

Angling for well-being

The emotional, psychological, social and physical health benefits of angling



1. Theory

Positive mental health and well-being

Mental health can be conceptualised as existing on a continuum: at one end is *languishing* (low levels of subjective well-being and a lack of vitality); and at the other end is *flourishing* (high levels of vitality combined with full emotional, psychological, social and physical well-being) (Keyes, 2002, 2007; Westerhof and Keyes, 2010).

This is a positive conceptualisation of mental health and well-being, which is not determined by presence or absence of a diagnosed mental illness (WHO, 2004 p. 2). Illustration 1 shows the different types of well-being that are required for a person to flourish.

Flourishing
High levels of vitality with full emotional, psychological, social and physical well-being

Languishing
Low levels of subjective well-being and a lack of vitality

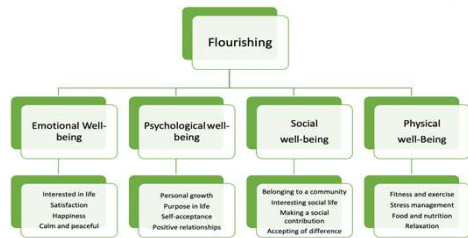


Illustration 1: Adapted from the work of Keyes (2002, 2007) and Westerhof and Keyes (2010).

2. Angling as therapy

The benefits of angling for well-being

Angling can make a unique contribution to a person's well-being, covering all four of the theoretical domains previously identified:

- I. It involves a therapeutic engagement with nature and green-blue spaces, which can have a positive effect on a person's subjective happiness, satisfaction, relaxation levels and overall **emotional well-being**. See evidence Table 1
- II. It can support personal development, including new resilience and coping skills. It can also provide a sense of purpose and a network of positive relationships to improve **psychological well-being**. See evidence Table 2
- III. It provides opportunities to join clubs, participate in social events, take on new responsibilities, and engage in volunteering or coaching. These roles are integral to **social well-being**. See evidence Table 3
- IV. It requires various levels of physical exertion - linked to walking, wading in the water, and from repeatedly casting and retrieving - which can increase **physical well-being**. See evidence Table 4

1. 3. Evidence

Table 1: Emotional well-being indicators	Study	Comments
Positive affect (calm, peace and the dissipation of stress).	Djohari et al (2018)	Ethnographic research with angling intervention programmes that work with 'disaffected' young people. Angling, through an active engagement with(in) green-blue spaces, can help young people regulate their emotions, escape stressful lives and find comfort in nature.
Positive affect (rest, relaxation and stress relief)	Stolk (2009)	Qualitative, survey-based study exploring how angling contributes to personal health and well-being in adults. Anglers place a high value on 'experiencing nature and scenery' and 'escaping crowds and noise'. Rest, relaxation and stress relief are the key mental health benefits.
Subjective happiness and quality of life (motivation, positive behaviors and life satisfaction)	Griffiths et al. (2018)	Quantitative study measuring the subjective human dimensions of recreational fishing. It uncovers the motivations of anglers (to be outdoors in nature, and to get away); the different angling behaviours (fishing method and environment); and the positive mental health outcomes (satisfaction, happiness, and stress relief).

Table 2: Psychological well-being indicators	Study	Comments
Personal development and positive relationships	Brown et al. (2012)	Qualitative triangulation applied, including an angling participation survey, 150 in-depth interviews, and research visits to angling projects. Angling can promote new 'protective factors' in young people, such as resilience, coping skills, and a network of social relationships.
Personal growth and environmental mastery	Eden and Bear (2010)	Qualitative study based on 60 semi-structured interviews conducted with UK-based anglers. Angling can promote unique skills of environmental interpretation, mapping and nonvisual sense-making, which are specific to the water-based encounter.
Self acceptance, meaning and personal development.	McManus et al. (2011)	Review of the literature on angling therapy - and interaction with key stakeholders. For young people who do not find school dynamics easy, angling can increase self-confidence, help form positive friendships, and lead to new responsibilities.

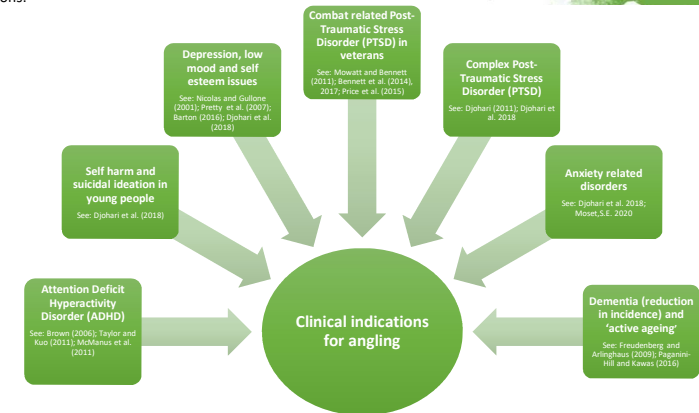
Social well-being indicators (Table 3)	Study	Comments
Social integration and meaningful contribution	Mowatt and Bennett (2011)	Qualitative study - based on narrative theory - on the benefits of fly-fishing for veterans. Fly-fishing helped veterans improve social relations, regain a sense of achievement, and reintegrate into civilian life.
Belonging to - and having support from - a community	Djohari et al. (2016)	Qualitative ethnographic study of angling programs run by UK charity organisations. Angling socialises young people into an 'experience-based learning community', giving them the opportunity to actively participate, learn new skills, and adopt teaching roles themselves.
Social integration and a sense of belonging	Craig et al. (2020)	Phenomenological study exploring the meaning of angling for military personnel with PTSD. The camaraderie developed through angling provides a respite from the negative impacts of PTSD, which in turn can serve as a platform for personal growth.

Physical well-being indicators (Table 4)	Study	Comments
Physical health, stress management and relaxation	Freudenberg and Arlinghaus (2009)	Angling survey on the benefits of the activity for elderly and disabled anglers. As a moderate nature-based activity, angling is accessible to older people and can be used to improve fitness and health, as well as promote relaxation and enjoyment.
Physical health and active ageing	Stolk (2009)	Qualitative, survey based study on the physical health benefits of angling. Angling can encourage physical activity amongst a range of different demographics (i.e., amongst the inactive, those recovering from serious illness and the elderly).

4. Clinical indications

The 'hidden' nature of angling

NHS-led mental health campaigns, such as the 5 ways to wellbeing (NHS, 2011), have championed a range of social prescriptions for well-being including: eco-therapy (adventure therapy, animal-assisted therapy, horticultural therapy); green-blue exercise (walking, running, cycling); and mindfulness (breathing exercises, yoga, tai-chi). However, the role of angling is often hidden in the debate on well-being, despite evidence that it could be therapeutic for a range of clinical indications.



5. Professional, legal and ethical considerations

Professional

Problem	Possible Solution
Referral pathways	-Signposting (leaflet at GP). -Direct referral from GP, practice nurse or community care -Link worker involvement -Self-referral (online or face to face)
Funding	-Statutory public health -One-off grants (research council, national lottery) -Local authority -Community, voluntary or social enterprise
Staff	-Scan local angling clubs for relevant skills and expertise -Encourage NHS staff with an interest in angling to help as 'local champions' -Allow service users to take on responsibility for coaching and mentoring roles

Legal

Problem	Possible Solution
Trust policy and procedures	-Safeguard vulnerable individuals -Keep accurate records -Personalised care and support plans -Follow health and safety procedures
Complex mental health problems	-Multi-disciplinary team in attendance (RMN, OT, SW) -Multi-disciplinary agreement on admissions -Shared decision-making between staff and group members
Risks particular to angling (weather, water, equipment, sharp objects, climbing, lifting)	-Supervision by professionals and experienced anglers -Buddy system to avoid lone angling -Contracts and boundary setting -A set angling site to allow a comprehensive assessment of risk

Ethical

Problem	Possible Solution
Inclusivity (low percentage of anglers are female or BAME)	-Targeted 'taster sessions' -Separate sessions for different demographics (i.e. women only) -Train staff, coaches and volunteers to support inclusivity
Accessibility (low percentage of anglers are disabled or urban living restrict angling participation)	-Sessions close to urban areas -Location on public transport links -Plan ahead for inclusion (parking, walking distance, fishing platforms, information and signage)
The cultural shift away from 'blood sports' such as hunting and angling	-Promote linked activities (walking and wildlife watching) -Compulsory fish welfare measures ('catch and release', barbless hooks, unhooking mats) -Inform how angling can help preserve waterways

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Appendix

2 Angling Resources I.

Examples of successful angling programmes

Angling For Youth Development (AFYD): <<http://www.afyd.co.uk/>>

BAIT Project: <<http://www.bait-project.co.uk/homepage.php>>

Borderlines: <www.borderlines.org.uk>

CAST: <<http://www.castangling.co.uk/about.html>>

CAST North West: <<http://www.castnw.net/latest-news>>

Catch 21: <<http://www.thames21.org.uk/Catch21.html>>

Get Hooked on Fishing (GHOF) <https://ghof.org.uk>

Inclusion Through Angling (ITA): <www.inclusionthroughangling.co.uk>

Les Webber's Angling Projects: <www.angling-projects.org.uk>

West Sussex Angling Academy <<http://www.wsangling.com/newsite/>>

3 Angling Resources II.

Useful angling organisations



Source: Gethookedonfishing.org