

BREAST MILK – AN INPUT TO NATURE

Ghita Bodman, PhD student in Social policy - Rural studies.
Faculty of Education and Welfare Studies, Åbo Akademi University, Vasa, Finland
Näverbackvägen 100, 65520 Helsingby, gbodman@abo.fi, +358 500 521068

Background

Childhood has a crucial meaning when creating a relationship with nature. Parents and grandparents have an essential role in this establishment by introducing nature to the children under their childhood. The input establishes a basis of using nature as a restorative environment as adult. Nature comes with the breast milk so to say.

Object

This abstract is a part of a doctoral thesis with a multidisciplinary approach to understand the relationship between human and nature from a salutogenic view. It is a qualitative study of nature's significance for human well-being and how well-being and quality of life are experienced, as well as nature and the local rural environment's significance as a health promoting factor.

Method

The data material was gathered with in-depth interviews of sixteen respondents in the age span of 25-76 years combined with a visual method, i.e. coloring "The Rug of Life". Results are analysed with an adapted version of visual grounded theory from a salutogenic perspective.

Results

Results show a need to be in touch with the nature with a movement to feel good and with childhood as a basic structure. In the data material two coping strategies to reach the goal to feel good are found.

The coping strategy "Roots in soil" can be sum up as *back to the modern version of the basics*. A feeling of safety with a belonging and solidarity in a simpler life, a self-selected aloneness where they can be themselves and where they have time to pause for thought in simplicity without modern impulses, a nearness to nature where they feel they are able to take care of their health; with these strategies stressors are comprehensibility together with heritage.

The other coping strategy is "Back to nature" and can be summarized with *from a densely populated loneliness to a sparsely populated area with presence*. A need to downshift with a change to a calm environment they remember from childhood, an freedom to take care of themselves, a life more here and now to live with nature and with the season that makes them feel more present in life; are strategies with which they make stressors comprehensibility together with social relations.

Conclusion

The research suggests that the environment where children spend their time has significant effect on where they find their restorative environments as adult. The childhood environment is experienced as something positive. Their grains of gold in ordinary life are social relations with solidarity and heritage that gives them a feeling of safety as well as a freedom to own choices. In addition, the relationship to nature gives an opportunity to recharge their batteries and to gain food on the table with simpler resources and less modern impulses, which belong to the respondents' grain of gold in their ordinary life.