

Step by Step into Nature: A Multiple Single-Case Study Exploring the Effect of Walking on Mood in Older Adults

Friday, September 12, 2025 12:30 PM (1h 45m)

Nature-based solutions (NBS), such as urban parks and large flowerbeds, are increasingly recognized for promoting human health by enhancing physical and mental well-being. Accessible natural environments can encourage physical activity, such as nature-based walking, supporting mental health, especially among older adults. However, few studies have examined how to design and implement nature-based walking interventions sustainably and tailored for this population.

This study aimed to investigate whether a personalized walking program could improve mood in older adults by comparing walks in environments enriched with NBS to walks in urban environments without NBS, using a single-subject A-B-A'-C design.

Participants showed varying levels of depressive symptoms, from mild to severe, as assessed by the Geriatric Depression Scale. Mood during the intervention was monitored using the Visual Analogue Mood Scale. To compare intervention effects across the two conditions, bootstrap Bayesian mean difference estimation was applied.

Results were as follows: a) in principle, no clear significant worsening of mood was observed at the end of the intervention, b) for participants with mild depressive symptoms, mixed treatment effects on mood were observed, with similar effects of walks with and without NBS, c) for participants with moderate depressive symptoms, better mood outcomes were observed following walks with NBS compared to those without, and d) for the participant with severe depressive symptoms, a slight mood improvement was observed early in the first training with stable scores thereafter.

This study suggests that walking influences mood, with a preference for nature-based environments, particularly for individuals with moderate depressive symptoms.

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