



# MIND MATTERS



## EDITORIAL

### GREENER SPACES AND INNER PEACE

**Our surroundings – the places where we live and work, have a significant impact on our mental well-being.** Development and urbanization have tremendously affected our surroundings and the effects can be seen in the form of climate change, global health issues, migration and displacement. We often overlook this highly influential factor while understanding mental health.



Physical environments which majorly consist of natural elements like flora and fauna have a major impact on our mental health. **Access to green spaces and recreational areas has been linked to reduced stress, anxiety and depression.**

Town planners and architects must prioritize **green infrastructure. Incorporating natural elements in landscapes will not only enhance aesthetics but will also offer tangible mental health benefits in the form of psychological resilience to the residents.**

Work environments too have a profound influence on mental health. **Various factors like office layout, noise levels, lighting, access to natural light affect productivity and mood.** Creating healthy work environments and prioritising employee well-being will foster a sense of community, provide opportunities to unwind, lower the burnout and increase the job satisfaction. This will enhance overall organizational performance.

Digital environments also play a significant role in shaping our mental health. Digital engagement must be balanced with real-world connections and positive social interactions.

We also should realise the long term effects of our environmental beliefs and behaviours (or the lack of it). We generally take the environment for granted and grossly misuse natural resources leading to depletion and destruction. But that's a different issue.

**In the modern life complexities, we must understand and address the interconnection between environment and mental health.** We must create environments that promote overall well-being and support healthy communities. Let us build a future where mental health is prioritised, let us cultivate a more compassionate and sustainable society.

- Dr. Aabha Pimprikar  
Co-Editor

## GROWING TOGETHER

Our Mission Statement : **Empowering self-expression while celebrating Indian handcraft and fostering a culture of 'Growing Together'.**

Designers and entrepreneurs, Bhaavya Bhatnagar and Rishi Baweja, are redefining sustainable fashion under three distinctive brands: HANNAN Jewelry, NADI NADI (Swim & Resort Wear) and BHAAVYA (evening-wear). Each exemplifies a commitment to environmentally friendly practices, focusing on regenerated fabrics, upcycling, and the promotion of mental health within their workplace.



**hannan** **HANNAN Jewelry**  
Inspired by memory, drawing from stories of the past, HANNAN is an amalgamation of one-of-a-kind charms in repurposed resin, ethically sourced gemstones, and freshwater pearls set in brass and 92.5 sterling silver, lends a fresh new perspective to a craftsmanship that dates back centuries. The brand was named after the founders' close association with one of their master craftsmen, Abdul Hannan. ([WWW.SHOPHANNAN.IN](http://WWW.SHOPHANNAN.IN))

**BHAAVYA Evening-Wear**  
Mindfully designed timeless pieces that are meant to last. By repurposing textile waste and incorporating innovative design techniques, the brand creates timeless evening-wear that speaks to both fashion-forward aesthetics and environmental consciousness. The brand's seasonless approach not only reduces overproduction but also champions the creative potential of existing materials. ([WWW.BHAAVYA.COM](http://WWW.BHAAVYA.COM))



**NADI NADI Swim & Resort Wear**  
ECONYL® regenerated nylon is made by recovering nylon waste - such as fishing nets from the oceans and aquaculture, fabric scraps from mills and carpets destined for landfill - and turning it into virgin quality nylon yarn for the fashion and interior industries. ([WWW.NADI-NADI.COM](http://WWW.NADI-NADI.COM))

**Commitment to Mental Health**  
At the core of the company's ethos is a profound commitment to the well-being, growth and mental health of its artisans and team members. Our factory and studio foster a supportive work environment through regular initiatives - employees have access to mental health resources, their children have access to our workplace for guidance and tuition, extensive medical help, and flexible working schedules help promote a healthy work-life balance.

(We thank Bhaavya Bhatnagar for sponsoring this newsletter)

## EDITORIAL TEAM

- RITA AGGARWAL : EDITOR
- AABHA PIMPRIKAR : CO - EDITOR
- SRIPRIYA SHAJI : REVIEWER
- SHIVANGI GARG : REVIEWER



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## IMPACT OF POLLUTION ON MENTAL HEALTH

### AIR POLLUTION

A recent review of more than 100 studies on the effects of outdoor air pollution on mental health shows that 73% of the studies reported higher mental health issues in humans and animals after exposure to higher-than-average levels of air pollution. The lead author of the study, Clara G. Zundel, Ph.D., concluded in a World Economic Forum report: **“People who breathe polluted air always experience some changes in the brain regions that control emotions, and as a result, they may be more likely to develop anxiety and depression than those who breathe clean air.”**

Air pollution can be a significant health risk causing stress, psychological distress, increased chance of dementia and Alzheimer's and depression. Research shows that short-term exposure to air pollution can increase the risk of death among people with serious mental disorders. Additionally research highlights the impact of air pollution on the brains and mental health of children.

### WATER POLLUTION

Tomás R. Guilarte, (professor, researcher, and director of the Brain Behaviour & the Environment program at the Robert Stempel College of Public Health & Social Work at Florida International University) quoted that **lead exposure in early life causes issues in learning performance and cognitive deficits in children.** Many lead-exposed children have been followed into adulthood, one can see that **later in life they are more likely to have major depression, schizophrenia, and other psychiatric disorders.** Globally 650 million people still don't have access to clean water. **Drinking impure water can lead to symptoms of arsenics, which has a negative impact on mental health and thus also impacting household productivity and wellbeing.**

### SOIL POLLUTION

Soil pollution refers to the impurity of the soil with abnormal mass of toxic materials. Usually, soil cannot impact directly but sometimes consuming vegetables and fruits containing high pesticides can impact mental health too. **Consuming food with pesticides might contain lead and arsenic which is harmful for brain development and can lead to depression, anxiety and some serious mental health disorders as well.**

### NOISE POLLUTION

Noise pollution is the transmission of heavy noise with impacts on human or animal life, most of which are harmful to a degree. The source of outdoor noise worldwide is mainly caused by machines, transport and propagation systems. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines noise above 65 decibels (dB) as noise pollution. To be precise, noise becomes harmful when it exceeds 75 decibels (dB) and is painful above 120 dB. Noise can itself act as a disturbing element to work, **it can hamper focus, attention and concentration. It can increase hyperactivity too.** Noise pollution can also increase emotional distress.

- *Shalmaly Chatterjee*  
Psychologist, Kolkata



PC: Macrovector on Freepik

## THE DARK POLLUTION OF LIGHT

We humans and our inventions contribute most of the environmental pollution. One of the greatest inventions, the light bulb - is becoming a source of pollution because of our irrational and irresponsible use. We all are living with the glow of artificial light (even in the day) which contributes to the light pollution and is causing problems for humans as well as the ecosystem.

**Light pollution is the use of artificial light outdoors that is excessive, inappropriate, or poorly implemented.** It comes in many forms like light trespass (or light spill - unwanted light entering in unintended area, e.g. light from street &/or parking lights, neon or illuminated signboards entering in the house), glare (excessive brightness from direct or reflected light), over illumination (too much light or light in the place where it is not required) and sky glow (diffused brightness of the night sky that obscures the astronomical observation). **More than 80 percent of the world's population, and 99 percent of Americans and Europeans, live under sky glow (National Geographic).** Indoor lights (intensity, temperature, size, colour and angles of diffusion) can also cause light pollution. Another source is the blue light emitted by digital devices.

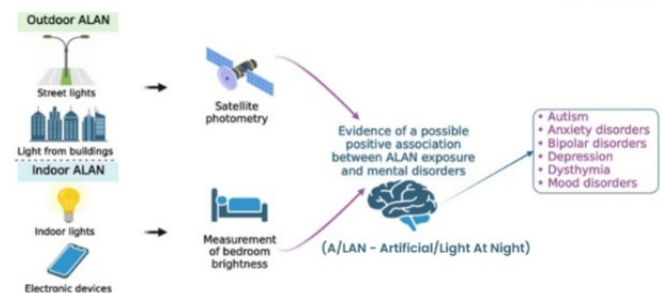
**Exposure to unwanted light (even for a single day) disturbs the sleep pattern, confuses the circadian rhythm (24-hour body clock).** This rhythm guides the physiological processes (day-night activities of our body). One of these processes is production of the sleep hormone - the melatonin (produced by our brain in response to darkness). Harvard Medical School researchers compared the effects of blue and green light after 6.5 hours exposure. The melatonin suppressed by blue light was double as compared to green light and shift in circadian rhythm was 3 hours with blue light and 1.5 hours by green.

**More light means less melatonin that leads to disturbed sleep patterns. This results in sleep deprivation, fatigue, headaches leading to stress and anxiety. Long term circadian rhythm interruption may lead to depression and increased ADHD symptoms along with other physical ailments.**

**This may also lead to sleep-work disorder (affects the individuals who work in rotating night shifts) and sleep-phase disorder (affects individuals who fall asleep late at night and have difficulty in getting up early in the morning).** *Individuals who are sleep deprived have a 1.49-fold higher risk of developing Alzheimer's compared to individuals who do not have sleep or circadian rhythm disruptions (remedypsychiatry.com).* Multiple studies have established the correlation between sleep deprivation, stress, increased cortisol (stress hormone) levels during the day and altered metabolism.

**Luckily, light pollution can be minimised and is completely reversible in a short time span. Minimise your use of lights. Simply turn off the lights.**

- *Dr. Aabha Pimprikar*  
Co-Editor



PC: sciencedirect.com - LAN and Mental Health Disorders

## WORK ENVIRONMENT AND MENTAL HEALTH

Imagine walking into a new job where the office atmosphere is warm and welcoming, with friendly colleagues and mutual support. At first glance, it might seem like just a pleasant work environment, but there's much more to it than meets the eye (in terms of physical as well as psychological environment).

Physical work environment includes location, size and layout of the workplace, furnishing, equipment and facilities provided. Ergonomics, noise, air, temperature, ventilation also have a great impact on employee's well-being.

**Lisanne Bergfurt** and her team did a comprehensive review of 133 studies in 2022. The results show that **some indicators of mental health (e.g. concentration, and stress) have frequently been related to indoor environmental quality (e.g. light and daylight), while others (e.g. burnout, engagement, and depression) have received less attention in relation to the physical workplace (especially to biophilia\*, views, look and feel).**

On the other hand the **Hawthorne Studies** conducted around 1920 uncovered a fascinating truth: **employees perform better when they feel noticed and valued, not just because of physical changes like better lighting.**

When you're in an environment where you feel genuinely supported and appreciated, you're likely to put in more effort and achieve better results. Motivation is essential for productivity and job satisfaction. Employees engage more and perform better when they feel valued and are appreciated. Behavioral management practices, such as clear expectations and constructive feedback, setting achievable organizational goals, celebrating milestones enhance the motivation.

Another important factor is a sense of accomplishment. When employees see progress and receive positive reinforcement, such as rewards and incentives, boost their confidence and drive them to continue striving for excellence. The positive reinforcement may range from verbal praise and public recognition to tangible rewards like bonuses or promotions.

To truly reduce work-related stress and create a work environment that fosters productivity and satisfaction, focus on nurturing positive relationships with your colleagues, engaging in open communication, and building a supportive atmosphere.

So next time you're in the office, **remember that cultivating a positive work environment is more than just a feel-good exercise.**

*\*Biophilia is a hypothetical human tendency to interact or be closely associated with other forms of life in nature : a desire or tendency to commune with nature (Merriam-Webster).*

- Aditee Bhargave  
Psychologist & Queer Affirmative Therapist



PC: questionpro.com - Work Environment

## TOWN PLANNING AND MENTAL HEALTH

Any new planned city is an abode for millions of people. There are many key factors of planning which eventually play a vital role in mankind's life. India's best planned city is Chandigarh. It was planned by Le Corbusier who clearly defined the city as analogous to the human body and should serve four major city functions: living, working, care of body and spirit and circulation.

In general, also the goal of city planning is to design and manage the physical, social and economic development of urban areas to create sustainable, functional and aesthetically pleasing communities. **The green spaces in any city planned plays a pivotal role in mankind's health and well-being.** Access to natural settings in neighbourhood's and in the course of people's daily routine is likely to improve and maintain mental health and well-being.

The allocation of places as per the social requisite is what a town planner has to do like gardens in the centre, recreational spaces nearby to the living spaces, Industries at the far periphery to hold up the health hazards, noise pollution and air quality are considered so that it doesn't affect the life of people.

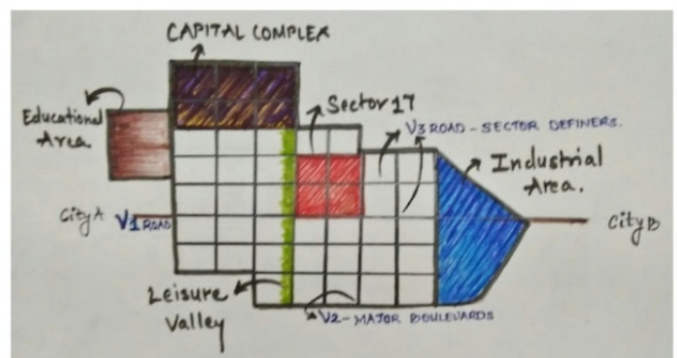
But look in your surroundings, are we living in a society where all these are taken care of? Various researchers have brought the fact in today's scenario. Life in rural areas is far better than urban areas. We have seen an increase in the rate of mental and physical health problems compared to rural areas by almost 40% higher risk of depression; 20% more anxiety and double of schizophrenia in addition to loneliness, isolation and stress.

Thus, a community where all walks of people join should be developed for the betterment of human beings' mental health. **The acute need of the hour is to develop more of common recreational centres, amphitheatres amidst the city, the advent of happy streets is an added feature for the people, lush green lawns with greenery and play activities help in reducing the toxicity of any kind.**

Health centres need proper placement in any of the planned cities, neither too near to the livelihood nor too far. Its proximity should be able to diffuse the emergencies and even the biohazard health issues arose by its waste generated in any of the health centres.

I would say that town planners need to look into the design of any urban space rising above economic development in lieu of the mental health of mankind.

- Ar. Nivedita Singh  
Director, Grapnel - An Architectural Consultancy Firm



PC: architectureinhindi.in - Town Planning Chandigarh

## ARCHITECTURAL INFLUENCE ON HUMAN WELLBEING

"The fact is a person is so far formed by his surroundings that his state of harmony depends entirely on his harmony with his surroundings."

- Christopher Alexander

**The psychological impact of our built environment is immense.** How do you feel when you buy a beautiful show piece? When you look at it, you see its shape and colour, you feel its texture, you try to make sense of it by understanding its meaning. What is happening through this process? Just by the act of looking at it, you are engaging with it, and it is influencing your mind. You can feel many things when you see it - happy, sad, nostalgic, excited etc. Imagine aesthetic architecture to be amplified showpieces and you are inside one of these. The amplification of scale leads to amplification of the experience. **The heightened sensory influence of architectural interiors leave a long-lasting impact.**

When Christopher Alexander published 'A Pattern Language' in 1977, a brave new conversation was begun in architectural psychology. Like all living complex adaptive systems, human beings must contend with external ecosystems in order to survive.

We spend most hours of the day within indoor spaces. It is either our office environments, homes, schools etc. and the design and layout dictate our behaviour. **How we move, in what mood and as a result how we feel are all controlled by our environment. Research is convinced that ill-conceived and inferior architecture, combined with other factors, can promote stress, encourage exhaustion, induce psychosomatic symptoms and even promote physical discomfort. As a rule, these effects are not immediately apparent, but often appear after a period of months or years. This allows for the reverse conclusion that spaces can also support healing processes and promote well-being.**

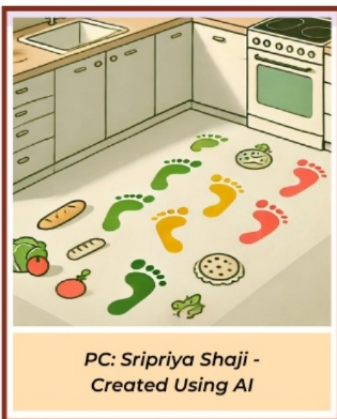
Cognitive psychologists John Bargh and Tanya Chartrand underlined this reality in 1999 when their research illuminated the fact that roughly 95% of our day-to-day choices are automatic and unconscious. What regulates it? Our surroundings, which are created by designers. Thus it is imperative to understand the effect of indoor spaces on people in cognitive, emotional and social terms. Maybe new technological tools in the architectural sector will soon be able to track the human response to changing spaces and its parameters so that we develop a paradigm of more responsive architecture.



PC: Naomi Elliot - (Illustration for archive.curbed.com)

- Ar. Dr. Tanisha Dutta, Nagpur

## THE FOODPRINT CONUNDRUM



PC: Sripriya Shaji -  
Created Using AI

A school took high school students to a hill station. The teacher announced, "Kids, prepare for hiking, camping, and wildlife watching. We will stay at Gurukulam for a week. Please bring groceries from home."

After a five-hour journey, they rested and ate packaged snacks and instant noodles. The next day, they felt fatigued. By evening, Guru Krishnan noticed plastic waste and food in the garbage, and the children looked weak.

A student asked, "Guruji, how do you stay fit and wise? Is it because you cut ties with the world?" Guru smiled, "I live close to the planet and share the space responsibly with co-species. The food we consume affects not only our health but also our planet's environment," Guru Krishnan explained. **"Food carbon footprints measure the greenhouse gas emissions throughout a food product's life cycle. A lifecycle is defined from the first step of growing the ingredients, processing the food, transporting the food, cooking and finally disposing. The longer the lifecycle of food the bigger is the greenhouse gas emissions. Animal-based foods, especially red meat and dairy, have high emissions, while plant-based foods generally have lower impacts."**

Greenhouse gases like CO<sub>2</sub> and methane trap heat, causing global warming and climate change. This leads to extreme weather, sea level rise, disrupted ecosystems, air pollution, heat-related illnesses, and

spread of vector-borne diseases.

Apart from this there has been a dramatic shift and globalization in eating habits due to promotion of instant and processed foods with long shelf-life full of preservatives. Modern fast paced lifestyle encourages fast foods which is damaging our physical and mental health.

Reducing food waste could eliminate 6%-8% of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions. In 2023, over 250 million people globally experienced acute hunger, worsened by economic downturns and conflicts. Despite this, significant amounts of food continue to be wasted, highlighting a stark contrast where millions suffer while vast quantities of food are discarded.

Children sat shocked. The teacher asked, "Guruji, does food print have a direct impact on mental health?"

Guru nodded, **"Direct studies linking food prints to mental health are limited, but these factors are interconnected. Pesticides and food waste negatively impact neurological health. Malnutrition impairs cognitive development, especially in children, causing long-term mental health issues.** An obesogenic environment promotes obesity, affecting body image, leading to eating disorders, depression, and anxiety. Diets high in processed foods and sugars increase the risk of mental health disorders, impacting mood and energy levels."

He concluded, **"By making conscious food choices, you can contribute to a healthier planet and improve your well-being.** Remember, small changes can make a big leap." The children felt inspired to make sustainable food choices.

- Sripriya Shaji, Ph.D.

Counselling Psychologist & Nutritionist, Kozhikode

**THERAPEUTIC GARDENS FOR CHILDREN**

**\*Positive Mental Health Initiative designed to enhance the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of children through therapeutic horticulture.**

\*A unique project proposal that aligns with Rotary's seven focus areas and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations

\*USA, UK, Denmark and Australia have developed therapeutic gardens designed specifically for the kids.

**Project Overview:**

The Therapeutic Gardens for Children will Create a vibrant, safe, interactive, engaging and inviting space where children can connect and engage with nature, learn about plant life, and participate in gardening activities through interactive play, sensory experiences, and peaceful relaxation.

**Features of a Therapeutic Garden:**

Bee-friendly and therapeutic plants, sensory paths, water play area, quiet corners, raised garden beds, play areas, butterfly garden.

**Key Benefits:**

Promotes Mental Well-being, Encourages Physical Activity, Stimulates Sensory Experiences, Educational Development, Fosters Responsibility and Nurturing Skills, Enhances understanding of biology, ecology, and sustainability, improves social skills like teamwork, communication, and cooperation among other children, Environmental Stewardship in a safe space.

**Alignment with Rotary Focus Areas and Sustainable Development Goals:**

- A. Peace and Conflict Prevention/Resolution (SDG 16): Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.
- B. Disease Prevention and Treatment (SDG 3): Enhancing mental and physical health.
- C. Water and Sanitation (SDG 6): Implementing rainwater harvesting and sustainable water usage.
- D. Maternal and Child Health (SDG 3): Fostering holistic health for children.
- E. Basic Education and Literacy (SDG 4): Providing educational opportunities in horticulture.
- F. Economic and Community Development (SDG 8): Engaging the community and creating green spaces.
- G. Supporting the Environment (SDG 13): Promoting environmental conservation and awareness.

**Let's work together to cultivate these therapeutic spaces and nurture the well-being of our future generations.**



**FOUR - WAY TEST**  
Therapeutic Garden for Children

- 1 Is it the Truth?** The garden should be designed with scientifically backed therapeutic benefits for children. It should provide genuine opportunities for physical, emotional, and cognitive development.
- 2 Is it Fair to All Concerned?** The garden should be accessible and inclusive, ensuring that all children, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, can benefit from its facilities. It should offer equal opportunities for engagement and enjoyment.
- 3 Will it Build Goodwill and Better Friendships?** The garden can serve as a community hub where children and their families come together, fostering social interactions, cooperation, and the building of friendships. Activities and programs can be designed to encourage collaboration and positive relationships.
- 4 Will it Be Beneficial to All Concerned?** The therapeutic garden should provide measurable benefits to the children, such as improved mental health, physical well-being, and enhanced learning experiences. It should also positively impact the families and the broader community by promoting health, wellness, and environmental awareness.



- Rtn. Neeraj Bhatnagar

Rotary Club of Delhi South East, RID-3011

Member of RAGMHI + ESRAG + RAGCED + RAGMHH

**मन के भाव**  
मन के अँधेरे में कभी खिलता सूरज देखा है?  
भावनाओं के बगीचे में कभी खुद को खोकर देखा है?  
विचारों के आकाश में मनचले भाव है,  
पर आँखों के पंख खोल कर देख  
विचारों में क्या ही रखा है।  
जब संदेह की आँधी आए  
और मन के बादल मार्ग छिपाए,  
विश्वास रख खुद पर  
क्योंकि रोशनी का दीप वही कहीं तू पाए।  
तो आजो मानसिक स्वास्थ्य की बात करे,  
विश्वास और धैर्य का हाथ धरे।  
सोचो नहीं अकेले जब थक जाए दिल,  
दोस्ती की बात करो और हो जाओ हस्त मिल।  
थक जाए आत्मा जब संकट आवे,  
आशा की किरणें अपने दिल में जगावे।  
चिंता आवे और मन उदास होवे,  
एक मुस्कान लावे जो दिल को भावे।  
हर कदम पर साथ चले, हर दिल को समझाएँ।  
मानसिक स्वास्थ्य की खोज में, सहयोग ही सहारा दिखाएँ।

**मनोन्मेष**  
**Mind your Mind**

**Poetry On Mental Health**  
**Online Competition**  
**by DAGMHI 3030**

**Poem by Diya Kunawat**  
**(Manonmesh 3.0)**  
**Winner of Third Prize)**

Translated into English by ChatGPT  
**EMOTIONS OF THE MIND**  
Have you ever seen the sun bloom in the  
darkness of the mind?  
Have you ever lost yourself in the garden of  
emotions?  
In the sky of thoughts, there are wayward  
feelings,  
But open the wings of your eyes and see  
What's really in your thoughts?  
When the storm of doubt arrives  
And the clouds of the mind obscure the path,  
Have faith in yourself,  
For somewhere within, you'll find the light of  
hope.  
Come, let's talk about mental health,  
Holding hands of trust and patience.  
When your heart grows weary, don't think  
you're alone,  
Talk of friendship and join hands.  
When the soul is tired and challenges arise,  
Ignite the rays of hope within your heart.  
When worry comes and the mind feels down,  
Bring forth a smile that enlightens the heart.  
Walk together at every step, understand every  
heart.  
In the quest for mental health, let collaboration  
be the supporting act.

**ECO-ANXIETY**

Eco-anxiety is a growing concern in today's world, as the state of the environment continues to deteriorate. Besides, living in a high-crime area or a politically volatile area that witnesses frequent community clashes and war, creates and enhances anxiety. The same is true for living in an area with poor air and water quality. People living in areas prone to natural disasters such as cyclones, earthquakes, drought, mudslides, cloudbursts, forest fires or floods can suffer constant anxiety and fear of potential harm/recurrence. Extreme weather conditions can be a trigger for anxiety in some and lead to stress in daily living.

Like other forms of anxiety, **eco-anxiety can manifest physically** as headaches, fatigue, muscle tension, and sleep disturbances. **Other symptoms include** excessive worry and fear, restlessness, irritability, poor concentration, palpitations, sweating, trembling, digestive issues, etc.

**Anxiety is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon and symptoms vary.** Those who recognize anxiety as a disorder may get assistance sooner to prevent the condition from getting worse.

**People experiencing eco-anxiety may or may not explicitly identify it as the primary reason for seeking help.** In many cases, individuals with eco-anxiety may initially exhibit more generalized symptoms of anxiety, depression, or stress. It is, however, likely that during the course of therapy the underlying cause of their distress may be explored, and patients may eventually express concerns related to the environment and climate change. The disease spectrum connects the mind-body as a whole and cannot be seen in isolation. Besides anxiety disorder, it could also present as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), mood disorders, substance use disorders, and self-harm and suicide in extreme scenarios.

**Research studies suggest that there is a gender and demographic differential for anxiety. As caregivers, women are more prone to experience anxiety disorders** than men and certain demographic factors such as age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status may also play a role in the prevalence and expression of anxiety. Societal and cultural factors can also influence the perception and experience of anxiety within different demographic groups.

**Although eco-anxiety is not a clinically recognized disorder with specific treatment protocols, general mental health strategies can be beneficial** and be used for good results. General counseling by a mental health professional helps in identifying the stressors causing the negative emotions and thoughts. Therapies such as deep breathing, relaxation methods, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), yoga, meditation, mindfulness strategies, can help manage anxiety. Physical exercise, nature walks, gardening, socializing, support groups of affected persons can be relieving.

- Rita Aggarwal  
Editor, Mind Matters



PC: Source UN Biodiversity

**SHINRIN YOKU**

Before continuing to read, close your eyes and imagine!!! There are all green trees everywhere, the wind flowing around is making all the branches and leaves happily sing and dance. Birds have also joined this gathering, and you can hear their chirping along with the whistling sound of the trees. There is a stream of clear water splashing and sloshing close by. You are in the midst of nature.

Did you feel the tranquility?

This concept is known as **Forest bathing or 'Shinrin-yoku', where people spend time in the forest atmosphere.** The most important part of this practice is to disconnect from your cell phones and other gadgets. **Forest bathing can simply be a walk in nature and connecting with your surroundings, or even going and staying there for a few days.**

Being surrounded by greenery is founded to help with mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. **Especially, color green especially has a very positive effect on the human brain.** It is said that it **promotes restfulness and calmness**, and helps improve efficiency and focus.

Dandeli, in Karnataka, is a prime example. I remember going there as a kid. After spending a few hours there with my family, I realized why my parents chose that place. The jungle was absolutely serene. We went on walks, cycled in the jungle, swam in the river, and I also made really good friends there. The trees, the different flowers and insects that I saw there, and the dog that I met there were my friends. I did not want to come back from this place at all.

After returning home, and going back to school, I performed better in the examinations than I used to, I was more focused and I could concentrate better. **The only difference was that I spent a lot of time in nature, even after coming home.**

One need not go to a jungle for a forest bath. You can simply do that by sitting under a tree, without your phone that is, or take a walk in a park nearby. **Spending time with nature is something that we have all forgotten over the years but it is something that we should do often.**

**ENVIRONMENT AND MENTAL HEALTH STUDIES**

Kings College London recently conducted a study and found that environments with more natural features, such as trees, birds, plants, and streams, are related to better mental health than environments with fewer elements, and that these advantages can continue for up to 8 hours.

According to another study conducted recently by the University of Glasgow, children who spent just 60 minutes daily in nature had a 50% lower risk of mental health issues.

- Sara Pimprakar (18 years)  
DAGMHI 3030 Member, Mental Health Ally



PC: Sara Pimprakar - Spending time with nature