



Peer  
Education  
Project



Mental Health  
Foundation



Lesson

## Lesson plan:

- **Welcome**  
Slides 1 & 2 ..... 7
- **Being in the moment**  
Slide 3 ..... 9
- **Building connections**  
Slide 4 ..... 10
- **Introducing the topic**  
Slides 5 & 6 ..... 12
- **Learning through activity**  
Slide 7 ..... 14
- **Reflecting on the learning**  
Slides 8-12 ..... 16
- **Being in the moment**  
Slide 13 ..... 19

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## A L T E R N A T I V E   A C T I V I T I E S

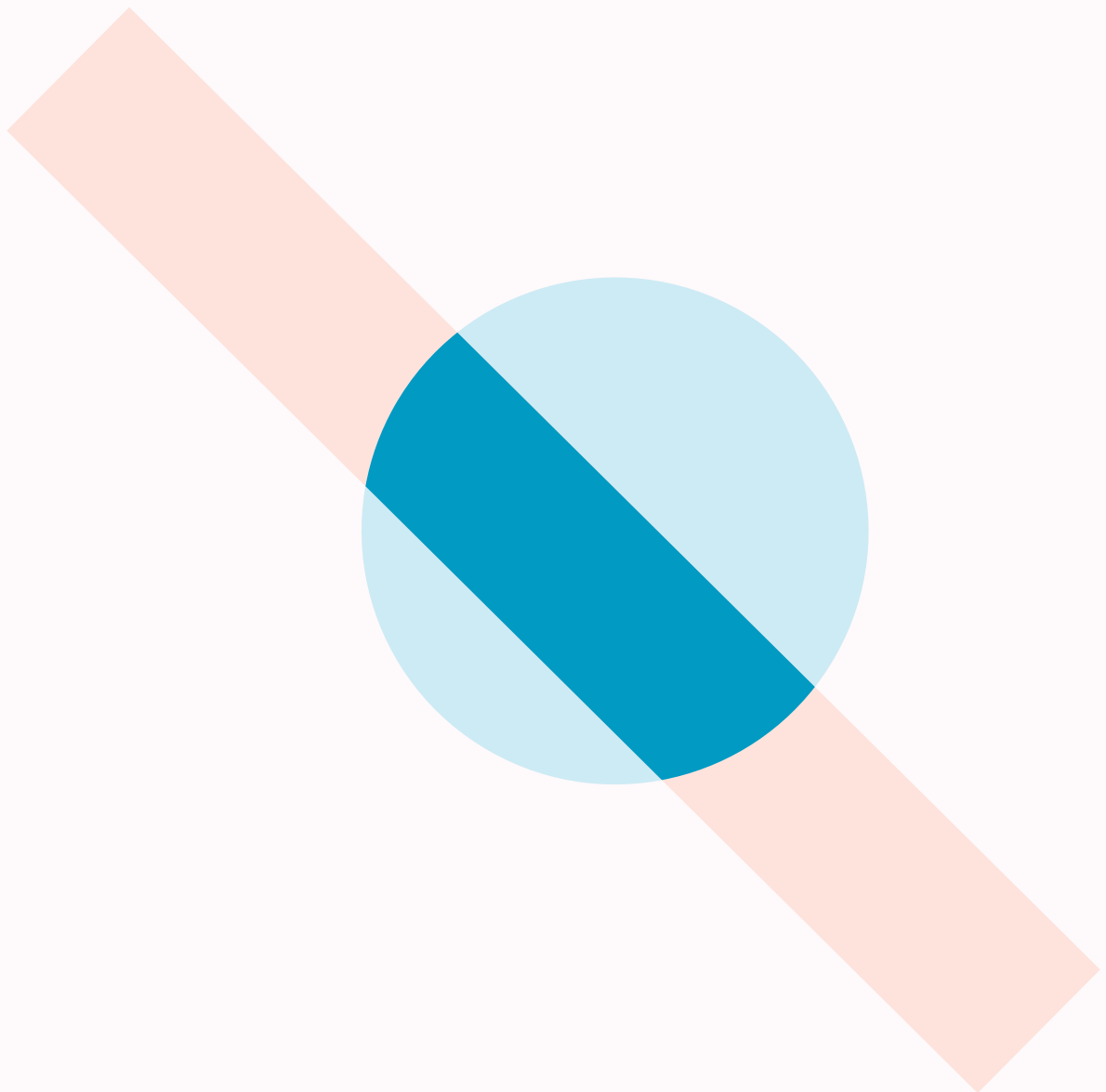
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- **Taking action**  
Slides 15-17 ..... 22
- **Challenging thinking**  
Slide 18-24 ..... 27
- **Resources**  
Nature-based case studies resources ..... 31  
Reflection worksheet ..... 35



This lesson has been developed from the Mental Health Foundation's Peer Education Project (PEP) - a secondary school-based, educational programme that aims to give young people the skills and knowledge they need to safeguard their mental health and that of their peers. PEP is a carefully researched, effective approach to mental health education whereby older pupils within school or college deliver mental health lessons to younger pupils.

For more information about PEP and how your school can get involved, [click here](#).





### Lesson aims:

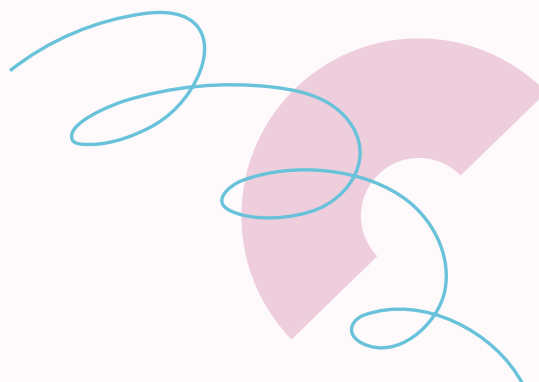
- To understand how connecting with nature can be good for our mental health and wellbeing.
- To understand how we all have different levels of access to nature.
- To learn about the different ways we can all connect with nature in our own way.

### Resources checklist:

- PowerPoint slides
- Pens and paper
- OPTIONAL: Natural objects (physical objects or images) for the ice-breaker
- OPTIONAL: Nature-based case studies resource
- OPTIONAL: Reflection worksheet

### Preparation checklist:

- Plan two 'Being in the moment' activities, referring to the [Mindfulness Activities Pack](#).
- Plan a 'Building connections' activity, referring to the [Ice Breaker Activities Pack](#).



## How to use the lesson plan:

This lesson plan is designed to be delivered by pupils aged 15 and upwards (known as Peer Educators) to pupils aged 11 to 14 (known as Peer Learners).

The recommended lesson plan is primarily suited for pupils aged 11 or 12 and can be delivered as a 50-minute lesson or two 30-minute lessons.

The revised lesson plan offers alternative activities related to taking social action or challenging mental health information. The revised lesson plan provides pupils, particularly those who are older or who already have basic mental health awareness, an opportunity to explore the topics in more depth.

Recommended lesson plan 50 Minutes	Recommended lesson structure 2x 30 Minutes		Revised lesson plan 50 Minutes
	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	
Welcome 5 Minutes	Welcome 5 Minutes		Welcome 5 Minutes
Being in the moment 5 Minutes	Being in the moment 5 Minutes	Being in the moment 5 Minutes	Being in the moment 5 Minutes
Building connections 5 Minutes	Building connections 5 Minutes		<b>Select either:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the 'Taking action' section; or</li> <li>• the 'Challenging thinking' section.</li> </ul> 25 Minutes
Introducing the topic 10 Minutes	Introducing the topic 10 Minutes		
Learning through activity 10 Minutes		Learning through activity 10 Minutes	<b>Reflecting on the learning</b> 10 Minutes
Reflecting on the learning 10 Minutes		Reflecting on the learning 10 Minutes	
Being in the moment 5 Minutes	Being in the moment 5 Minutes	Being in the moment 5 Minutes	Being in the moment 5 Minutes

If the lesson is being delivered by Peer Educators, as per the Peer Education Project model, each activity is recommended to be delivered either by Peer Educators or School Staff.

## How to do it:

The instructions for each activity are split into these steps:



Actions required such as presenting slides or handing resources out.

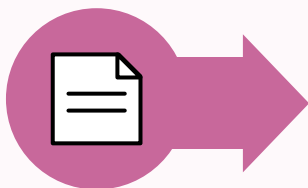


Key messages and activity instructions to be said.



Questions to be asked to extend the discussion or gauge understanding.

## Notes and troubleshooting:



There is additional information to support lesson delivery such as activity adaptations, considerations for classroom management, and key preparations for the lesson.

## It's not a script:

The lesson plan is not a word-for-word script. Prior to delivery, preparation time should be allocated to make key notes and plan how each activity will run.

# Welcome 5 mins

Resources needed: • Slides 1 & 2



## Slide 1



## Lesson



Do:

### Present Slide 1.

Welcome the class and the Peer Educators to the lesson. Explain that the Peer Educators will be leading some of the activities during the lesson – an opportunity for Peer Learners to get to know them and learn from those who are similar in age.



Say:

**"In this lesson, we are going to explore why nature is good for our mental health and wellbeing, and how we can connect to nature in different ways."**



#### Ways of working



SLIDE 2

#### We will:

1. Respect and listen to each other, giving space for everyone to be heard.
2. Value everyone's opinion, even if it's different to yours.
3. Ask questions, especially if you are unsure about the information or activities.
4. Be kind to yourself and others, reaching out for support if you need it.

Any others? \_\_\_\_\_

Click to add text



Do:

Present Slide 2.



Say:

**"It is important for us all to feel safe and confident to share our thoughts, ideas and questions in this lesson."**



Do:

Read out the slide and ask the Peer Learners and the Peer Educators for any other points they would like to add. Write them directly on the slide.



#### Notes and troubleshooting

**Variations:** It can be useful to have the 'Ways of Working' list visible throughout the lesson. You could write these on a board or poster paper to display in each lesson.





# Being in the moment 5 mins



Resources needed: • Slide 3  
• A mindfulness activity

## Slide 3

### Being in the moment



SLIDE 3



**Do:** Present Slide 3.



**Say:** "We're going to start with a short exercise to bring our focus to this lesson."



**Do:** Read out the mindfulness activity you have chosen.



### Notes and troubleshooting

**Prepare:** Select a mindfulness exercise from the [Mindfulness Activities Pack](#). You may want to explain what mindfulness is to the pupils.



# Building connections 5 mins



- Resources needed:
- Slide 4
  - Natural objects
  - An ice breaker activity

## Slide 4

### Building connections



SLIDE 4

Connecting with nature  
using our senses



## Recommended ice breaker



Do:

Present Slide 4



Say:

"Today's welcome exercise is designed to get us thinking about how important it is to give ourselves the time and space to connect with nature in a meaningful way, and to recognise that we will all connect differently."

*Continued...*



## Building connections (continued)



Do:

Ask Peer Learners to work in pairs. Hand out a natural object such as a leaf, a stone, or a feather, to each pair.

Ask the Peer Learners to spend one minute looking at and feeling the natural object, giving it their full attention without speaking.

*Time to complete: 1-minute.*



Do:

Then, ask pupils to share their observations of their object in their pairs.

*Time to share: 1-minute.*



Ask:

**"How did you find the activity?"**



Say:

**"Sometimes we don't take the time to notice and value the nature around us. Even if we do, what we observe and how we connect with nature will be different from others, and this is ok – it is important to find what works for you!"**



Notes and troubleshooting

**Prepare:** This recommended ice breaker activity is directly relevant to the lesson content. However, you can select an alternative activity from the [Ice Breaker Activities Pack](#).

Before the lesson, you will need to gather the natural objects to use in this activity.

**Variations:** If you are unable to use physical natural objects, select images of natural objects and add them to the PowerPoint. Allocate an image to each pair of Peer Learners.

# Introducing the topic 10 mins



Resources needed: • Slides 5 & 6

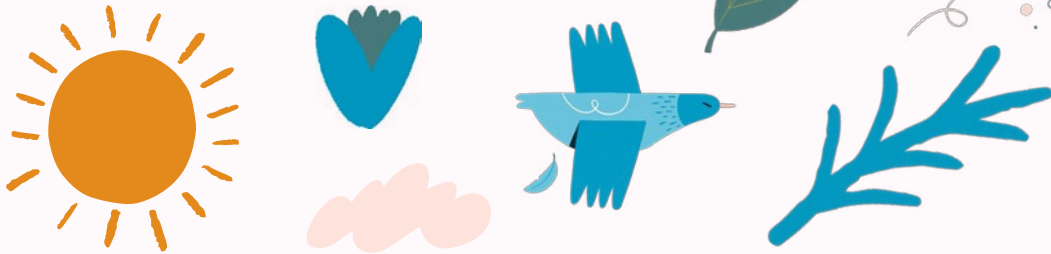
## Slide 5

### Introducing the topic



SLIDE 5

Connecting with nature is about building a relationship with nature by noticing and becoming sensitive to what is around us.



Do:

Present Slide 5.



Say:

"Nature can refer to wild plants, animals, ecosystems, landscapes and waterscapes, but also 'natural' green features that are partly the products of human activity, such as urban parks and back gardens.

Connecting with nature is not just about the amount of time we are spending outdoors; it is also about building a relationship with nature by noticing and becoming sensitive to what is around us. We use our senses to do this."



## Introducing the topic (continued)

Slide 6

### Introducing the topic



SLIDE 6

What are the benefits of connecting with nature for our mental health and wellbeing?



Do:

Present Slide 6.



Say:

“Just like with our physical health, connecting with nature has many benefits for our mental health and wellbeing too.”



Do:

Ask pupils to work in pairs to discuss what the benefits are for our mental health and wellbeing.

*Time to discuss: 5 minutes.*



Do:

Invite pupils to share their ideas and write them on the slide.

*Time to share: 5 minutes.*



### Notes and troubleshooting

**Prepare:** Prepare a list of mental health and wellbeing benefits in case Peer Learners struggle to think of ideas.



# Learning through activity 10 mins



Resources needed: • Slide 7  
• Pens and paper

## Slide 7

### Learning through activity



SLIDE 7

Connecting with nature:



Say:

"There are many ways to connect with nature, whether at home, in school or outside. We all have different levels of access to nature, as well as different interests and activities we like doing. So, we need to find our own space and ways to engage with the nature around us in a meaningful way.

It is important to remember that this might look different to others, and that is okay."



Do:

Present Slide 7.

Continued...



## Learning through activity (continued)



Do:

Divide pupils into groups and allocate them to one of the following categories:

- Connecting with nature at home
- Connecting with nature in school
- Connecting with nature outdoors



Do:

Ask each group to create a mind map of their ideas on how to connect with nature in that location.

*Time to discuss: 5 minutes.*



Do:

Invite each group to share their mind map with the class.

*Time to share: 5 minutes.*



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# Reflecting on the learning 10 mins



- Resources needed:
- Slides 8-12
  - Pens and paper (optional)
  - Reflection worksheet (optional)

## Slide 8

### Reflecting on the learning



SLIDE 8



One thing I have learned.



One thing I will do differently.



One question I would like an answer to.



**Do:** Present Slide 8.



**Say:** "Spend two minutes thinking about these reflection statements:

- One thing I have learned.
- One thing I will do differently.
- One question I would like an answer to."



**Do:** Invite pupils to share their reflections with the class for each statement. Write their responses on Slides 9-11.

Continued...





## Reflecting on the learning (continued)



### Notes and troubleshooting

**Prepare:** If using the worksheet, print copies ahead of the lesson and hand out to Peer Learners for this activity.

**Classroom management:** Their comment, question or thought doesn't have to be about mental health – it can be about the lesson itself, the activities, how it went, etc.

If using the worksheet, ask the Peer Learners to write down their reflections.

**Follow-up:** Collate any questions that weren't answered, and follow-up with responses to the pupils in the next lesson.



## Reflecting on the learning (continued)

### Slide 12

#### Lesson summary



SLIDE 12

Our relationship with nature is reciprocal, which means that we can protect and look after each other.



Do:

**Present Slide 12.**

Read out the lesson summary.



# Being in the moment 5 mins



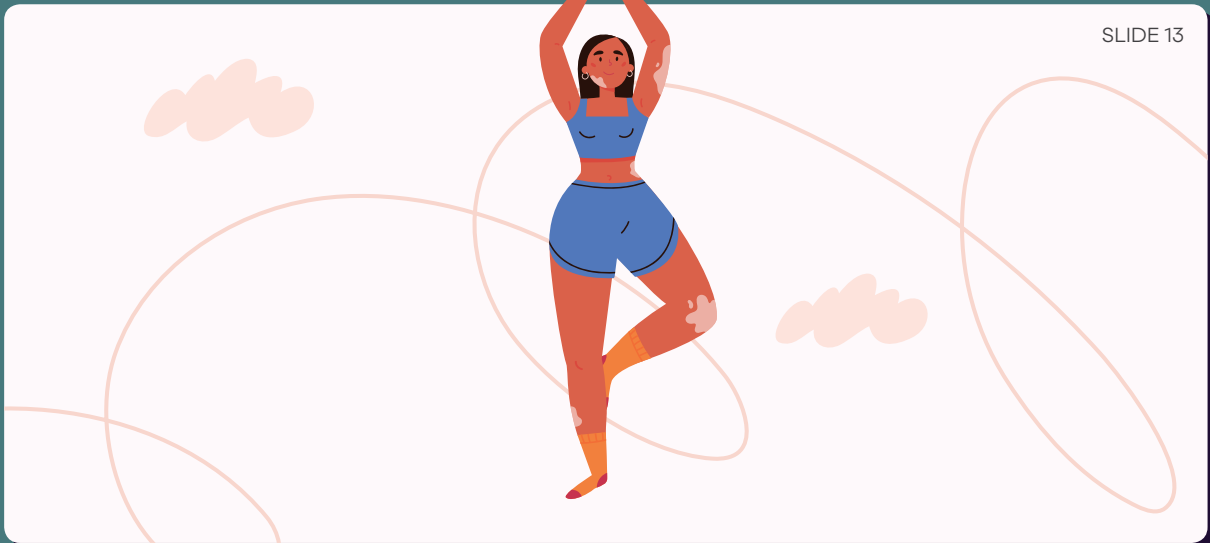
Resources needed: • Slide 13  
• A mindfulness activity

## Slide 13

### Being in the moment



SLIDE 13



Do:

Present Slide 13.



Say:

"We'll finish the lesson with another short mindfulness exercise."



Do:

Read out the mindfulness activity you have chosen.



Say:

"That's the end of the lesson. Thank you everyone for your contributions."

Continued...



## Being in the moment (continued)



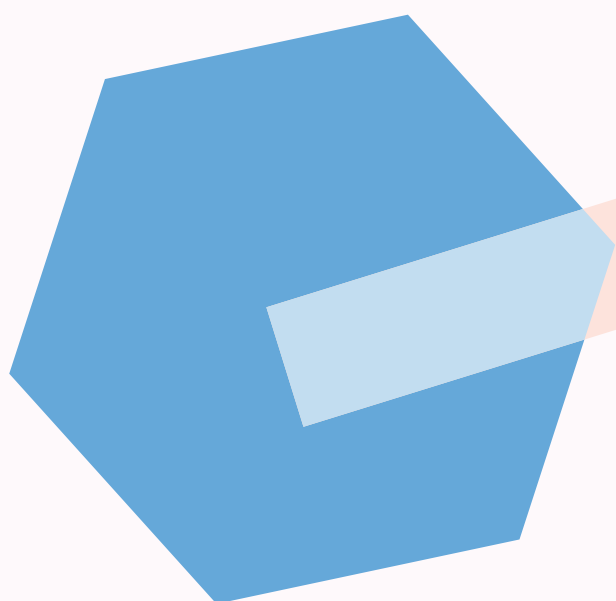
### Notes and troubleshooting:

**Prepare:** Select a mindfulness exercise from the [Mindfulness Activities Pack](#).





# Alternative activities



# Taking action 25 mins



Resources needed: • Slides 15-17  
• Pens and paper

## Slide 15

### Taking action



SLIDE 15

**Connecting with nature has many benefits for our mental health and wellbeing, such as:**

- Increased happiness
- Reduced feelings of stress
- Having more and better-quality sleep
- Increased self-esteem and self-confidence
- Improved concentration
- Increased social interaction with others and the world around us



**Present Slide 15.**



**"Connecting with nature is not just about the amount of time we are spending outdoors; it is also about building a relationship with nature by noticing and becoming sensitive to what is around us."**

*Continued...*



## Taking action (continued)



“Connecting with nature has many mental health and wellbeing benefits, including:

- increased happiness,
- reduced feelings of stress,
- having more and better-quality sleep,
- increased self-esteem and self-confidence,
- improved concentration; and
- increased social interaction with others and the world around us.”



### Taking action



SLIDE 16

#### Being part of positive environmental change is linked with:

- Increased empathy
- Self-confidence
- Self-esteem
- Increased sense of community



Do:

Present Slide 16.



Say:

“There are many ways to connect with nature, which will be based on our own personal experiences and opportunities. One way to connect with nature is to get involved in activities that create positive environmental change.

Studies have found a link between taking part in these types of activities and increased empathy, self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as an increased sense of community. So, when combined with the benefits of being in nature, these activities can have a positive impact on our mental health and wellbeing.”





### Taking action



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SLIDE 17

**How can we  
take environmental  
action?**



**Do:**

#### **Present Slide 17.**

Ask pupils to discuss in pairs how the school is currently taking environmental action, and what other things could be done.

Here are a few examples, in case pupils need prompting:

- Leaving seeds on the windowsill for the birds.
- Promoting a reusable drink bottles policy.
- Offering recycling points across the school.
- Sharing relevant petitions or campaigns with pupils about protecting the environment.

*Time to discuss: 10 minutes.*

*Continued...*



## Taking action (continued)



Do:

Invite pupils to share their ideas of new actions the school could take with the class and write them on the slide.

*Time to share: 5 minutes.*



Do:

Hand out paper and pens to pupils. Ask them to select an idea they would like the school to take forward and write a persuasive letter to Senior Leadership Team.

*Time to complete: 10 minutes.*



### Notes and troubleshooting

**Follow-up:** Collect the letters and share with the Head of Year or another senior member of staff.

# Challenging thinking 25 mins



Resources needed: • Slides 18-24 • Nature-based case studies  
• Pens and paper resource (optional)

## Slide 18

### Challenging thinking



SLIDE 18

Connecting with nature is about building a relationship with nature by noticing and becoming sensitive to what is around us.



Do:

Present Slide 18.



Say:

“Connecting with nature is about noticing and becoming sensitive to what is around us. This could be growing herbs or watching the birds. However, meaningful engagement with nature can depend on our individual circumstances and experiences.”



## Challenging thinking (continued)

Slide 19

### Challenging thinking



What could be  
the barriers to someone  
connecting with  
nature?



Click to add text

SLIDE 19



Do:

Present Slide 19.



Ask:

**"What could be the barriers to someone connecting with nature?"**



Do:

Invite pupils to share their ideas with the class and write them on the slide.

*Time to discuss: 5 minutes.*



## Challenging thinking (continued)

Slide 20

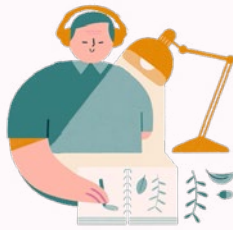
### Challenging thinking



SLIDE 20



Mo



Jamie



Nara



Ciara



Do:

Present Slide 20.



Say:

“We are going to look at some case studies of people who have different levels of access to nature to see if we can think of creative ways for them to connect with nature in their own way.”



Do:

Put Peer Learners into small groups and hand out paper and pens.



## Challenging thinking (continued)

Challenging thinking

Mo



SLIDE 21

Challenging thinking

Jamie



SLIDE 22

Challenging thinking

Nara



SLIDE 23

Challenging thinking

Ciara



SLIDE 24

Slides 21-24



**Do:** Present Slide 21-24.

For each slide, read out the relevant case study and ask pupils to discuss in their groups ways the case study could connect with nature.

*Time to discuss: 10 minutes.*



**Do:** Invite pupils to share their ideas for each case study and write them on the slides.

*Time to share: 5 minutes.*



### Notes and troubleshooting

**Prepare:** If using the nature-based case studies resource, print out copies and hand out to each group. Ask the Peer Learners to read and discuss each case study in their groups. After 10 minutes, bring the class back together to share ideas for each case study.

Write down your own suggestions for each case study in case the Peer Learners need prompts.

# Nature-based case studies resource



## Case study 1 - Mo

This is Mo. Mo lives on the 10th floor of a block of flats in the middle of the city. Mo doesn't have a garden and there are no local parks that he can travel to by himself. Mo enjoys his photography class at school and likes to follow different photography accounts on social media.



# Nature-based case studies resource



## Case study 2 - Jamie

This is Jamie. Jamie lives in a small village, close to a large park. He loves playing any sport and listening to music. At weekends, Jamie works at a local supermarket. It is often very quiet in the village when he finishes work and the park doesn't always feel safe after dusk.



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# Nature-based case studies resource



## Case study 3 - Nara

This is Nara. Nara lives on the beachfront and loves the sea. She is really creative and enjoys art at school. She has a health condition that means her mobility is limited and she can't walk very far without her wheelchair.



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# Nature-based case studies resource



## Case study 4 - Ciara

This is Ciara. Ciara lives in the middle of a big city, close to a major motorway. There is no green space within walking distance of her house and her family doesn't have a car. The air often feels polluted and the noise of traffic is often really overwhelming when she is outside.



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# Reflection worksheet



One thing I have learned:

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One thing I would do differently:

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One question I would like an answer to:

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