

Connecting with nature

 60 minutes

Objective

- *To guide participants in discovering how nature-inspired elements can create powerful environments for sensory rest while exploring the visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory qualities of natural settings.*

Materials needed

- Comfortable seating (chairs, cushions, or mats)
- Printed copies of the Sensory Rest manual
- Nature imagery (photos, posters, or slideshows)
- Audio recordings of nature sounds (birds, water, wind, forest ambience)
- Objects from nature (stones, leaves, flowers, pinecones) for tactile exploration
- Notebooks or journals for reflections
- Pens or pencils
- Optional: plants, essential oils with natural scents, or small fountains for live sensory stimulation

Tool Description

This tool offers a guided, immersive experience where participants connect with the restorative qualities of nature to design their own quiet spaces.

Through guided exploration, sensory imagination exercises, and reflection, the session helps them identify which natural elements resonate most deeply.

By the end, they will have a personalised plan for a nature-based sanctuary they can incorporate into daily life, either indoors or outdoors.



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Instructions

1 - INTRODUCTION (20 minutes)

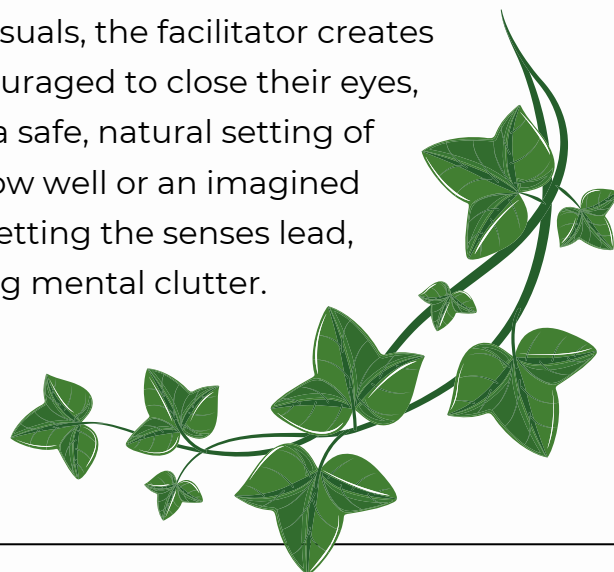
- Introduce the manual
- Allow participants time to familiarise themselves with the manual and its content
- Focus on the chapter **Sensory Rest**
- Introduce the importance of **connecting with nature** as a practice and let participants know this will be the main focus of this module

Step 2 – Connecting with nature's sensory elements

Participants are guided to reflect on past experiences in nature where they felt most at peace, perhaps walking in a forest, sitting by the sea, or lying in a grassy field. The facilitator prompts them to recall the colours, scents, textures, and sounds present in those moments. If possible, objects, images, or recordings are provided to stimulate the senses and help participants identify what resonates most deeply.

Step 3 – Immersive nature experience

Using a curated selection of nature sounds and visuals, the facilitator creates an immersive environment. Participants are encouraged to close their eyes, slow their breathing, and imagine themselves in a safe, natural setting of their choice. This could be a real location they know well or an imagined place designed entirely by them. The focus is on letting the senses lead, what they see, hear, feel, and smell, while releasing mental clutter.



Step 4 – Reflection and journaling

After the immersive experience, participants open their notebooks to capture their impressions. They can describe the elements that made them feel most relaxed, the emotions that arose, and any new ideas for incorporating nature into their daily life. The facilitator may prompt reflection with targeted questions to deepen awareness.

Step 5 – Designing a nature-based quiet space

Using the Quiet Space Planning Template, participants translate their reflections into a practical design. They choose a location (indoors or outdoors), define its size, and specify its sensory elements, visuals, sounds, smells, textures, and even tastes. They also consider functional aspects like seating, lighting, and additional comforting items.

Step 6 – Sharing and closing

The group is invited to share, if they wish, their envisioned quiet spaces and the role of nature in them. This sharing offers inspiration and reinforces the collective benefit of sensory rest. The facilitator closes the session by encouraging participants to integrate even small nature-based elements into their everyday environments, reminding them that connection with nature can be nurtured anywhere, from a forest to a windowsill plant.



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Reflection questions

Here are a few questions to facilitate discussion and reflection, such as:

- What sensory elements from nature made you feel most at ease during the exercise?

**Look deep into nature, and then you will
understand everything better.**

- How do you imagine incorporating these natural elements into your daily life?
- What obstacles might you face in creating your nature-based quiet space, and how could you overcome them?
- How do you feel about the importance of having a designated Nature-based sensory area in your life?
- Why is this quiet space important to you?



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