

Walking Initiative

Key Elements

Walking

Weekly, same time - commitment to regular attendance

Small groups - 3/4 people

Outdoors - fundamentals of connection to nature

What is the thinking behind the walking initiative?

Walking initiative to bring people together on a regular basis, doing gentle exercise in the outdoors.

Explain the importance of each element

Walking

For most people, walking is an accessible activity. It doesn't require specialist equipment other than a comfortable pair of shoes. It's gentle exercise meaning that it is suitable for people who have injuries or ailments that would prevent them from doing more strenuous exercises. It allows for the most basic mobility and movement. It's "non-threatening". Even for people who don't feel comfortable exercising, walking is an activity that can be done.

Weekly Appointment - Regular Attendance

This is all about creating a new and healthy habit. Making a regular commitment to this initiative is the start of a building block. Research shows that habits are formed by doing something regularly. This means that by making a commitment to doing this and sticking to it, it will become a healthy (and health-forming) habit.

Small Groups

The purpose of the group is two fold. The first is that it provides for connection to others. Doing a gentle activity with other people allows for conversation and connection. Seeing familiar faces on a regular basis and over a prolonged period of time builds connection - and hopefully companionship and friendship. The second element is commitment and accountability. When taking on a new activity by yourself, it's easier to find an excuse not to do it. [Studies have shown that] when you commit to doing something with others there is an accountability to the group - you are less likely to find an excuse not to do it when you have others who are expecting you. This accountability is key to keeping people attending and therefore the long term success of the initiative.

Outdoors

Connection to nature brings huge benefits to our physical and mental health. [Reference to studies] Time outdoors can help provide perspective and clarity - having the space, removed from the confines of four walls, can bring a whole new set of insights. Access to natural light has biological impacts on our bodies and can provide balance to our hormones, helping us to sleep better. [Need more stats on this]

The act of having a connection to nature also provides a link to time and seasons, a sense of

something bigger than oneself.

How it works?

The idea is simple. Wellderness Walks (name TBC) will set up the initiative in your GP practice, workplace, college or school.

This process will entail:

Advertising Initiative

Holding meetings to introduce it

Facilitating group introductions

Attending the first week's walks (with Pets as Therapy dog)

Providing a framework for the next six weeks - format, how to plan, structure, conversation topics if requested

Surveying before it starts with participants, at week 6 and after 3/6 months

Attending walk at week 6 (with Pets as Therapy dog if requested)

Follow up and group discussion

Provision for ongoing monitoring - to be handed over to in-house with Wellderness involvement if required/requested

What will this mean for the host organisation?

Aims for the programme can vary between host organisations. For a GP practice for example, it can be to provide an outlet for lonely patients, patients requiring help to start exercising, a support for patients with low level mental health challenges. The aim is also to provide a social outlet which may benefit some patients and [avoided appointments].

Schools or colleges - can provide an informal support network, a way to meet new people, an opportunity for constructed

