



WILD WONDER
& WISDOM

Outdoor Learning

RECONNECT

PROJECT IMPACT REPORT



SPRING 2023



Kathy's Introduction

Kathy King, founder of Wild, Wonder and Wisdom (WW&W) has been working on this project concept for the last four years. In 2019, she delivered her first Women's Wild Camp Adventure Project Pilot with funding from the School of Social Entrepreneurs. She has since been able to improve the scope of what WW&W can offer.

Before lockdown, Active Cornwall awarded us funding through their Tackling Inequalities fund. This has allowed us to tweak and amend our offer, improving delivery methods, content and logistics to ensure that we get the maximum uptake and engagement from all of our participants.

The qualitative and quantitative data presented in this report describes the impact of our most recent run with referrals from Live West Housing Association in Liskeard and Bodmin. Previous projects have taken referrals from The Women's Centre, St Austell College and St Austell Healthcare Social Prescribing.

It has been a real pleasure working alongside Grace on this project as she brings a wealth of experience and knowledge that adds so much value to our original offer. We are keen to replicate this programme and scale up delivery so we can help more young women in Cornwall to reconnect with themselves, nature and their community, and to feel supported in making decisions about their futures.



Empowering young women in the outdoors





Grace's Introduction

Grace Moore is founder of Hidden School Yoga, Perranporth. Her practice aims to build wellness through a trauma-informed approach, Yoga and nature. Grace collaborated with WW&W to deliver this six-week Reconnect programme, bringing her wisdom and Yoga practice to the course.

The mission of this course was to help people understand, protect and sustain their mental health through the non-verbal pathways of nature-based practice.

The premise of the Reconnect Social Impact Project is to help young women build, or indeed re-build, their confidence, positive self-esteem, boundaries and resilience. More immediately, it sought to reduce stress and anxiety in a setting that allows for non-verbal exploration of these themes.

The pathways often prescribed or offered to these women are considered as cures and people often expect to seek to heal through talking therapies, indoor-based activities or telephone consultation. However, for many people, particularly the young women we supported, accessing these services is becoming increasingly challenging, and expressing their thoughts and feelings in this format can be daunting or off-putting.

Reconnect recognises this, offering a more holistic approach, including access to wild therapy. We took our participants to green and blue spaces to encounter the other-than-human and the more-than-human: animals, birds, plants, trees, hills, rivers, winds and the sea. By spending time 'in nature', participants could gain a better appreciation of their place in the world, always inhabiting and encountering their own nature in all its wondrous strangeness. By embracing this wildness, they had the opportunity to improve their social, emotional and mental health, areas that many of these women, and indeed all of us, crucially need support in.

Using this approach, our data shows that the young women who participated saw significant changes in their wellbeing. Our activities supported them to feel more grounded and encouraged them to relax their mind and body, providing an alternative perspective on life. Consequently, our outcomes show reductions in depression, anger, feelings of anxiety and stress over the course of the project. We also recorded improvements in mood and self-esteem, and increased emotional resilience.

Reconnect offers a unique opportunity to access natural spaces and grow emotionally, physically and socially alongside a community. I am proud of what we achieved with this group and look forward to continuing this valuable and rewarding work with future participants. It was a privilege to share this journey.

The Project

The Reconnect project is an offer that we aim to replicate and scale up due to the significant positive outcomes we observed in our participants during this initial pilot. This is a six-week one-day-a-week course for young women aged 16-24 who are, or are at risk of becoming, NEET (Not In Education, Employment or Training). It provides the opportunity to learn bushcraft skills, build confidence, develop a sense of self and feel empowered to step confidently into the next stage of their lives. It offers the chance to grow and form lasting relationships alongside experienced outdoorswomen, as well as seeing the challenges they are facing from a new perspective.

Empowering young women

Inspiring those facing barriers

Promoting physical and mental wellbeing

Supporting communities, partners and outdoor providers

A huge thank you to Active Cornwall for their support in funding this project and enabling us to do this life-changing work for these young women.



The Company

Wild, Wonder and Wisdom is a social enterprise that seeks to empower young people through outdoor activities. The organisation became a Community Interest Company (CIC) in March 2019 and has since steadily increased its social reach around the St Austell area of Cornwall. Kathy King, founder of WW&W, has recently worked with the School of Social Entrepreneurs and alongside the directors of the CIC has developed a strategy seeking to expand the services the organisation can provide. This includes increasing the financial sustainability of the company.

Over the past few years, the scope and vision of WW&W have grown, but the founding principle remains the same: providing enriching and empowering outdoor activities to those with limited access to outdoor spaces. Increased opportunities to funding, the introduction of new directors and Kathy's work with the School of Social Entrepreneurs have enabled the charity to reach more young people than ever before. This growth also translates into our financial outputs and sustainability.

WW&W is currently running several programmes in the St Austell area of Cornwall. These include subsidised after-school clubs that offer a diversity of activities and sports for both mixed and girls groups, and 'This Woman Can' groups for women who want to engage with sports. Discount codes are available for disadvantaged families and hot snacks are provided at each session. We use sports/activities as a medium to deliver stealth learning in emotional literacy (self-belief, confidence, self-regulation, social skills and empathy) and to improve physical fitness.

Hidden School Yoga



Hidden School Yoga, Perranporth offers a range of Yoga programmes for building wellness through trauma-informed practice, Yoga and nature. Grace is Yoga Alliance-certified and accredited, has a Diploma in Eco-Therapy and is an Accredited Trainer in Mental Health and Wellbeing. She says:

"The foundation of our practice combines Yoga and Eco-Psychology, compounding the physical with the inner emotional body and recognising the importance of our need for integration within the wider natural environment. By integrating body, breath, movement, nature and meditative awareness, we strive to promote an understanding of the interdependency of all these aspects in your physical and mental health and wellbeing."

What we did...

Week 1: Outdoor Yoga with Grace of Hidden School Yoga



Week 2: Bushcraft and Slacklining



Week 3: Sea Swimming



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Week 4: Kayaking, Beach Yoga and Campfire Cooking



Week 5: Stand Up Paddleboarding, Beach Yoga and Campfire Cooking



Week 6: Coastal Walk from Gorran to Vault Beach



Outputs

Our Reconnect project is targeted at young women aged 16-24 who are, or are at risk of becoming NEET. We are pleased to have been able to deliver a range of outdoor activities including outdoor Yoga, sea swimming, kayaking and paddleboarding.



“I went home afterwards and it was like a switch had been flipped inside of me. I was taking better care of my health, and myself, in ways I had struggled with for my entire life.”

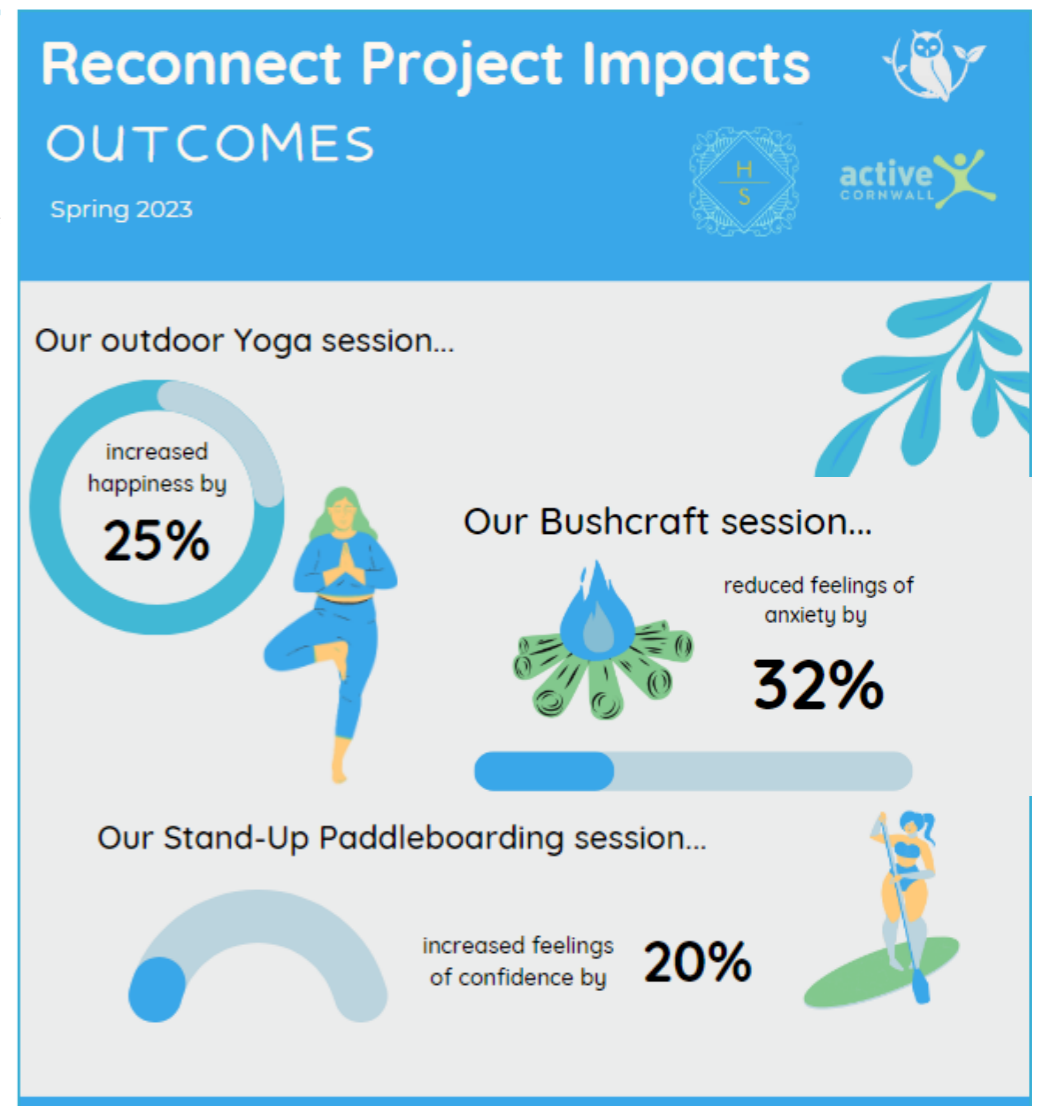
Mia, 16

Outcomes



Over the course of the Reconnect project, we used a 'mappiness' tool that we have created in line with current research and effective methods for the monitoring and evaluation of outdoor youth work. The self-directed tool measures momentary happiness, anxiety and confidence before and after an activity. The value of this tool is two-fold: it allows the experiences of the participants to be measured and it allows them to become more in tune with and cognisant of their emotional wellbeing, improving emotional literacy.

During our Reconnect project, participants consistently noted increased happiness, reduced anxiety and increased feelings of confidence. We were especially pleased that one of our participants who had become extremely socially isolated and excluded was able to complete the coastal walk and noted an increase in their confidence as a result.



Outputs

MEASURING OVERALL WELLBEING

The Reconnect project culminated in a coastal walk from Gorran to Vault Beach and we were pleased the participants reported improvements in how they were feeling over the course of the programme.

To measure the success of the six-week course, we have used the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scales (WEMWBS). WEMWBS is a tool developed to help measure mental wellbeing and evaluate projects and programmes which aim to improve mental wellbeing.

It is a 14-item scale with five response categories, summed up to provide a score that indicates mental wellbeing. For example, one item states 'I've been feeling optimistic about the future' with responses ranging from 'None of the time (1)' to 'All of the time (5)'.

We conducted WEMWBS scale surveys with the young women who took part in our Spring 2023 Reconnect project both at the beginning and the end of the course. This has indicated where the programme has been successful in improving participants' mental wellbeing, and where there is room for improvement.

Using these results, we want to begin to understand what our social impact looks like. So, to make them more tangible and meaningful to our stakeholders and service users, we have used a Social Value calculator engineered by the Housing Association Community Trust (HACT) and Simetrica, international experts in social value analysis, research and econometrics. This tool helps us transform our WEMWBS results into monetary value that make more sense to us all.

Our Reconnect project Spring 2023 generated £8,700 for the local community according to surveys and data analysis we conducted using the HACT WEMWBS tool.



£8,700

generated for the local community through our Reconnect Project

SOCIAL VALUE

Feedback

Confident Relationships

Amazing

Brave Resilient

Joy Unmatchable

Empowering Happiness

Positive Inspired

Capable



Tapping

Trauma-Informed Practice



What is Tapping?

Tapping is a First Aid technique that can be used to heal or soothe symptoms of stress and trauma. It is a tool that we can use to clear physical and emotional blocks from our energy systems with our fingers, breath and intention. More scientifically, Tapping is a self-directed method that combines elements of cognitive and exposure therapy with acupuncture. The fingertips are used almost percussively to tap on different parts of the body to stimulate a physical and cognitive response, and for grounding and bringing an individual into the present.

Why should we Tap?

Scientific studies show that Tapping allows the brain and body to release stress and negative emotions, as well as calm and regulate the central nervous system.

Tapping helps you access your body's nervous system and send signals to the part of the brain that controls stress. By stimulating these points through Tapping we can reduce the stress or negative emotion you feel, ultimately restoring balance and hopefully reducing stress and anxiety.

Tapping, along with movement and breathwork based around Yoga practices, hacks into the stress response. For some of the women we worked with, this stress response might be firing on all cylinders. These practices allow the body to bring the base level stress in the body and mind down. Stimulating the calming response of the brain and body through the parasympathetic nervous system, then allows for the body and mind to feel more calm and potentially, as we saw, safer to approach work that would otherwise not be accessible in more mainstream therapeutic approaches.



RECONNECT

CASE STUDIES

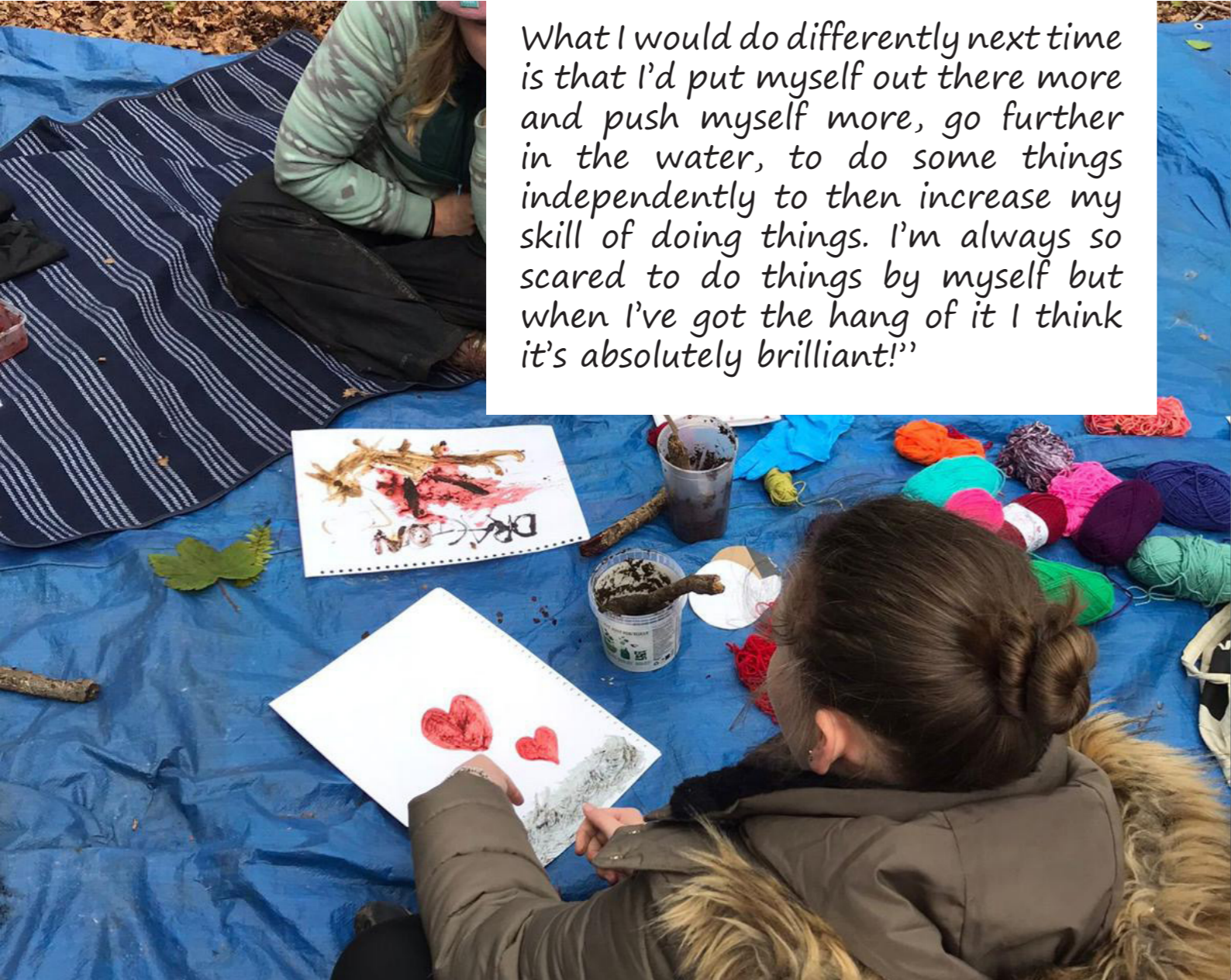


Charlotte

Participant

“My favourite memory was kayaking! I loved every second of it! What I took from the six-week course was that even though I may be scared or anxious, to push myself because in the end it'll all be worth it. I learnt that I'm actually braver than I thought, and that I love the sea which I didn't think I did.

What I would do differently next time is that I'd put myself out there more and push myself more, go further in the water, to do some things independently to then increase my skill of doing things. I'm always so scared to do things by myself but when I've got the hang of it I think it's absolutely brilliant!”



Mia

Participant, 16

“My highlight was definitely the first session, meeting everyone and doing the yoga. Spending time to lay and meditate in the sun with Grace as an amazing teacher was my favourite and inspired me to start having a more positive view on my life. I instantly went home afterwards and it was like a switch had been flipped inside of me, I was taking better care of my health and myself in ways I had struggled with for my entire life.

I took away the experience and friendships, learning to take opportunities despite my fears and anxieties, and push through the difficult mental barriers.

I learned many things about myself. I typically would go months not talking to anyone, thinking I was just a not very social person and finding it hard to talk to people my age. I learned that I am able to make friends, as soon as I started the first session, I felt like my social side came out and I enjoyed taking the time to talk to everyone and learning I did in fact love talking to people and making friends. My social life has picked up, talking to old and new friends and balancing a healthy lifestyle.

I learned that I need to stop focusing on the negatives in my life, and appreciate the beautiful surroundings of nature more. I learned to be grateful for my life and everything I have. After months of being detached from the world and my own body, this course has brought me back into life and given me a whole new perspective. I have overcome anxiety and instead of letting depression take control of my life, I get back up and tell myself it isn't the end of the world, while allowing myself the time to process things and rest.

The only thing I would do differently is making sure I am able to attend all sessions: hopefully no exams in the way”

Molly

Care worker

“Thank you for everything, I really hope that we can do it again with another group of residents!”

The six-week programme has had a really positive impact on both of my residents that took part and on me.

To begin with both residents I offered the course to were really unsure, felt that it wasn't for them and that they wouldn't be any good at any of the activities suggested, never mind the overwhelming anxiety of being with a group of new people. The two residents from Bodmin had never met or spoken to each other, despite only living doors apart.

After contacting Kathy and arranging to meet before the sessions started, I managed to convince both residents to come with me for a coffee. This helped calm some of the anxiety and reassure them by answering questions that they had.

Over the following six sessions the girls grew in confidence with each other and their abilities. It gave our residents a chance to try activities they hadn't done before or revisit things that they loved and brought them great joy from a time that was less tricky for them.

The way the activities developed over the weeks enabled the girls to build relationships with each other and start to support each other. The sessions also helped us to get to know the girls more and help support them better.

It was wonderful to see the difference this six-week programme made to these young women. They have built solid relationships with each other and now spend time together outside of the programme. Their newfound confidence has led one into feeling she is ready to attend college and the other now knows her happy place is the sea, and that life can be ok when you leave your flat!

Both girls have said to me how grateful they are that I 'forced' them to come and meet with you at the start and that they wish it could have gone on for longer!

Thank you for the most wonderful experience and I really hope that this continues so we can offer it to future residents as the difference it has made is unmatched.”



Ruby

Participant, 17

KK: "What were your highlights?"

R: "Being able to be myself and doing my water sports even with severe anxiety."

KK: "What did you take from our six-week programme?"

R: "Confidence and happiness"

KK: "Did you learn anything about yourself?"

R: "That not all things are scary."

KK: "Would you do anything different next time?"

R: "Not be as anxious and worried about things."



Thank you so much for a lovely six weeks, I have really learnt new skills about myself and what I am capable of! I have loved every minute over the six weeks with you!!"

Ruby, 17

Justine

Support worker

"After attending your six-week programme with Wild Wonder and Wisdom as a support worker for a young lady of 17 years I feel I should let you know the positive impact it has had on her (and me).

At the start, Allie was a little unsure about joining the group because she didn't know anyone and didn't think mixing with random (yes, her words) people would work for her. Meeting up for a coffee and a chat a few weeks before helped to settle her nerves a little and she met another young person who she hit it off with.

In the first session, we met the other young ladies attending and mixed within the group, but Allie still held back a little. In the second session the confidence was starting to show more and she was happy to speak more freely to the others in the group. As time went on and the activities progressed, I saw a real change in Allie and I myself got to know her even more. To me she did everything she could to participate in the group even with a little fear of the water. She tried everything in her ability to join in and helps others along the way could be seen!

A fantastic experience to build confidence up in young ladies and to help them become more resilient, help them know that they can take on a challenge whatever it may be and as long as they give it a go that's all that matters in life!

I would like to thank you for the amazing food and friendliness, to Grace for her amazing Yoga skills and for a fantastic time! I wish you all the best and hope you can carry this amazing work on to help others along life's little journey!"



WILD WONDER & WISDOM

Outdoor Learning

active
CORNWALL

