

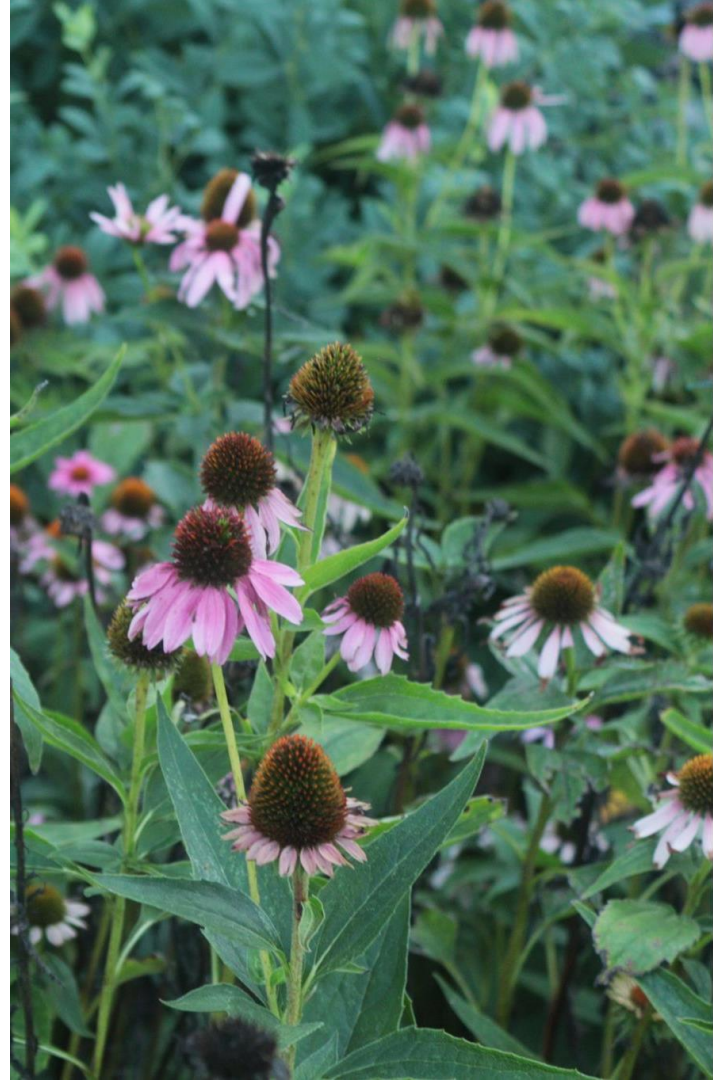


**The Nature Connection:
Collaborating to Bring
Ecotherapy to Your
Community**



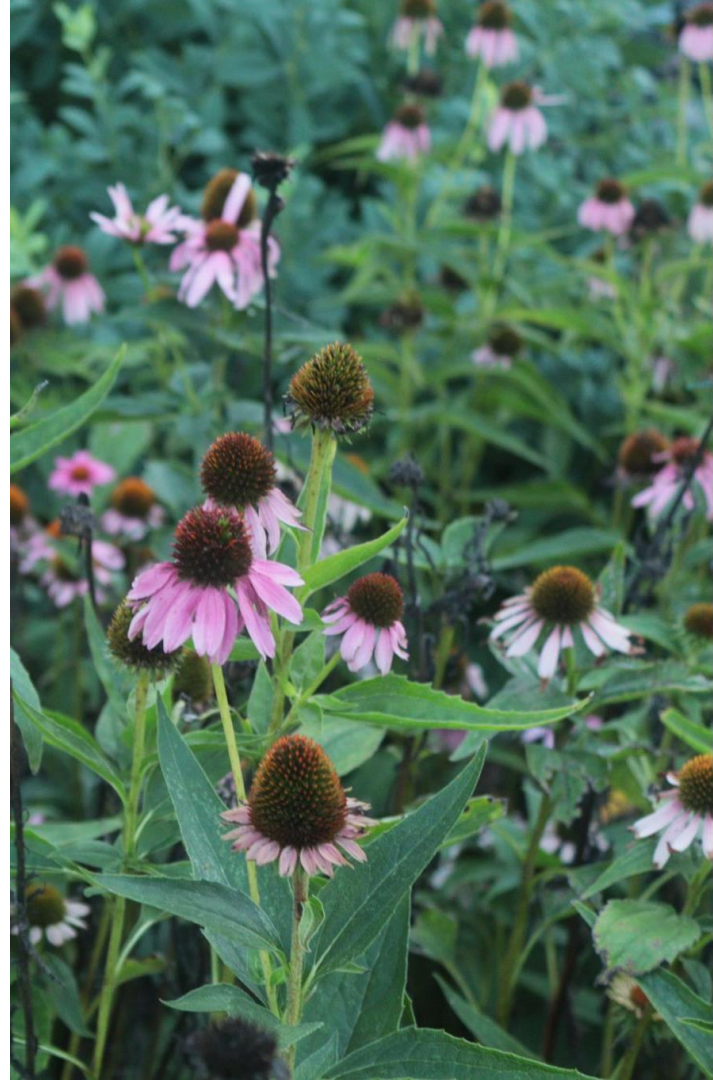
Expectations

- Background
- Community care
- Public health framework
 - (International Transformational Resilience Coalition)



Land Acknowledgement

- An invitation to connect with and understand the history of places you live, work, play, and pray

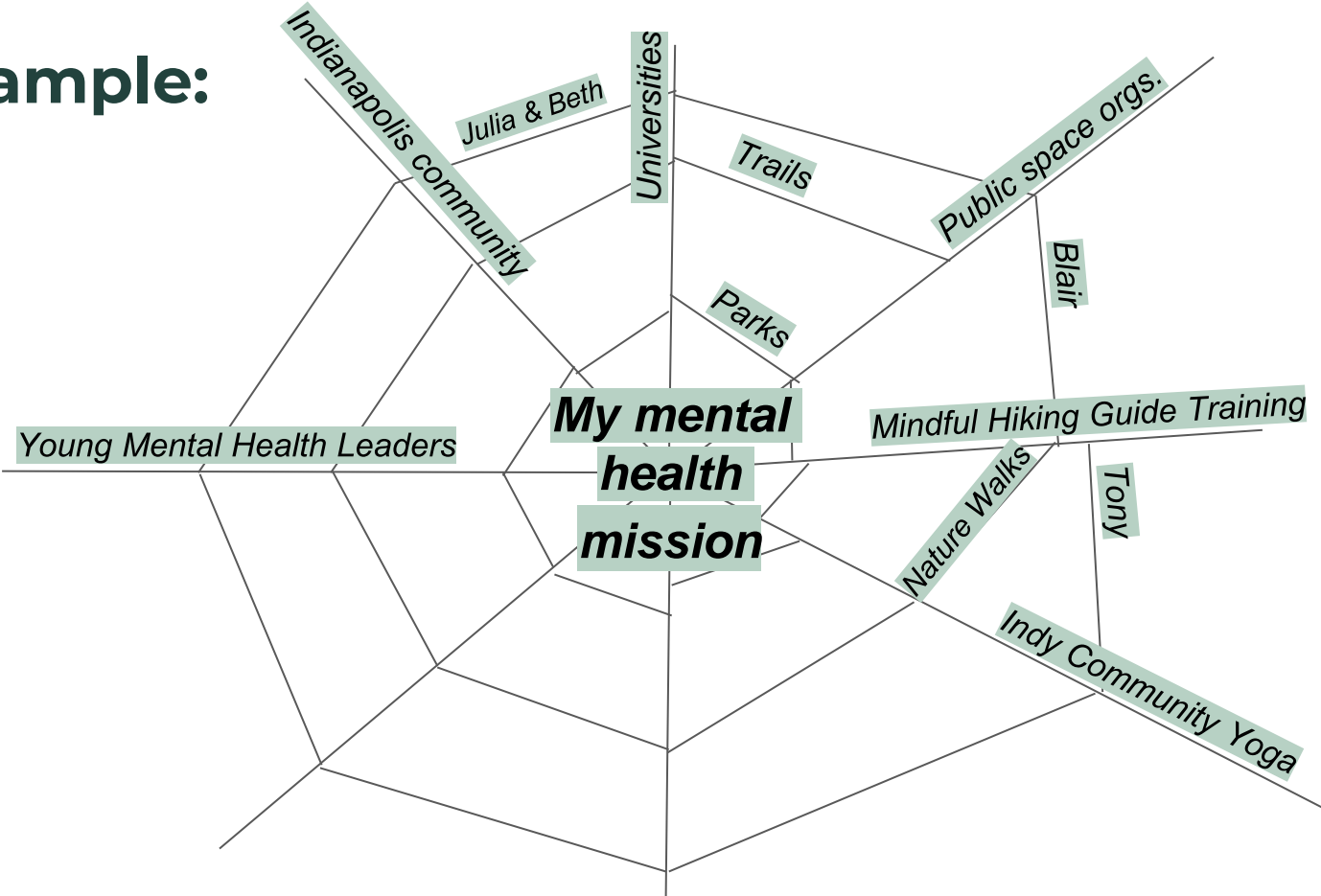


Your Own Ecosystem



Image from iStock

Example:



Your turn! What's on your web?



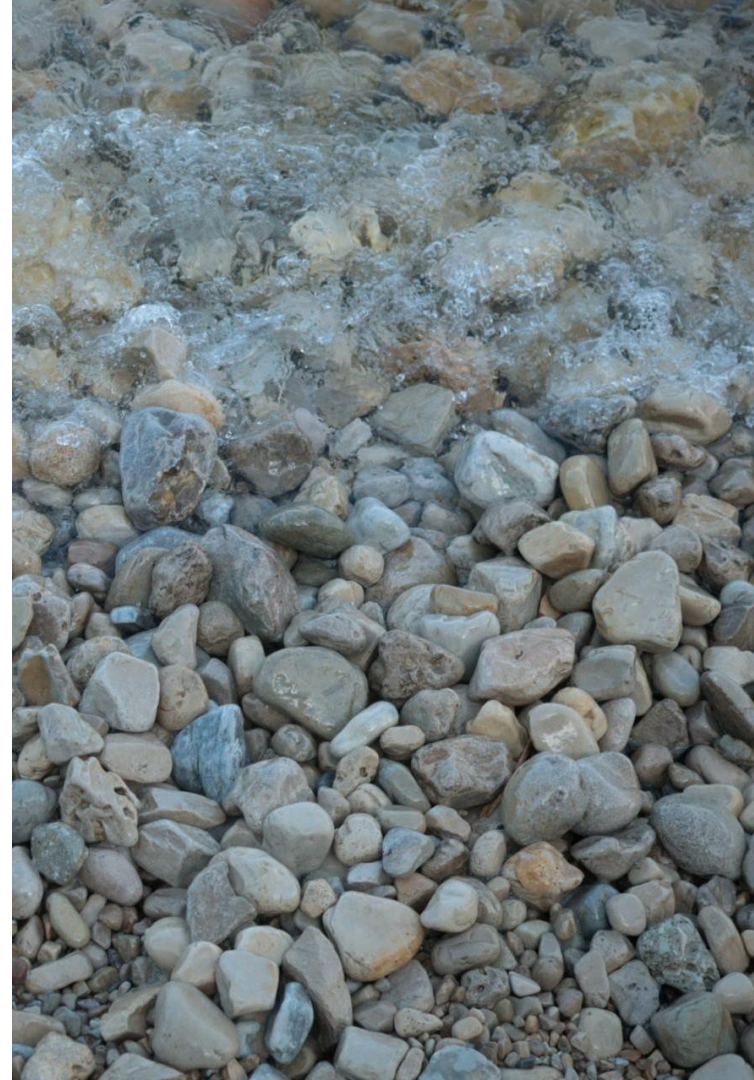
Image from iStock



**Let's take a
breath together.**

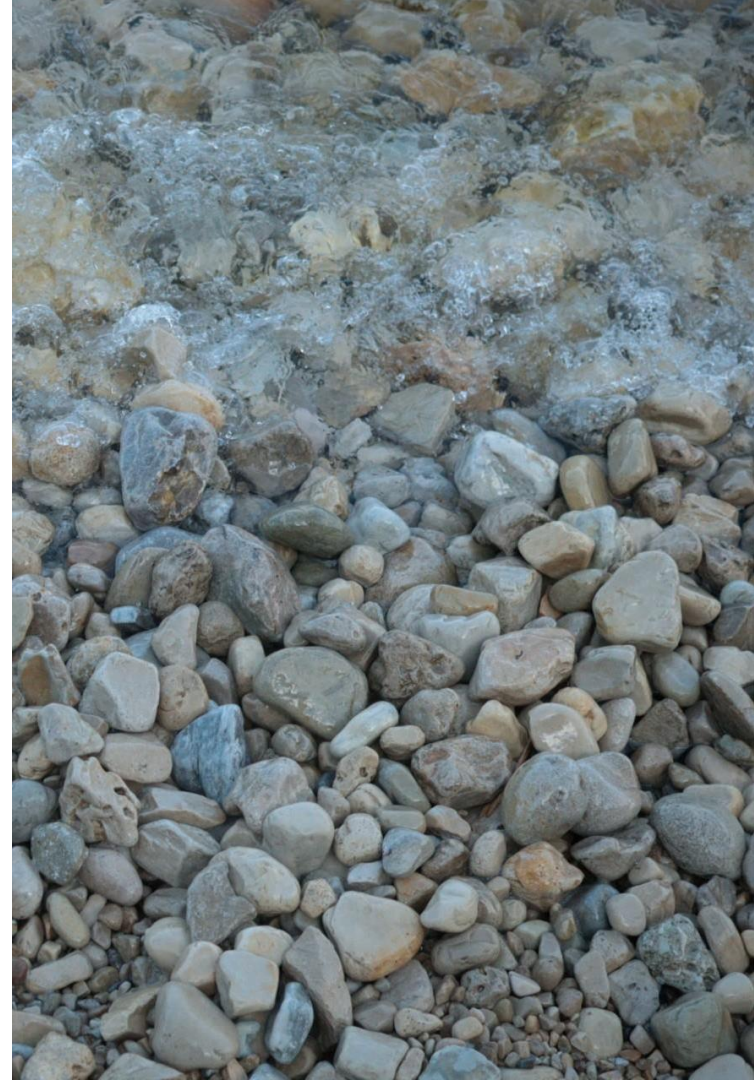
What is ecotherapy?

- Ecotherapy: Intentional time spent in nature for its restorative and biopsychosocial benefits
- Can include facilitated/guided practices in connection
- Ecotherapy practice includes a variety of styles:
 - Walk & Talk Therapy
 - Recreation/Adventure Therapy
 - Animal-Assisted Therapy
 - Horticultural Therapy
 - Shinrin-yoku (Forest Bathing)
 - Nature-based mindfulness



Why ecotherapy?

- Evolution:
 - As a species, we evolved with and depend on the natural environment to meet our needs
 - Nature has heavy significance in cultural traditions based on our experience outside
- Biophilia theory: We are drawn to nature!
- Attention restoration theory:
 - We have a finite amount of attention for working on tasks.
 - Exposure to nature causes neural shifts that lead to shift in parasympathetic nervous system and restores attention, among other benefits.



Individual Benefits

- Decreasing stress
- Attention/focus restoration
- Improved mood and creativity
- Spark curiosity - create connection with natural environment
- Physical wellbeing
- Social connection



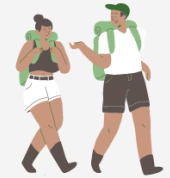
WHY IT WORKS:

Ecotherapy

Intentional contact with nature (the more-than-human world) can provide both mental and physical benefits.

PHYSICAL BENEFITS

- Reduced stress
- Better sleep
- Lower blood pressure
- Improved immune function



MENTAL BENEFITS

- Reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Increased happiness and self-esteem
- Enhanced cognitive performance and creativity



SOCIAL BENEFITS

- Increased feelings of social connectedness
- Greater life satisfaction
- Sense of community and generosity



Community Benefits

- Availability of park spaces* leads to improved access, scalable programs, & reduced stigma
- Related to social determinants of health - can improve built environment and active living, reduce social isolation
- Growing interest in/need for mental health resources - parks, libraries, college campuses, gardens, public trails or green spaces can all have a role!

NRPA PARK PULSE Reduce Stress With Parks and Recreation

86% of U.S. adults believe it is helpful to have access to the outdoors and nature during stressful times.



A majority of U.S. adults across all generations — including baby boomers (89%), Gen Xers (87%), millennials (85%) and Gen Zers (79%) — agree that dealing with stress by accessing the outdoors is helpful.

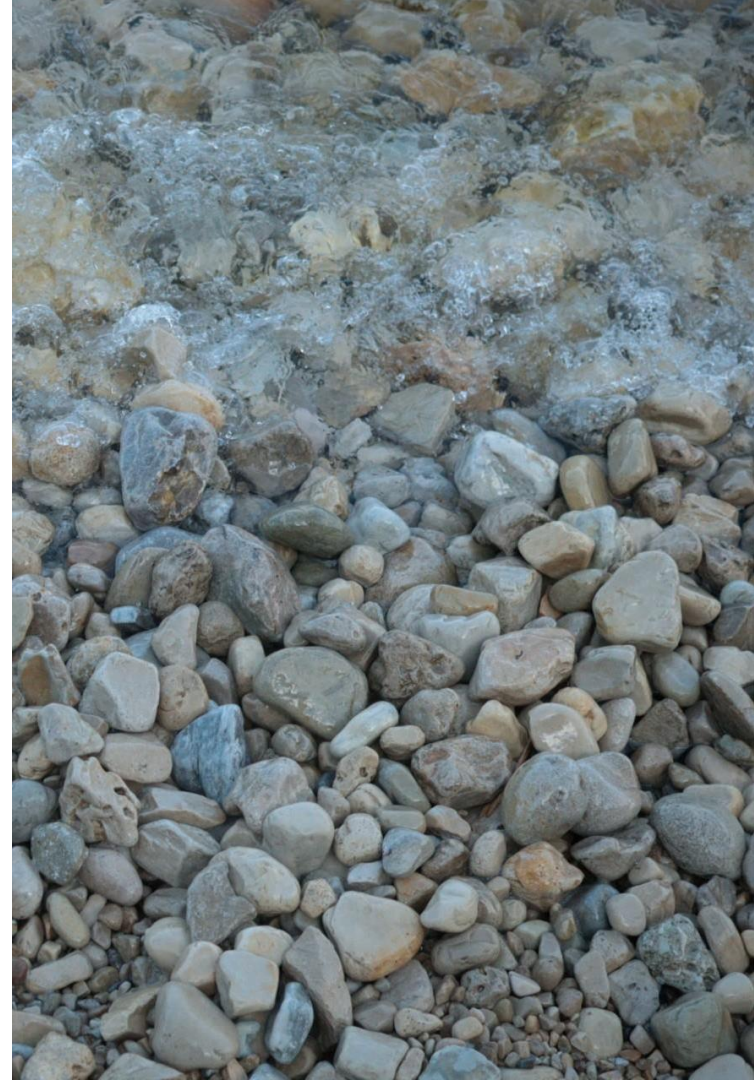
Each month, through a poll of 1,000 U.S. residents focused on park and recreation issues, NRPA Park Pulse helps tell the park and recreation story. Questions span from the serious to the more lighthearted. The survey was conducted by Wakefield Research (www.wakefieldresearch.com).

Visit nrpa.org/ParkPulse for more information.



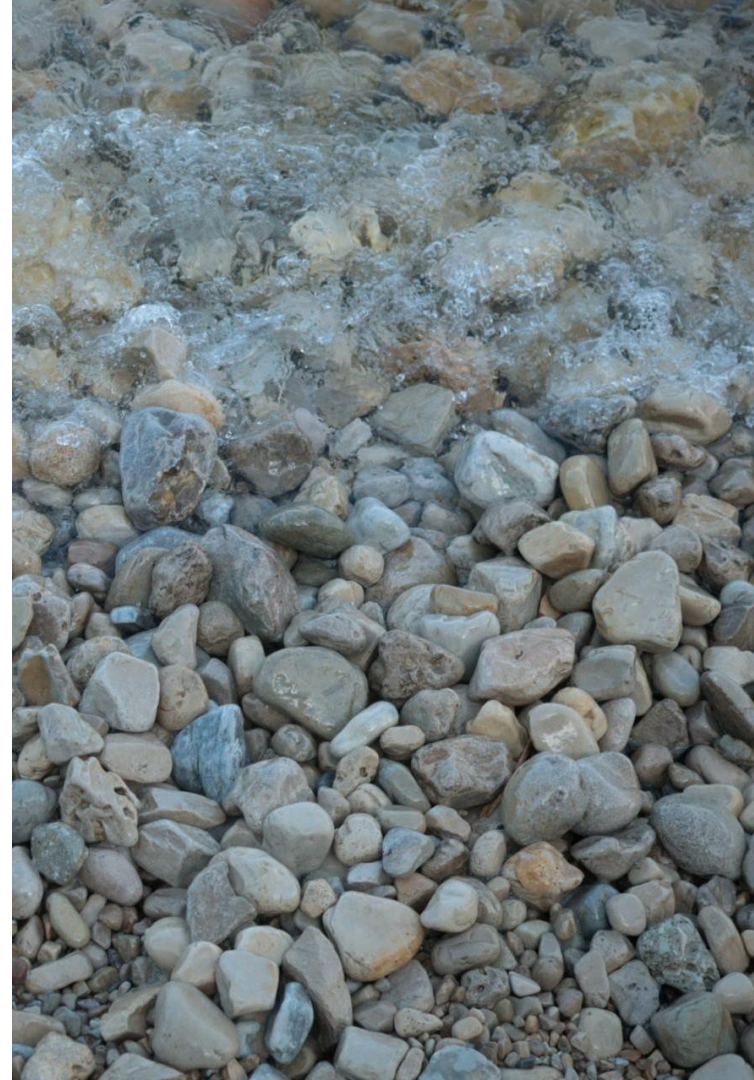
*Key Factors to Keep in Mind for Ecotherapy...

- Safety (and perceived safety)
- Accessibility (Terrain, transportation, program promotion)
- Language (What resonates in your community?)



Ecotherapy & Climate Grief or Anxiety

- Climate change affects our physical environments and safety - but also our emotions and sense of meaning and purpose
- Community connection is empowering - supports action and prevents burnout for advocates
- Connects individuals with tools for processing big emotions with support from others with shared experience
- Opportunities for cultural connection & uplift for specific demographics





**Where is your
favorite outdoor
space?**

Case Studies



to me ▾

Hi Marissa!

Thank you for your email! I wish I could cite some amazing scientific study that we referenced for the therapy trail but I literally just got online to see what others are doing. I'm also embarrassed to say that since we put the signage up, I've had two signs stolen (post and all)!

My strategies consisted of walking the trail and picking stopping points that I thought would be good stopping points. Ha!

I'm so sorry that I couldn't be of more help. We have had some positive feedback from visitors and, we have looked into having a licensed "Forest Bathing Instructor" come and lead a hike in the park. Here is the link that I used to find her: <https://www.natureandforesttherapy.earth/>. Maybe they would have some resources that would help you.

Best of luck!

FOR YOUR MENTAL
AND PHYSICAL WELL BEING

ECOTHERAPY TRAILS

USE THEM APRIL 10-30
AND OFFER FEEDBACK
TO WIN SWAG.

Learn more about the new Ecotherapy Trails on campus.



Butler University

- Launching this week! Two self-guided nature mindfulness trails, Campus Ecotherapy Guide, and online resources
- Coalition to create an experience where students connect to nature
 - Staff, faculty, student interns, community volunteers
- BU Community Sustainability Literacy & Cultural Assessment:
 - 76% of students and 79% of faculty and staff surveyed stated when they think about climate change they feel negatively, including depressed, anxious, and angry
 - 73% of students surveyed feel climate change will significantly impact their future
- Process: Brainstorming, design & approvals, evaluation

Eagle Creek Park Foundation



- Collaboration between Park & Foundation
- In-person mindfulness hikes twice per month for all ages (June - September 2022)
 - Led by trained volunteers
 - Two guides per hike
 - Took place on two accessible trails
 - 50 adult participants in first season

Eagle Creek Park Foundation

- Guides were trained using Park volunteer process (Background check & orientation) plus one-day group facilitator training
- Designated routes were provided for volunteers, including one loop outside paid area
- Logistics for the Program
 - Volunteer Application (Form distributed to volunteers and connections)
 - Training (Background check, video orientation, and one day in-person)
 - Foundation handled registration for volunteers and participants with Sign-Up Genius
 - Limited promotion via e-newsletters and social media during first season



Indy Community Yoga



- Two free, accessible hikes per month for all ages
- Four paid walk leaders
- Process: Brainstorm, plan, test, revise
- Ongoing: Launching partnership with downtown trail to offer weekly urban mindfulness hikes

Benefits of Collaboration

- Cross-sector, multi-dimensional opportunities
- Variety of options based on shared knowledge, time, and resources
- Provide new community services and reach new audiences
- Can accelerate / expand existing work with strong ecosystem



Strategies for Collaboration

- Be open about your interests and honest about what you can offer
- Listen! (To needs and feedback)
- Flexibility is key throughout the entire process
- Look for inspiration - then tailor to your situation
- People are excited about this work & willing to share





Let's stay in touch!

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**Instagram:
[@Ecotherapy4All](https://www.instagram.com/Ecotherapy4All)**

www.ecotherapyforall.com

A close-up photograph of several vertical stems of small, pinkish-purple flowers. The flowers are arranged in dense, elongated clusters. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a natural, outdoor setting. The lighting is bright and even, highlighting the delicate texture of the petals.

Questions?