

The Nature Effect

*Personal, professional &
community development
connecting people to
their earth*



Personal Development

*Wellbeing,
Creativity and
Transformation*

Our other pamphlets include:
Overview 2011-13
Professional Development
Community Development
Schools Projects
Early Years Projects



www.TheNatureEffect.co.uk



Personal Development

Wellbeing, Creativity and Transformation

Research shows that we feel better if we spend time in green spaces, even for short periods. We know from experience the transformational potential of silencing the chattering of human and electronic life in favour of the sounds of birds, wind, trees and rain.

Directors and Associates of The Nature Effect have a wide range of skills for supporting people, nurturing well-being, and providing a space where creative transformation can take place. Many of our community events (see separate section) are intended to support wellbeing in the individuals who attend and the community as a whole. Time spent outdoors, learning together, eating together, meeting new people, mixing across generations and cultures, seems a foolproof recipe for laughter and wholesome pleasure for head, heart and hands.

We also offer coaching and mentoring with individuals and with groups (see pamphlet on Professional Development). However, lines between personal, professional and community are often quite blurred: when working with individuals on personal issues, the key questions may be about work, “how can I find a right livelihood in this world or a sense of place and belonging in my community?” Conversely, when working with professionals, the things that concern them and may keep them awake at night are often about people and personal relationships and finding a balance between personal and professional fulfillment.

The Nature Effect employs three key methodological approaches: Working with Nature, Asking Good Questions, and Mapping what is in the Field:

- Time spent in Nature might be a brief observational exercise or a mindfulness focus outdoors; it might be developing a regular ‘sit spot’ practice or spending 24 hours or longer alone in a beautiful wood; it might be ‘walking and talking’ with colleagues outside of your usual workspace. We use natural materials and nature metaphor to find ways to disentangle the complexities of life and particular personal challenges.
- Einstein is quoted as having said “*If I had an hour to solve a problem, I would spend the first 55 minutes working out the right question!*” When we tell people something we invite them to obey or to believe. When we ask them a good question we invite them to think and maybe to transform their thinking.
- People carry with them a whole field of relationships. We use systemic approaches to map these relationships so that support and help offered is in service of the ‘whole field’ rather than simply the individual’s surface needs and wishes.



We explain our work in these pamphlets:

Overview

Introducing
The Nature Effect

Personal Development

Wellbeing, Creativity
and Transformation
- You are here

Community Development

Creativity, Collaboration
and Connections

Professional Development

Action Learning,
Peer Group Enquiry
and Mentoring

Early Years Projects

Playing with the Elements

Schools Projects

Bread, Butter & Soup

All downloadable from
TheNatureEffect.org.uk

Over the last two years we have offered a range of personal development workshops and retreats for different groups and ages. Many, but by no means all, of our activities in this area have focused on women; this has perhaps reflected the gender bias in our Directors and Associates and is something we seek to address in future.

Women and Earth Retreats

We have offered two Women and Earth Retreats by the magnificent waterfall of Pistyll Rhaeadr in North West Wales. Both were profound, creative, wild and wonderful; the transformation often subtle. The words of one of the participants (quoting a Martha Postlethwaite poem) express this beautifully:

“After the retreat I feel that something has shifted in my life – nothing that one could see with a naked eye, I suppose, nothing outwardly ‘grandiose’. But I myself feel that I have at least glimpsed “the song that is my life”. I do not know yet what shape it will take or where it will lead, I just have the taste/memory of it in my mind. For that I do thank ALL of you who helped the retreat to happen”

Zane

- Women & Earth Retreat Participant 2012

“The least movement is of importance to all nature. The entire ocean is affected by a pebble.”

- Blaise Pascal



“Some of nature’s most exquisite handiwork is on a miniature scale, as anyone knows who has applied a magnifying glass to a snowflake.”

- Rachel Carson

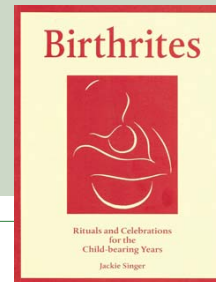
The Nature Effect Girls Mentoring Circle

Associate Jackie Singer talks about a new initiative:

“In the new year of 2014, a group of 11 ten and eleven year old girls met for the first time in a Community Centre, with two mentors, myself and Emma Hood. As we sat around a vase of pink roses and did our first ‘check in’, a dream that I’d held for a long time came into being. The period of time when girls are changing into teenagers, moving to a new school, dealing with the onset of puberty and shifting relationships with parents, is such a tender and significant phase. Inspired by a training with the Rose Circle (www.rosecircle.org), I wanted to offer something to hold girls steady through this time.

Emma Hood is a primary school teacher, who brings skills in bushcraft, cooking, and non-violent communication, to add to my creative and therapeutic toolkit. Emma and I had both been on The Nature Effect’s Women and Earth retreat, and also been part of TNE’s Kids Area team at Uncivilisation Festival. We build on this common ground as we plan each session. Our passionate hope is that we can share with these girls some of the treasures we only discovered much later in life: how to cherish the wild rhythms of our own bodies, listen to the truth of our own hearts, and find support from our friends and relations.”

Jackie’s first book **Birthrites – Rituals and Celebrations for the Child-Bearing Years** was published by Permanent Press in 2008; she is working on a new book about coming of age. A new monthly The Nature Effect Creative Women’s Group will start in Oxford in May 2014.





Wild Mindfulness

Associate Ally Stott reports on her Wild Mindfulness retreat:

The spring 2013 Wild Mindfulness retreat took place in and around east Oxford. By way of mindfulness meditation practices, the day was an experiential exploration of our embodiment, of being here in the world at this time of change, challenge and opportunity. The roots of mindfulness practice are over 2,500 years old and historically were practised as much outside as indoors. The Wild Mindfulness retreat provided the opportunity to dissolve some of the perceived boundaries between 'inner' and 'outer'; 'self' and 'other'; and to pay attention to our experience as this happened.

Part of the motivation for offering this retreat in my local area was that often in our busy lives it is the local, the familiar, that we have the least conscious relationship with. This can include people, places and our own self. To really know a place though paying deep attention, to know its changing nature as something not separate from ourselves, expands our identity and strengthens our participation with the life of the place. What we feel connected to, we care about.

"I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in."

John Muir

The air of our breath is the air that rustles leaves and gives flight to birds.

The water we drink falls as raindrops and fills mountain streams.

The fire of the sun gives light to our day and warms the soil to stir seeds.

In the rocks of the earth are the same elements we find in our bones.

Ally Stott

The 'wild' of the day beckoned us into the territory of curiosity, intuition and creativity. After opening our circle together and establishing a safe, respectful approach to the day, we began with some formal guided sitting meditation, focusing on the embodied breath, the element of air. This type of practice supports a clear compassionate seeing of what is actually happening in our inner landscapes and immediate environment, and including all of this, we begin to settle, to ground – with the breath. This was followed by an outdoor meditation practice. In the afternoon we practised walking meditation to a local meadow, and had some solo time, letting intuition guide us to the part of the meadow we needed to spend time with. On arriving back to the cabin we used art materials to express and integrate something of our experiences of the retreat.

Ally Stott has been engaged with soulful mindfulness practice for over 15 years, and works with groups and individuals both indoors and outside. See www.AllyStott.co.uk.

For further info on our work please visit our website: www.TheNatureEffect.co.uk or email: TheNatureEffect@gmail.com