The Grow Project

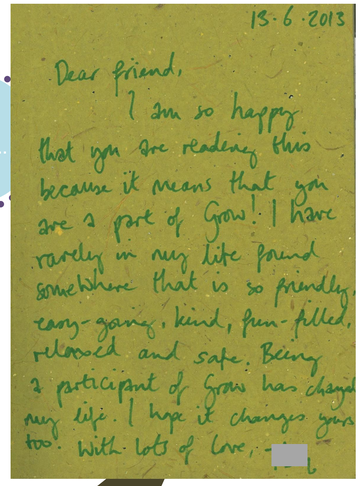
An infographic on the well-being benefits of nature connection for people with experience of mental distress

grow

See Grow's website for the full report
www.growingwellbeing.org.uk

Adams, M., Jordan, M., Wren, J. & Wright, J. 2014.
The Grow Project. A report on the well-being benefits of nature connection for people with experience of mental distress.
Brighton, Community University Partnership Programme,
University of Brighton.

DEAR FRIEND...



This is a message from a previous participant of Grow to a new one

Connecting University volunteering programmes with Grow

VOLUNTEERING

Those involved in Grow sharing experiences with University staff & students

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

THIS IS THE FOCUS HERE

DEVELOPING the evidence-base of Grow's success

- INTERVIEWS
- FOCUS GROUPS
- QUESTIONNAIRES
- PARTICIPATION

with past & present Grow participants

WHAT HAVE WE FOUND OUT? SO FAR X 4 THEMES:

This infographic reports on a collaboration between Grow & the University of Brighton*

SO HOW HAVE WE WORKED TOGETHER?

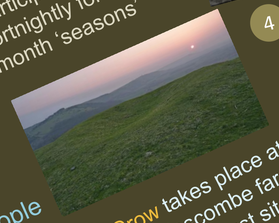
THAT'S BASICALLY HOW IT WORKS

START HERE!

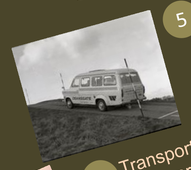
WHAT IS GROW? & WHAT DOES PARTICIPATING IN GROW ENTAIL?

1 Grow is a programme designed to support people with diverse lived experiences of mental distress to experience the significant wellbeing benefits of being in nature, in a safe and supportive group.

2 Grow takes place at Saddlescombe farm, a National Trust site in Sussex: a hidden gem on the South Downs Way.



3 Participants meet fortnightly for three-month 'seasons'



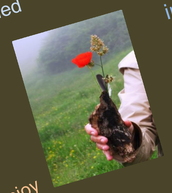
4 Transport to & from the site is provided - travelling together by minibus

5 The group check-in & then choose from a range of activities…

6 … such as guided walks & conservation activities, green woodworking, environmental art, mindfulness…

7 …or healthy lunches, fireside tea and conversation

8 … or simply enjoy being in nature their own way



9 A high level of professional support is provided

10 Participants are centrally involved in planning new seasons of Grow

POSITIVITY

1 Experiences of Grow are overwhelmingly positive

for example

We collected together everything that was said (10000+ words) & generated this wordcloud. The size of the word reflects how often it was used by participants

lots of positive words but positive about what?

see 2 3 + 4

NATURE CONNECTEDNESS

2 Participants overwhelmingly cited **feeling connected to nature** as important part of Grow.

for example

'I just love being around the animals, hearing the birds singing and breathing in the fresh air'

…

'The peaceful environment helps your mind become peaceful in contrast to the hectic city environment which seems to make your mind more hectic'

Experiencing nature as peaceful, safe & something positive but hard to articulate, as well as a place less weighed down with social & cultural expectation about how to be

BELONGING

3 People often cited **supportive relationships with others** as important part of Grow

Participants expressed what felt good about Grow in terms of attachments- a sense of belonging, acceptance, safety, that applied to the group

for example

'I used to be a sociable person but when I had my breakdown 2 or 3 years ago people stopped getting in contact with me. I was getting more and more isolated and coming to Grow has made me realise that I can form relationships with people again'

AUTONOMY

4 Grow often stressed the value of it being **participant led**, and incorporating the **choice** to participate or not in the activities on offer.

Autonomy was highly valued in terms of participants being involved in designing the 'season' & having the freedom to engage, or not, with activities

for example

'I thought it was brilliant that there was no pressure to do anything — by not having the pressure to do things, it sort of encouraged me to do them more'

FINALLY

Grow recently secured Big Lottery funding for the next 3 years

CONGRATULATIONS!

*This poster reports on an ongoing collaboration between Grow & the University of Brighton. It was made possible by the Community University Partnership Programme's On Our Doorsteps funding. Grow is supported by the Big Lottery Fund, MIND & the National Trust.
The real live people involved are: present & former Grow participants & volunteers; Julie Wright & Jo Wren, Grow Project Directors; Grow trustees incorporating former participants & volunteers; Matt Adams & Martin Jordan, University of Brighton.

grow | On our doorsteps | Community University Partnership Programme | Mind in Brighton and Hove | University of Brighton | National Trust | Big Lottery Fund

Poster by Matt Adams