



ROOTED IN RECOVERY

Exploring the Role of Nature in Connection, Engagement & Recovery

Katie Gassner
www.GrowingWellnessConsulting.com



1



2

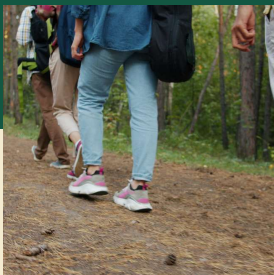
Nature-Based Experiences Support Recovery

- **Complement clinical programs** ———> Natural stress reducer, promotes physical activity, improves emotional regulation, space for connection
- **2024, DDAP and DCNR “Recovery in Nature” initiative highlights the healing role nature can play in recovery** ———> Encouraging connection and safe exposure to nature parks & trails
- **Many agencies may not formally brand “nature therapy” but are integrating nature experiences into programming** ———> What’s happening in Region 7



3

Nature-Based Recovery Supports Across Region 7



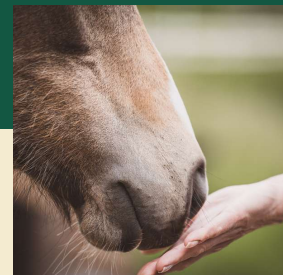
Recovery Walks & Outdoor Peer Connections

Recovery walks • Hiking groups • Outdoor peer support meet ups • Sober social events • Recovery celebrations • Parks and trail exploration



Therapeutic Horticulture & Hands-On Wellness

Community gardens • Planting activities • Creative wellness experiences • Sensory and self-care activities



Mindfulness, Recreation & Farm-Based

Outdoor mindfulness • Yoga • Grounding activities • Fishing • Kayaking • Equine programs • Therapy animals • Farm and agricultural experiences

4

Growing Recovery Capital

- 01 When hands are busy = People are engaged
- 02 Included + Purposeful = Connected to others
- 03 Space to explore + be curious in positive learning environment = Growth happens
- 04 Positive shared experience = boosts mood and forms lasting brain associations, linking new activities with safety and feelings of belonging



5



Cross-County Collaborations

Supporting prevention, **treatment, recovery** & employee wellness



Succulents & Self-Care™ Mobile Wellness Program

A wellness experience that is trauma-informed, recovery-oriented, and nature-based, centered on **resilience, connection, and strengths-based care.**

SAMHSA Frameworks - Curriculum - Evidence-Driven

6

Succulents & Self-Care™ Program Model



- 01**
- Intentionally slow down
 - Choice & creativity
 - Low-barrier engagement
 - Interactive Learning
- Framework: **Apply • Add • Anchor • Take Away**

- 02** Prioritizes meeting people where they are emotionally, socially, and physically through mobile wellness.

Exploring the parallels between plant care and self-care

Succulents symbolize **HOPE**, **RESILIENCE** & the ability to **THRIVE** in challenging circumstances



7

Data-Driven County-Wide Pilot: Implementing Succulents & Self-Care™ in Mercer County

- **9+ months**
- **320+ adult individuals active with 1 or more of the 12 organizations listed**

- **Detox/Inpatient:** Resolutions Recovery Center & Alpine Springs
- **PHP/IOP/OP/Pain Management:** Gaudenzia, Community Counseling Center
- **Faith-Based Organizations (CR):** Bethel Life's Life Center, Transformation Church Recovery Center
- **Community Centers:** ROAR, Drop-in Center, Good Shepherd, Children's Aid Society, Mercer County's Overdose Prevention Workgroup, Prince of Peace



8

3 Key Insights from Program Data

1. Creating opportunities to explore self-care strengthens:

- health
- recovery
- resilience
- well-being across all ages

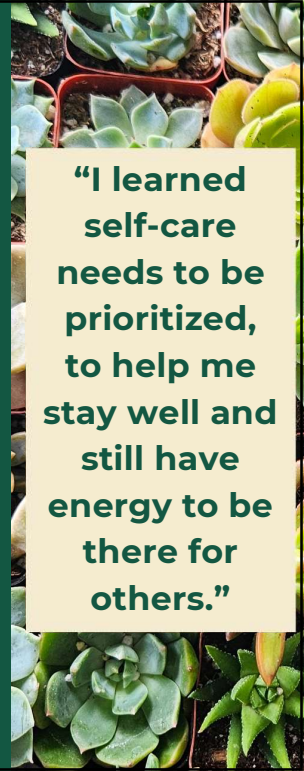
Taking care of myself is important.

Choose a number; 0 = Not at all, 10 = Very important

Before



After



“I learned self-care needs to be prioritized, to help me stay well and still have energy to be there for others.”

9

2. Clinical + Non-Clinical Experiences Both Matter

- Healing Starts With Safety
- Welcoming Space Creates Openness
- Trust & Belonging
- Opportunities to Integrate Supports



“Everyone in the group was sharing and enjoying the program, which was cool to see.”

“I walked in the room and immediately felt so special. This was calming.”

During the program I felt Safe & Supported (5-Point Likert Scale)



Strongly agreed (86%) Agree(12%) Unsure (2%)

10

3. Safe exposure to nature = supports recovery



Succulent & Self-Care™ Participants report feeling:

- More relaxed and calm
- Immediate mood boost and outlook
- Increased hopefulness
- Interest in gardening and nature
- Looking forward to being outdoors
- Greater connection to each other



Connection with nature doesn't have to be complex.

Even small moments can interrupt stress and create space to breathe, think, and reconnect.

11

“We all grow at our own pace.” “

“Plants are like people, both need solid foundations to grow properly.”

“This works very well with recovery programs.”

“The fellowship with others.”

I liked the energy and positivity. I liked touching the dirt. I picked a cactus because it's hard to touch but deserves care just the same.”

“I needed this time to slow down. Thank you.”

“An honest approach to an important subject.”

“Relating something like succulents to my life was such a powerful thing. It allows me to see myself as a thriving being if I just take time to nurture myself.”

12

Contact Us



Growing Wellness is **ROOTING FOR YOU!**

Interested in growing together?

We are always open to creative collaborations



724-992-5949 Katie Gassner



Katie@growingwellnessconsulting.com



www.GrowingWellnessConsulting.com
Subscribe to our monthly newsletter

