



20 CONFERENCE
26 & EXPO APRIL 9–11
COLUMBUS, OH

Abstract Title: Nature as Co-Therapist: A Trauma-Informed Lens

ABSTRACT PREVIEW: NATURE AS CO-THERAPIST: A TRAUMA-INFORMED LENS

[Nature as Co-Therapist: A Trauma-Informed Lens](#)

Abstract ID: 2198683

Session Format: 60 Minute Education Session

Abstract Status: Active

Speaker(s)

Peter-William L. Myers, LPC, CNIT

Position:

Psychotherapist

Organization:

Elevation Therapy and Wellness

Role:

Speaker

Biographical Sketch

Peter-William L. Myers, is a licensed professional counselor and certified nature-informed therapist specializing in integrated treatment for co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. With 6 years of clinical experience, Peter blends trauma-informed care, narrative therapy, and nature-based interventions to support holistic healing and resilience. Passionate about making counseling accessible and culturally responsive, Peter has developed presentations that harness the restorative power of the natural world. Peter is committed to empowering clinicians with innovative tools to deepen client engagement and recovery outcomes and is currently earning his PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision at Waynesburg University.

Are you an ACA member?

Yes

6479536

Degree

Master of Arts (MA)

Area of Degree

Clinical Mental Health Counseling

Presenter Qualifications

Category 1: Presenter holds a graduate degree in a mental health field from a regionally accredited institution and is qualified by appropriate education, experience, and/or training to present on the subject matter.

LinkedIn Profile:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/peterwilliammyers/>

Promotional Description and Topics

Topic

1st choice: Substance Use and Addictions

2nd choice: Counseling Theory, Practice & Relationship

Promotional Description

Step into a session where the natural world becomes a co-therapist in healing trauma and supporting recovery from co-occurring disorders. Combining the principles of trauma-informed care with the restorative power of nature, this workshop offers practical, research-based strategies to regulate the nervous system, strengthen resilience, and prevent relapse. Through interactive demonstrations, case examples, and adaptable interventions, you'll discover how to integrate outdoor experiences, nature metaphors, and sensory-based practices into your work—even in urban or resource-limited settings. Leave with tools you can use immediately to help clients reconnect with themselves, their recovery, and the world around them.

Learning Objectives

1. Describe the intersection of trauma, co-occurring disorders, and disconnection from nature.
2. Identify at least three nature-based, trauma-informed interventions adaptable for various treatment settings.
3. Apply nature metaphors and sensory experiences to improve emotional regulation and client engagement in recovery work.

Additional Session Information

Audience Level

General: Attendees should have a general understanding of the topic. Content Expectations: Define key concepts, explain terms, and provide practical examples. No prior in-depth experience is assumed.

Rationale

Why is this topic important to you?

I've seen clients battling both mental health and substance use disorders find hope again—not in an office chair, but under open skies. Nature has a way of reaching people when words can't. This work matters to me because I've witnessed clients move from hopelessness to possibility through even brief moments of connection with the natural world.

Why is it relevant and valuable for attendees of the ACA 2026 conference?

Co-occurring disorders are complex and growing more common. Counselors need approaches that engage the whole person—mind, body, and spirit. Nature-informed therapy offers adaptable, research-supported strategies that can be used anywhere: inpatient units, outpatient programs, schools, or private practice. This session gives attendees tools they can use immediately.

What makes you uniquely qualified to present on this topic?

I'm a licensed professional counselor and certified nature-informed therapist who has designed and led nature-based interventions in inpatient recovery, outpatient counseling, and therapeutic retreats. My approach blends evidence-based practice with narrative and constructivist frameworks, helping clients re-author their recovery stories with nature as co-therapist.

Target Audience and Area of Application

Anyone who provides therapy.

Expertise

Licensed Professional Counselor and Certified Nature-Informed Therapist

Presentation Structure

Presentation structure would include part teaching/part interactive/part processing.

References

Annerstedt, M., & Währborg, P. (2011). Nature-assisted therapy: Systematic review of controlled and observational studies. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, 39(4), 371–388. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1403494810396400>

Bowen, E., Neill, J. T., & Crisp, S. J. R. (2016). Wilderness adventure therapy effects on the mental health of youth participants. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 58, 49–59. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2016.05.005>

Bratman, G. N., Anderson, C. B., Berman, M. G., Cochran, B., de Vries, S., Flanders, J., Folke, C., Frumkin, H., Gross, J. J., Hartig, T., Kahn, P. H., Kuo, M., Lawler, J. J., Levin, P. S., Lindahl, T., Meyer-Lindenberg, A., Mitchell, R., Ouyang, Z., Roe, J., ... Daily, G. C. (2019). Nature and mental health: An ecosystem service perspective. *Science Advances*, 5(7), eaax0903. <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aax0903>

Sahlin, E., Ahlborg, G., Jr., Tenenbaum, A., & Grahn, P. (2015). Using nature-based rehabilitation to restart a stalled process of rehabilitation in individuals with stress-related mental illness. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 12(2), 1928–1951. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph120201928>

Authorization to Record?

Yes

Addressing Diversity and Ethics:

Understanding and integrating culture and diversity is foundational when applying nature-informed therapy in the treatment of co-occurring disorders. Clients' identities—including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability, religious and spiritual preferences, and geographic location—shape their relationship to nature, healing, and mental health treatment. For example, access to natural spaces varies widely by urban versus rural environments and by socioeconomic resources, which requires adaptation of interventions to ensure inclusivity and equity. Additionally, cultural and spiritual beliefs influence how clients perceive nature and trauma, as some Indigenous and global

communities hold deeply interwoven connections to the land, while others may experience nature-based settings as unfamiliar or even threatening. Gender identity and disability status may impact physical accessibility and safety in outdoor interventions, necessitating flexible, client-centered planning. By embracing a multicultural lens informed by research on environmental justice, health disparities, and intersectionality, counselors can tailor nature-informed interventions that honor clients' unique cultural narratives, avoid assumptions, and promote empowerment.

Ethically, nature-informed therapy requires adherence to core counseling standards such as autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice (ACA Code of Ethics, 2014). Practitioners must ensure client safety by assessing for potential risks in outdoor or sensory-based activities, including physical limitations, trauma triggers, and cultural sensitivities. Informed consent must include clear explanation of nature-based interventions and potential benefits and risks, with ongoing assessment of client comfort and choice throughout the process. Counselors should apply decision-making models such as Kitchener's Ethical Principles to balance respect for client values with professional responsibility, especially when adapting interventions for diverse populations. Ethical challenges may arise around confidentiality in outdoor or community settings and boundaries regarding personal versus professional roles in experiential work. By integrating cultural humility, ongoing supervision, and consultation, clinicians can navigate these challenges, promote client dignity, and foster equitable access to nature-informed healing in co-occurring disorder treatment.