

# Top things you can do to help your wellbeing, nature and the climate



At Walk in My Shoes (WIMS), we're delighted to share ideas here, supported by research, to take action to support your wellbeing and the natural world. Think about what's important to you and what interests you the most.

Which of these do you think would work best for you?

1



**Spend time in nature** – Spending time connecting with nature in different ways is really good for our wellbeing and mental health. It can also help us to deal with worries we might have, including about climate change. Feeling more connected to nature also makes us more like to behave in environmentally responsible ways. Green spaces like parks or woodlands are especially found to soothe our nervous systems, but 'blue spaces' like spending time at lakes or the seaside can also have a positive effect on our mood and wellbeing. It's important when in these environments to be respectful of the wildlife and plant life, and to "leave no trace"; for example, bringing any rubbish with you and staying on marked paths and trails.

2



**Care for animals** – Looking after animals has been found to boost and support our wellbeing also. Whether it's spending time with pets, volunteering with wildlife or animal rescue centres, or feeding the birds in your garden or local park – all can have a positive effect on how we're feeling and help us to relax. Research suggests that even being able to see birds from your window can have a positive impact on your wellbeing. Recognising that humans are just one part a beautiful and complex ecosystem, and that we share the world with other species, can also motivate us to make better choices for the animals and the climate.

3



**Walk or take the bike** – Walking, wheeling or cycling, instead of using cars, is one of the most important things we can all do to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions causing climate change. Opting to go car-free for journeys, including as a family, also helps improve air quality, which is important for protecting our mental and physical health. The regular exercise of these activities is also really positive for our mental health at all ages. For example, recent research shows that young people who cycle to school are less likely to experience depression.

4



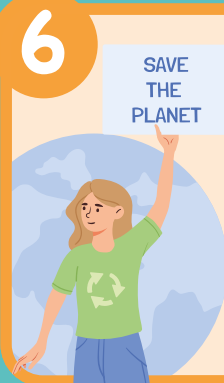
**Talk to others** – We know that the natural world faces very serious risks from climate change and different forms of human activity. Hearing about the impacts of climate change can be worrying and upsetting. This is an understandable and logical response to a serious situation. Caring about others and having compassion about what's happening in the world is also an important part of being human. If you ever feel worried or anxious about climate change, it's important to know you're not alone in feeling like this. It's also important to know what can help. As with anything that's weighing on your mind, if you find you're worrying a lot, it's important to talk about this - with your parents or guardian, or another trusted adult, for example.

5



**Join with others** – Research suggests another one of the most impactful things we can do to help with climate emotions like these is to join with others to act together. Collective action can take lots of different forms and finding something that fits with what's important to you will help. It might be joining a **monthly beach cleaning group**, taking climate action with your family, or taking part in school projects.

6



**Know your rights** – It's important to know that, as children and young people, you have rights when it comes both to your local environment and climate change. Politicians and leaders must listen to your views and take them into account when making decisions that affect you. Decisions about the environment and climate change especially affect children and young people, because of potential health impacts for example. You can **learn more in this video about your environmental and climate rights** as a child or young person.

Using our voices and becoming informed about our rights can help us feel more empowered and also deal with feelings of worry or anger we may have about climate change, or things happening in our local communities. You might find it helpful to take part in climate youth justice activities, like those run by **Eco-UNESCO**. If there is an issue you feel strongly about, you can also contact your local TDs to have your say. You can **get advice on how to get in touch with your TDs here** from SpunOut.

You will find lots more ideas and information on things you can do to support and protect both the natural world and your mental health in our Minding Yourself, Minding Nature workbook: **visit our website** to get your free copy. This workbook was created by WIMS in partnership with **Leave No Trace Ireland**, **BirdWatch Ireland** and **Biodiversity In Schools**. All these organisations offer programmes, resources and fun activities for schools, children and young people.

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