**What are the benefits of nature-based outdoor sessions or walk and talk therapy?**

In addition to all the benefits of a “normal” talk therapy session with me, which integrates elements of Interpersonal Psychotherapy, Solutions Focused therapy, psychodynamic, liberation and social justice frameworks, you will be outside! Going outside on its own elevates mood, opens possibilities, soothes the nervous system, and is enjoyable. Many clients feel accomplished and efficient at checking off therapy and a little exercise or outside time in one hour.

If you are not sure you want to be walking, we can also find a peaceful place to sit. Being outside lets us take advantage of the natural world to practice mindfulness. Being near the ocean or the running water of a creek also has added benefits.

**What are the benefits specifically of movement?**

Many of us, including me, find that moving helps with a feeling of being stuck or stagnant. I find that I am more creative in coming up with strategies and metaphors for my clients when I am walking. This is true whether I’m walking on my own doing a phone session, or if we are walking together. Many of my clients have more breakthroughs walking, or simply are more able to see things in a different way.

Movement is one of the best ways to process and discharge trauma\*. The trauma response in the body activates the fight or flight response. Simply saying words or thinking thoughts does not clear the stress hormones from the nervous system as well as moving. It makes sense… if your body is pumping adrenaline, epinephrine, cortisol and other stress hormones to help you run away or fight off a threat, putting that energy into a brisk walk can discharge and release it. (\* by trauma I mean both major traumatic events as well as smaller activating events.)

In addition, walking at a semi-brisk rate or up a slight incline can make us take deeper breaths from our diaphragm. Engaging the breath from the diaphragm or abdomen, as opposed to shallow breaths in the chest, is another way to switch your autonomic nervous system from the sympathetic (stress response) to the parasympathetic (or more relaxed state.)

Want one more benefit? Self generated optic flow and lateralized movements when walking lowers stress and calms the brain circuits. EMDR (a popular therapy for therapy) uses lateral eye movements to the same effect.

**What are the drawbacks or risks of outdoor therapy?**

The number one tradeoff for outdoor sessions is privacy. Being located in the central coast region, there will inevitably be other people around. It is possible someone walking by may hear a part of our conversation or that you may want to pause until they pass. In addition, you will be seen in public with me and there is a small possibility we will see someone who knows I am a therapist. They may or may not be able to tell it is a therapy session or if we are two acquaintances on a walk together.

Other risks include the possibility of twisting an ankle, getting a bug bite, and all of the things that could happen outside.

**Who is a good fit for walk and talk therapy or outdoor nature sessions?**

You might like outdoor sessions if you have ever felt sitting and looking at another person while talking about vulnerable topics is awkward. You might like it if you would prefer to be in person vs telehealth.

Existing or returning clients of mine can schedule an outdoor session by simply texting or emailing me. I will also send you an additional consent form for outdoor sessions that lists all of the risks and benefits. For first time clients, I like to do at least one video intake session first, to make sure it is an ideal fit.

**When is outdoor therapy not a good idea?**

Please just let me know how you are feeling the day of the appointment. If it is raining, extremely hot, or otherwise unsuitable weather, we will switch to telehealth. If you would like to do a session incorporating clinical hypnosis, it is better to be somewhere more private and sedentary. When you would like to open up about a particularly vulnerable topic, you might decide that day that more privacy would make it easier.