight, needs to be watered every 3 weeks, purifies the air.



POTHOS

Requires very little sunlight, only needs to be watered when soil is dry, has a lush green look.



Healthy Gardening

Gardening is one of the most popular pastimes for Americans, but doing it incorrectly can lead to back pain, joint aches, and muscle strains. Gardening can also be difficult for people with health conditions that limit movement (such as arthritis) or cause fatigue. But with a few easy strategies, gardening can be a pleasurable and safe activity for all.

Developed by occupational therapy practitioners, the following tips will help decrease the aches, pains, and strains that often occur during gardening.

IF YOU WANT TO:

Plant & weed without pain

CONSIDER THESE ACTIVITY TIPS:

Start with a small garden that you can manage easily. The garden should be located near your house and water supply to reduce time spent hauling the hose or watering can. Self-coiling hoses are lightweight and easy to use. Use a kneeler seat, which is a combination kneeling platform and seat. Many kneeler seats fold for easy storage. Make sure that the folding mechanism is easy to operate and does not cause stress on your hands.

Avoid back pain from heavy lifting

Bags of mulch, soil, and fertilizer are heavy. Instead of lifting the whole bag, divide it into smaller loads, and use a two-wheeled garden cart to move materials, as it is more stable than a wheelbarrow. When lifting a bag, use your leg muscles (not your back). Ask for help or consider hiring someone to assist with heavier tasks.

Conserve energy to be able to garden longer

Sit while gardening to decrease stress on your back, knees and hips. Take rest breaks every 15 minutes and stop work before you become overtired. Vary your tasks to avoid overstressing one part of your body. Change your position frequently to avoid becoming stiff. Tightly gripping or pinching a tool for a long time can lead to swelling in your hands and arms, and prolonged hunching can cause back strain and knee pain. Resist the urge to focus on just one area of the garden at a time, and instead move around doing various tasks.

Healthy Gardening

IF YOU WANT TO:

CONSIDER THESE ACTIVITY TIPS:

Protect your joints and avoid awkward positions while using pruners and other garden tools

Select garden tools that have padded and curved handles to protect the joints in your hands and fingers from excess pressure and strain. If you have a weak grip, use pruners and clippers that have racheting or spring-action self-opening features. Avoid twisting and reaching while planting or pruning.

Spend more time enjoying the fruits of your labor

Carefully consider how much maintenance your garden will need. When possible, use native plants. Plant groundcovers to keep weeds to a minimum. Once established, perennials require less work than planting annuals every year. Think about how large each plant will get, and the amount of pruning that will be required.

Planting & Weeding

Kneeling without cushioning and with your back arched strains your knees and back. Keeping your body straighter, using a kneeler, and kneeling with one leg up reduces the strain.



Lifting

Lifting from your waist strains your neck, shoulders, and back. Lifting with your knees bent uses the much stronger leg muscles.



Mindful Moments

5 SUBTLE EMPLOYEE BURNOUT SIGNS

The fact is: burnout is a big concern. In a recent survey, Deloitte found that 77% of people had experienced burnout at their current job, while 69% felt their employers weren't doing enough to prevent or alleviate burnout.

Here are some of the less visible signs of burnout that you may be overlooking. Alone, none of these are guaranteed symptoms, but—taken together—they form a pattern that may signal someone is in need of support.

Loss of confidence...

If somebody suddenly seems to lose confidence in their abilities, it could be a sign that they're experiencing burnout. This could manifest as an employee who's convinced their work will always be rejected, or who becomes more tentative than usual. And it's not just in the office; this loss of confidence can also leech into personal lives, with people believing that they're incompetent, disliked, or unwanted.

A change in socializing at work...

Burnout can sometimes mimic symptoms of depression, leading people to feel lethargic and disconnected. If someone is suddenly exhausted all the time and skipping plans or turning down favorite activities, it could be a sign of burnout. Burnout could also be the reason why an employee suddenly becomes cynical about their work relationships or their perceived place in the company.

A change in general behavior...

If an employee or colleague suddenly has a drastic dip in energy—for example, if they seem disinterested and unspirited compared to how they usually are—it could be a sign of them becoming disengaged, which is a marker of burnout. Likewise, a sudden change in eating habits—either in terms of suddenly eating more or eating less—could also signal impending burnout. That's because individuals suffering from burnout may try to fill the serotonin gap through eating sugary junk food and carbs. (It's called stress eating for a reason!)

Lack of care at work...

Another common sign of burnout is an employee who suddenly becomes a lot less careful at work—whether in terms of their attention to detail or their attitude. For example, there may be a rise in absenteeism, or a reckless, “devil-may-care” attitude. These could signal that an individual no longer cares about their job, which could be a result of an underlying issue like burnout.

Physical illness...

Finally, if you notice someone is off work more often, or is complaining about ailments, you should pay attention. Partially because burnout can cause actual physical symptoms (such as headaches, stomach trouble, body aches, and increased susceptibility to flu and colds.) But also because a sudden uptick in days off could be symptomatic of someone who is burnt out and unable to face work.

Nourish

CANNELLINI CASHEW BREAKFAST BARS

Recipe From: <https://foodandnutrition.org>

ingredients

- Cooking spray
- 2½ cups old-fashioned oats
- ½ cup unsweetened coconut flakes
- ½ cup raw unsalted sunflower kernels
- 1 cup roasted unsalted cashews
- ½ cup dried cherries
- ¼ cup mini chocolate chips
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 cup pitted medjool dates
- ½ cup natural creamy cashew butter
- 1 cup canned cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- ½ cup (131 milliliters) unsweetened applesauce
- 2 teaspoons (9 milliliters) pure vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon flaky sea salt, for topping

recipe preparation

- Preheat oven to 350°F (176°C). Lightly coat a 13-by-9-inch pan with cooking spray. Mix oats, coconut, sunflower kernels, cashews, dried cherries, chocolate chips, kosher salt and cinnamon in a large bowl.
- Place dates, cashew butter, beans, applesauce and vanilla extract in a food processor and blend until smooth. Add the blended ingredients to the bowl with dry ingredients and stir.
- Spread onto the prepared pan and sprinkle evenly with flaky sea salt. Bake for 20 minutes.
- Cool completely and slice into 12 bars. Wrap each bar with plastic wrap and store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to one week.

