

SUMMER RITUALS

FOR A MINDFUL AND MEANINGFUL SEASON

As she looks forward to soaking up the joy of summer, wellbeing writer, **Katy Lassetter**, delves into ways we can create therapeutic, holistic rituals to promote physical and mental health

WORDS KATY LASSETTER

With the arrival of summer, the anticipation of basking in the sheer delight of vibrant flower fields fills the air. As we immerse ourselves in the beauty of nature, there is a unique opportunity to cultivate mindful and meaningful rituals that promote both physical and mental wellbeing. By incorporating intentional practices into our daily lives, we can unlock a profound sense of joy and tranquillity that resonates within us long after the summer sun sets. Join me on this journey of self-discovery and uncover the transformative potential of mindful rituals this summer…

THE BENEFITS OF TIME IN NATURE

July and August are glorious times to get out in nature and make the most of the UK's multi-sensory floral displays. Let the fresh, herbal chamomile scent bathe you in serenity, the vibrant beauty of sunflower fields warm you and enjoy the double dose of relaxation from lavender with its tranquil aroma and pleasing purple haze.

Lavender has many benefits. It's been lauded to promote skin health and better sleep, all while relieving chronic pain and menopausal hot flushes. The winning blend of lavender and chamomile has also been linked to boosting mood and memory.

So, this summer, perhaps try meandering through fields of these calming crops (or any wildflowers) and let the benefits of engaging with the natural world manifest. The comforting hum of buzzing bees soothes the soul, and brilliant birdsong is a proven tonic to boost happy hormones. In fact, a 2020 study published by The Natural History Museum, found that some bird sounds offered relief from mental fatigue and stress, with one participant associating the nostalgic sound of wood pigeons with long, hot childhood summers.

Consider taking your treatments outside this season or providing your clients with some ideas of where they can visit and immerse in nature. Take a deep breath, drink it all in and let nature heal.

MINDFUL BREATHING AND MEDITATION

I spoke with FHT member and accredited training provider Anna Gatland of Freedom Therapies Training (**www.freedomtherapies.co.uk**) about mindfulness and meditation. We agreed that summer is the ideal time to start or refine your practice to boost wellbeing – for both you and your clients.

"With the longer days, everything is awake and alive with bright colours. It's a great opportunity to find a quiet space and soak up the warmth. Tune into birdsong or the sound of water by the beach or a river," she advised.

"Mindful breathing involves inhaling fresh oxygen and nourishing your body, breathing out stress while focused and present. What better place is there to do this than out in nature?

"Meditation is about having one specific focus – like a rose growing in your garden – and counting your breaths or listening to a guided visualisation. With practice you may achieve more calm and improved concentration so you can filter out mind chatter. This isn't easy, so it's important to make meditation and mindfulness part of your daily routine.

"Regular mindful breathing and meditation brings our bodies back to a natural balance, encouraging relaxation and allows healing – physical and emotional. The aftercare advice we give our clients should include these disciplines. And we should remember to practise them ourselves. If we're balanced, this will reflect in the quality of our lives and treatments."

One of my summer rituals is to sit in a field of chamomile surrounded by the uplifting melody of skylarks, breathing in the sweet scent and focusing on the birdsong. Aromatherapy meets meditation! Why not try this in your local green space?

A TASTE OF SUMMER WELLBEING

Seasonal summer foods work wonders to support a healthy diet and promote wellbeing. Some of my favourite forages along the coast include sea beet (or wild spinach) and samphire.

Common, year-round sea beet is the wild ancestor of beetroot with more pep than spinach. It can be used in salads, pesto or a summer stew with tomatoes and fresh herbs.

Available June to August, marsh samphire is found on salt marshes and tidal mud flats. It tastes great with fish and it's an antioxidant packed with vitamins, reducing inflammation and boosting the immune system.

My summer flower field experiences have also inspired some tasty treats. Why not make chamomile ice cream or lavender and lemon biscuits to savour with a classic tea blend?

SELF-CARE IN THE SUMMER

Self-care is key to support your wellbeing, and outdoors is the ideal place to embrace some 'you time,' re-energise and reflect. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said: "Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience."

When talking to FHT member Amy Taylor of Purple Turtle Therapy (**www.purpleturtletherapy.com**) about her go-to summer self-care routine, her V Lift Mini Facial piqued my interest. It's a five-minute facial that can be done anywhere at any time, not only helping you feel invigorated but also relieving facial tension. Perfect if you're suffering from sinusitis caused by hay fever or you get a tension headache just thinking about jetting off on holiday. Here's how to do it:

First, if you're doing the facial outdoors, Amy advises applying an SPF moisturiser at least 20 minutes before sun exposure. Then, sit or lay down in a comfortable position, take a few deep breaths and relax your shoulders. Cue the calm.

Facial Effleurage – Using the palm of your hand, sweep in a v-shape upwards and outwards from the neck and face to the scalp. Repeat three times.
Forehead Sweep – Place your fingertips vertically in the centre of your forehead and sweep outwards horizontally. When you get to your temporal dips, do small rotations with your fingertips. Repeat three times.
Eye Brightener – Place your thumbs under the top lip of the orbicularis oculi (a muscle located in the eyelids), lift and hold for three seconds. Work along your eyebrow line, from the centre out. Repeat for the other eye. Using your index fingers, sweep gently under your eyes on the lower orbicularis oculi from the centre out.
Cheeks Releaser – With your thumb and index finger, pinch and lift your cheeks working from the centre out.
Jowl Lifter – With your thumb and index finger, pinch and roll your jowls up and over the mandible working from the centre out.
Facial Effleurage – Using the palm of your hand, sweep in a v-shape, upwards and outwards from the neck and face to the scalp. Repeat three times.

As summer unfolds and we find ourselves surrounded by the beauty of nature, it is the perfect time to establish mindful and meaningful rituals that promote physical and mental wellbeing. Try out these summer rituals, or create your own, and embrace their transformative potential. IT

Katy Lassetter is a writer based in West Sussex. With a keen interest in holistic therapies, she has worked with everyone from aromatherapists and Indian head massage therapists to osteopaths and subliminal hypnotherapists. Living with ME and an autoimmune disease for over 10 years has provided Katy with experience of using alternative therapies to manage her own health as well as the empathy required to write for and about others receiving treatments. To contact Katy email **katy@chichestercopywriter.co.uk** or visit **chichestercopywriter.co.uk**