

# Nature assisted rehabilitation is proven effective

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## Conclusions

**Nature assisted rehabilitation with cognitive elements, for patients with psychiatric and musculoskeletal diagnoses, is an effective method. The economic costs for these patient groups are significant. If results appear to hold, there are large gains to be made for both the individual and society.**

## **Introduktion**

Introduction: The use of nature in the rehabilitative purposes has long been well-documented. Research suggests that the use of nature is a powerful instrument for treating and preventing mental and physical disease. There is likely a quality in outdoor experiences that dampens feelings of anxiety. A possible distortion of anxiety triggers can perhaps explain this phenomenon. The distortion in question is produced by signals of shelter and safety, which is linked to a natural environment. This produces a soothing feeling for the participants.

The project was conducted in two periods. 41 participants underwent the process in 2008 and 198 participants in 2010 - 2012.

The participants had a clinical picture of psychiatric disorders (F) or musculoskeletal disorders (M). The absence from the labor force ranged from 1-7 years.

## **Purpose of the study**

The project was aimed at increasing the rehabilitation potential of people within working age (16-64 years of age), and to strengthen participants' cognitive self-image, physical fitness and social skills.

## **Method**

An essential element is to move people away from the environment in which their anxiety triggers are activated and into an environment that dampens these feelings, which is described in the background portion. An employment worker can, in forestry / natural environment, easily capture the participant's desire for job training without it being obscured by diffuse anxiety. Participants went through eight weeks of nature-based group activity in the forest environment, with cognitive training elements around significant areas such as self-image, self-esteem, coping strategies, and stress management. The participants where they experience an anxiety that leads to an avoiding behaviour. The participants were also engaged in training aimed at helping them to articulate their dreams for the future. Eight weeks of vocational rehabilitation followed. This was done through an internship, of which the participant felt was interesting.

## **Results**

The project was conducted in two sessions. In 2008 a total of 41 people participated in the project. 25 of those went on to continued vocational rehabilitation. Of these, 22 started to work or study immediately after. A three-year follow-up of these in 2011 showed that 18 of them were still engaged in work or studies

During the second period there were 198 clients who went through the process. 29 of them went back to work or study, the majority in full-time work. 78 participants are in continued vocational rehabilitation. An active workable plan exists and continued rehabilitation progress is made, although 26 of the 198 participants have received disability pension.

This shows that the participants are very fragile even if the percentage of participants within the group that has returned to work is high.

# Pilotmodell: Samordningsteam Västerås

## Malma Farm Nature assisted rehabilitation in development

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### Pilotmodell: Samordningsteam Västerås Malma Farm - Nature assisted rehabilitation in development.

Our research findings show that nature is a powerful tool when used in a rehabilitative context, and that exposure to natural environments not only prevents ill health but also has a healing effect.

#### Background

*Vägen in* and *Gröna Arenor* are two projects involving nature as a method, which have now merged into the pilot model **Samordningsteam Västerås**.

Through Samordningsförbundet Västerås, the model has been developed through a dynamic cooperation between the Municipality, the Job Centre, the Social Insurance Administration and the County Council.

The team includes a physiotherapist, a CBT therapist, a behavioral scientist, a researcher, a Job Centre advisor, personal case worker, supervisors and gardeners.

#### Method

The positive experiences will be utilized and built on. The participants in the project are 16-64 years of age and are unemployed.

The project consists of three different groups: the focus of the first group is on gardening, where the participants work in the garden for six months. The second group is experience-based, where the participants spend time in the countryside, with eight weeks of rehabilitation and eight weeks of work experience. The final group consists of young adults in need of a motivational intervention.

Our method is based on rehabilitation with the assistance of nature, and includes cognitive and existential training elements focusing on key areas such as self-image, self-esteem, coping strategies and stress management.

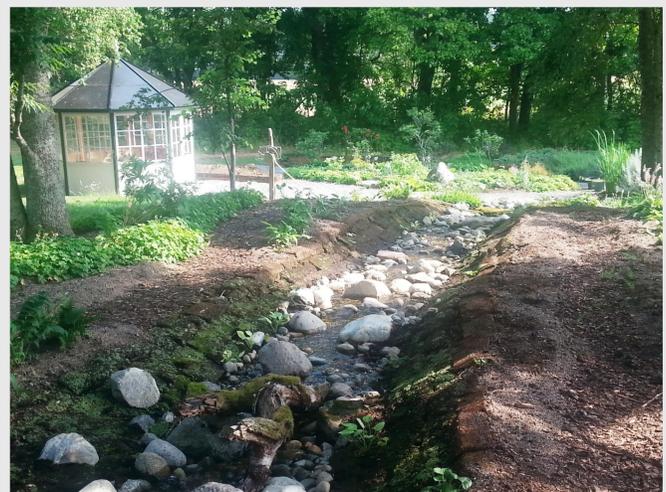
A vocational rehabilitation group, an assessment group and a behavioral medical group are actively involved in the project; a research team observes the progress of the project.

#### Results

Our research findings show that nature is a powerful tool when used in a rehabilitative context, and that exposure to natural environments not only prevents ill health but also has a healing effect.

The outcome of previous projects was convincing: of those who finished their time in the *Gröna Arenor* project, 42.3 % have moved on to be either financially independent or to study.

When it comes to the participants of *Vägen in*, the results show that about 45% go on to find work or to study. What the participants have in common is that they are a vulnerable group and their rehabilitation needs to be given time.



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