



OUTDOOR MEET-UPS FOR MENTAL HEALTH

IF YOU WANT TO TRY SOME OUTDOOR ACTIVITY BUT NEED SOME SUPPORT, LOOK NO FURTHER THAN THE ORGANISATION, YUGEN EXPLORE, WHICH HOSTS MEET-UPS TO ENCOURAGE ALL OF US OUTSIDE.

Grace Wilson is on a mission to help others discover what she herself has; that the outdoors has the power to not only aid our wellbeing but to support our mental health and expand our social circle.

Grace co-owns travel and outdoor brand, Yugen Explore, and her passion is in getting more people outside and into adventures. And so she has devised a range of meet-ups, so that people who perhaps don't have others to get outside with or simply want to meet new people, can do so in a fun, friendly and safe environment.

Grace told *Getting Active Outdoors*: "I know how important it is for your mental health and general wellbeing and know from personal experience that it can be difficult to find people to go with and not everyone has the confidence or skills to go alone."

Last year, she created a hiking meet-up in the Cairngorms, then one in March in the Peak District and supported by Ordnance Survey, with an adventure weekend taking place in June, which partnered with the YHA

So, what's it all about, and is it for you? Read on for the full story.





HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Yugen Explore hosts a whole host of outdoor meet-ups for mental health.

"Mental health awareness is an issue that's close to our heart and we know how important it is to get outdoors for both your physical and mental wellbeing. If you love to travel, then you love to visit new places, experience adventure and meet new people. So why not do this in your own country?" Grace questioned.

"We think the biggest barrier to getting outdoors in the UK is having no one to go with and not knowing where to go, so we decided to get our followers together and start arranging free meet-ups. In a time when everything is online and social media-based, we wanted to bring the human aspect back and connect people in the outdoors. It's so important to talk to one another and it gives people a sense of community. So far, our meet-ups have been a huge success and brought together total strangers with a shared passion."

At the meet-ups, the team brings together a total mix of personalities, skills and backgrounds, with the simple goal to show all of us that adventure is on your doorstep, and that if you have no one to go with, you can join the meet-ups so you don't have to feel alone.

Grace continued: "Social media is an amazing tool for connecting people, it just needs to be used in the right way and to have a positive impact. We have had experts in paddle boarding, outdoor cooking, hiking and map reading to join us over a weekend. We brought together their skills and knowledge to teach others and show how much fun you really can have in the outdoors. Adventure really is on your doorstep and all it takes is a change in perspective, stepping out of your comfort zone and joining a meet-up and you too can feel a part of something amazing!"

WHY YUGEN

The term yugen is fundamental in the appreciation of beauty and art in Japan. It suggests that extreme beauty does exist and that it awakens feelings and responses that are too deep and meaningful to express in words.

It also represents an awareness of the universe that triggers emotional responses too powerful for words.





BEING OUTSIDE HELPS WITH MENTAL HEALTH

Grace and her team want to inspire and encourage as many people as possible to get outside and go on adventures, because the world is yours to explore, whether that's travelling to the other side of the world or right here on your doorstep.

"There are so many benefits to being outdoors and going on adventures, it opens up a whole new world of meeting new people, improving your mental health and getting fit along the way," she explained.

"By now, a lot of us know how beneficial to our health and wellbeing getting outdoors more is."

Exercise and being outdoors improves academic performance and physical health, Grace explained, adding that just being in nature can help to reduce your stress levels

Everyone is welcome at the meet-ups, and so no one should worry if they are coming alone as they are designed for all. To join, check them out on social media @yugenexplore or visit www.yugenexplore.com



GETTING ACTIVE OUTDOORS AUTUMN/WINTER 2019