

Incorporating gardening into therapy helps to restore balance in the lives of people who have been injured or are otherwise incapacitated by illness. From a physical point of view, walking around the garden helps regain lost mobility, while gentle bending, stretching and lifting help the patient to build muscle strength. Obviously, as some patients recuperate, they can take on heavier work like digging and cutting wood.

Of course, these physical benefits could also be got with sessions in the gym or the pool. However, these would not provide the mental health benefits that gardening gives, and it is here that gardening really benefits the patient. Participants in gardening programmes report having less stress, feeling more alert during the day and having better sleep. In addition, it is no small matter that people also report that they feel better in the knowledge that they are helping the environment. The increased wellbeing that patients talk about is a quantifiable measure of the success of such schemes. In the following paragraphs, I intend to examine the benefits in greater detail.

f
g
h
i
j
k
l

Reflect

- 5  Look again at the checklist you wrote in Exercise 1. Now that you have reached the end of the Worksheet, is there anything you should add? Discuss with a partner.