

## HARNESSING NATURE FOR *wellness*

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As we move into the season of renewal and growth, it's the perfect time to consider the benefits of plant therapy. Beyond just being decorative, plants have the power to reduce stress levels and improve cognitive abilities. Here are a few ways in which engaging with plants can promote your mental and physical well-being.

### BENEFITS OF PLANT THERAPY

- Lowers blood pressure, decreases the stress response, and reduces heart rate
- Acts as a coping skill to aid in grounding and mindfulness
- Increases hand-eye coordination, fine motor skills, and strength
- Provides people with new skills or hobbies
- Teaches us to care for something else
- Aids in relaxation and comfort
- Creates a sense of pride in one's work when it blooms or grows
- Teaches goal-setting skills
- Improves math and science skills through observation, measurement, or experimentation
- Enhances communication and problem-solving skills
- Fosters a sense of community
- Bolsters creative and artistic skills

While some of the benefits are self-explanatory, how do plants provide us with these benefits?

Studies have shown that engaging in activities such as walking, meditation among plants, repotting, and experiencing their scent or taste are the most effective ways to reap the benefits of plant therapy. These activities release endorphins, providing benefits such as decreased heart rate, relaxation, and improved attention span. Essentially, when we interact with plants, it makes us feel good, both mentally and physically.

Other studies have found a more profound impact on our mental health, such as improving our mindsets while reducing anxiety and depression symptoms<sup>1</sup>. When we feel less stressed and more mentally well, we become more connected with the world around us. Connectedness to nature and our surroundings also boosts the positive emotions we feel, which, in turn, reduces our stress responses. Practicing plant-related activities, even if plants are in the same environment, can have a huge impact on your total well-being.

As the weather warms up, try to find more reasons to spend time outdoors or bring a few plants into your living space. Whether you nurture a garden, go for mindful walks in nature, or add a touch of greenery to your workspace, the benefits are endless!

<sup>1</sup>Thrive (2024). *Stress relieving gardening. Thrive: using gardening to change lives.*