

Towards Healthier Minds and Cities: Insights from Environmental Education, Emotion Regulation, and Urban Park Design

Friday, September 12, 2025 9:15 AM (20 minutes)

Numerous studies emphasize the value of integrating nature in everyday life to support cognitive and emotional functioning, enhance psychological well-being, and promote sustainable development. Three lines of research –aiming at fostering healthier individuals and more environmentally conscious communities –are presented.

The first research explores how nature exposure aids emotion regulation following negative mood induction, through two experimental studies. In the first study (within-subjects), participants viewed videos of different environments. A serial mediation revealed that nature videos improved emotional outcomes via perceived restorativeness and adaptive strategies. In the second study (mixed design), VR scenarios were used to assess five environments. While emotion regulation strategies did not mediate effects, the perceived suitability of a location for down-regulation significantly influenced emotional recovery.

The second research, developed with national stakeholders (e.g., Assoverde and Confagricoltura), identifies key indicators for healthy urban parks (presence of blue elements, floral coverage, chromatic diversity, and faunal biodiversity). By using AI-generated images, each indicator's impact on dependent variables (e.g., emotional reactions, restorativeness, and attractiveness) was tested. Findings support a framework for certifying "Health Parks" based on evidence-based psychological benefit.

The third research (e.g., PRIN 2022) examines effects of outdoor environmental education on Italian secondary school students from different regions. Results suggest that participation improves environmental knowledge, identity, and well-being indicators compared to a control group, with positive changes observed post-intervention across multiple psychological domains.

Taken together, these lines highlight the importance of (virtual and real) nature exposure in promoting emotional resilience, environmental knowledge and beliefs, and sustainability attitudes.

If you're submitting a symposium talk, what's the symposium title?

Thinking Climate, Feeling Nature: Psycho-Cognitive Dynamics - id #605.

If you're submitting a symposium, or a talk that is part of a symposium, is this a junior symposium?

No

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