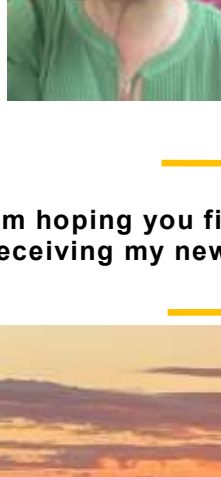


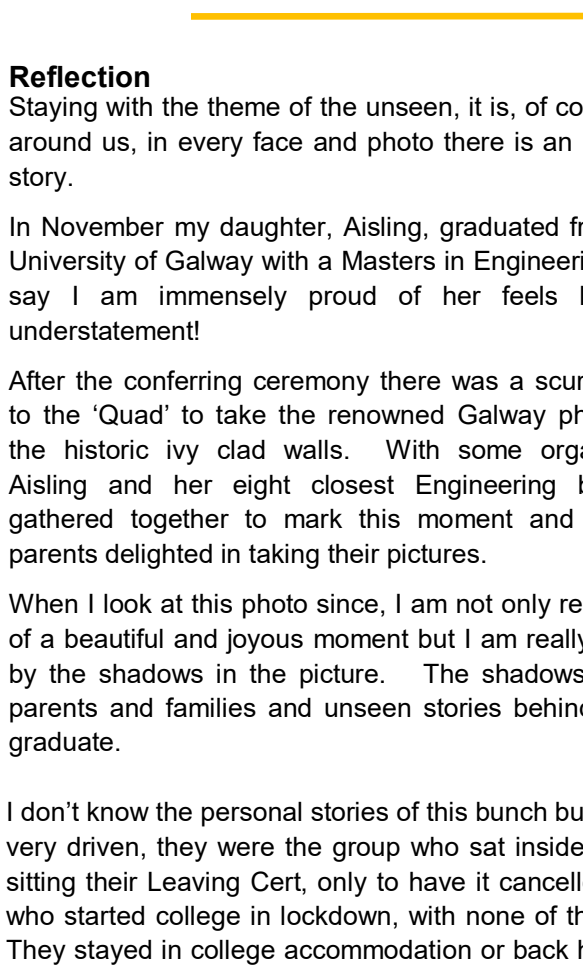
Welcome Back to Imbolc



Welcome to my Imbolc Newsletter. This is my 21st newsletter and marks the start of my 6th year of engaging with you all this way! I welcome all those who have joined my mailing list in the last season. I hope you enjoy my nature and therapy themed offering and I remind new friends and old that previous newsletters are available on the home page of my website should you wish to review the resources mentioned in them.

February 1st is the Imbolc festival in the Celtic seasonal calendar marking the beginning of Spring. Imbolc celebrates the midpoint between the winter solstice and the spring equinox, the increasing in daylight, gradual increasing temperatures and new life.

I'm hoping you find this information useful but if at any stage you want to take a break from receiving my newsletter, just [click here](#) or reply to this email with "Newsletter Opt Out".



Wintering

How has your winter been? This year I have really embraced Wintering. I've spent lots of time with family and friends and decided to take on less, and reschedule some work. I've relished in winter strolls and some of the beautiful night skies we've had. I've set intentions to have a short mindful walk everyday regardless of the weather. I've also decided to spend a little time in my garden each day really trying to embed myself in the small piece of land I am the guardian of. I've imagined all that goes on in the magic of winter where the unseen is often where the action is, as the earth and soil rests and new life develops. Imbolc or Imbolg means 'in the belly of' speaking to the new life of spring birthed by mother Earth and as the season turns I hope you too are ready to step forward and delight in your emergence!

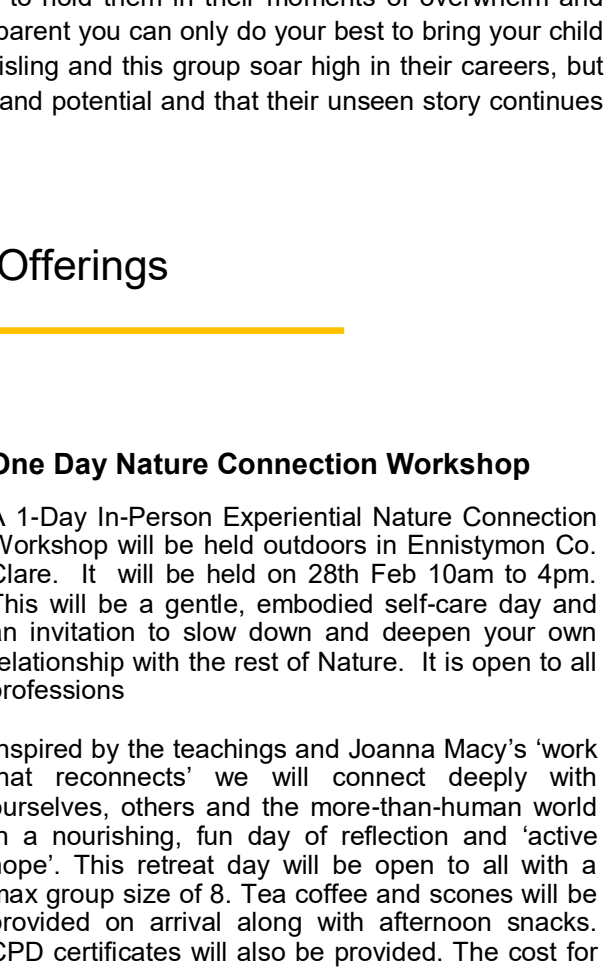
Reflection

Staying with the theme of the unseen, it is, of course all around us, in every face and photo there is an unseen story.

In November my daughter, Aisling, graduated from the University of Galway with a Masters in Engineering. To say I am immensely proud of her feels like an understatement!

After the conferring ceremony there was a scurry over to the 'Quad' to take the renowned Galway photos at the historic ivy clad walls. With some organising, Aisling and her eight closest Engineering buddies gathered together to mark this moment and all the parents delighted in taking their pictures.

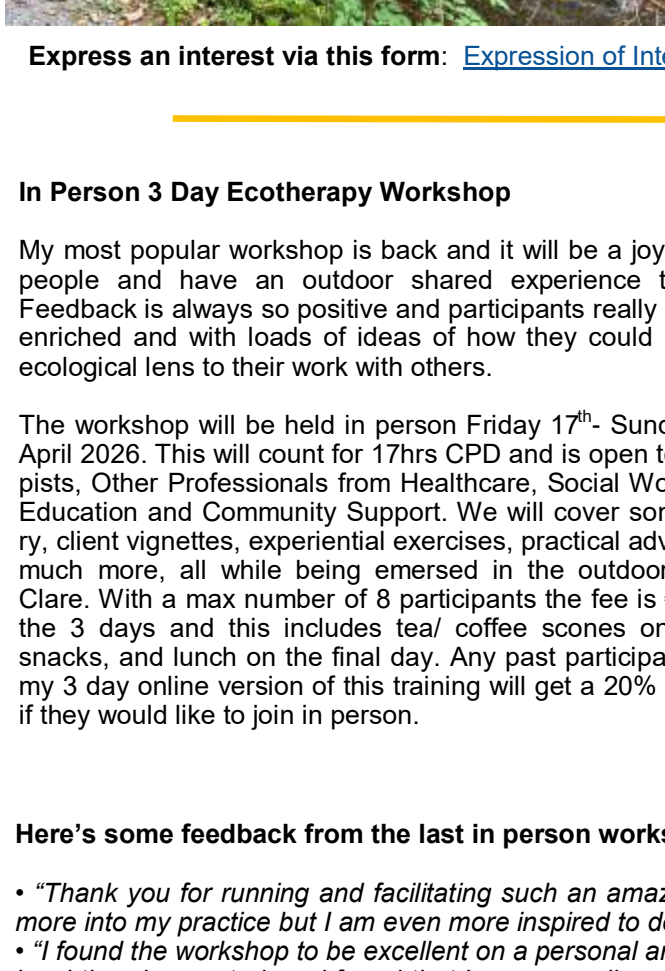
When I look at this photo since, I am not only reminded of a beautiful and joyous moment but I am really struck by the shadows in the picture. The shadows of the parents and families and unseen stories behind every graduate.



I don't know the personal stories of this bunch but there are parts of their past they share. High achievers and very driven, they were the group who sat inside studying in the blistering lockdown heat thinking they were sitting their Leaving Cert, only to have it cancelled weeks before their start date. These were the 1st years who started college in lockdown, with none of the usual social events to make friends or meet class mates. They stayed in college accommodation or back home in their bedrooms while doing their lectures online. As the years went on and normality returned, they formed a solid group and stressed about thermodynamics, fluid dynamics, finite elements and endless deadlines!

And in the background there were the parents like us, supporting them financially and psychologically in the midst of all the other life and family challenges. We tried to hold them in their moments of overwhelm and loved them with all our hearts while willing them on. As a parent you can only do your best to bring your child to a certain point and then let them fly. My wish is that Aisling and this group soar high in their careers, but more importantly have fulfilling, happy lives full of wonder and potential and that their unseen story continues to be one of resilience, hope and love.

Upcoming CPD Offerings



One Day Nature Connection Workshop

A 1-Day In-Person Experiential Nature Connection Workshop will be held outdoors in Ennistymon Co. Clare. It will be held on 28th Feb 10am to 4pm. This will be a gentle, embodied self-care day and an invitation to slow down and deepen your own relationship with the rest of Nature. It is open to all professions

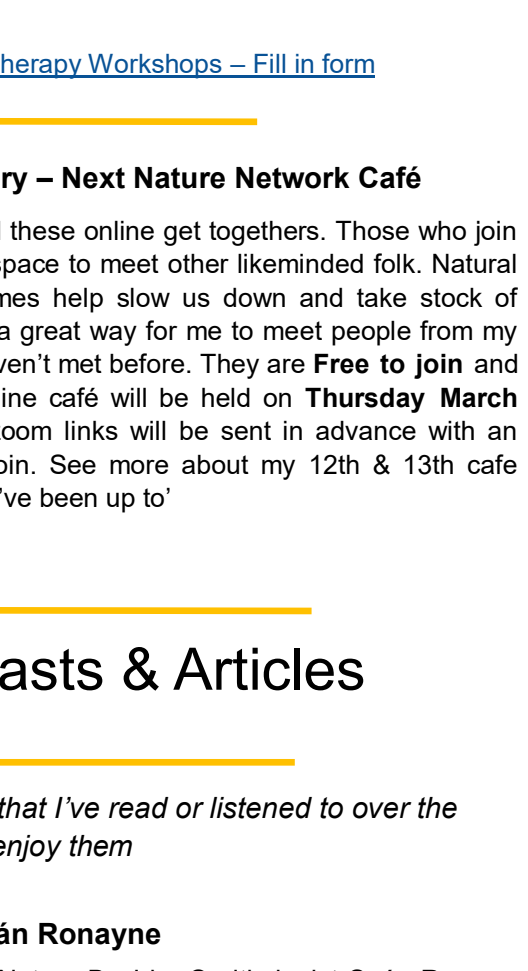
Inspired by the teachings and Joanna Macy's 'work that reconnects' we will connect deeply with ourselves, others and the more-than-human world in a nourishing, fun day of reflection and 'active hope'. This retreat day will be open to all with a max group size of 8. Tea and coffee and scones will be provided on arrival along with afternoon snacks. CPD certificates will also be provided. The cost for this experience will be €150.

Express an interest via this form: [Expression of Interest for Early 2026 Ecotherapy Workshops – Fill in](#)

In Person 3 Day Ecotherapy Workshop

My most popular workshop is back and it will be a joy to meet people and have an outdoor shared experience together. Feedback is always so positive and participants really go away enriched and with loads of ideas of how they could bring an ecological lens to their work with others.

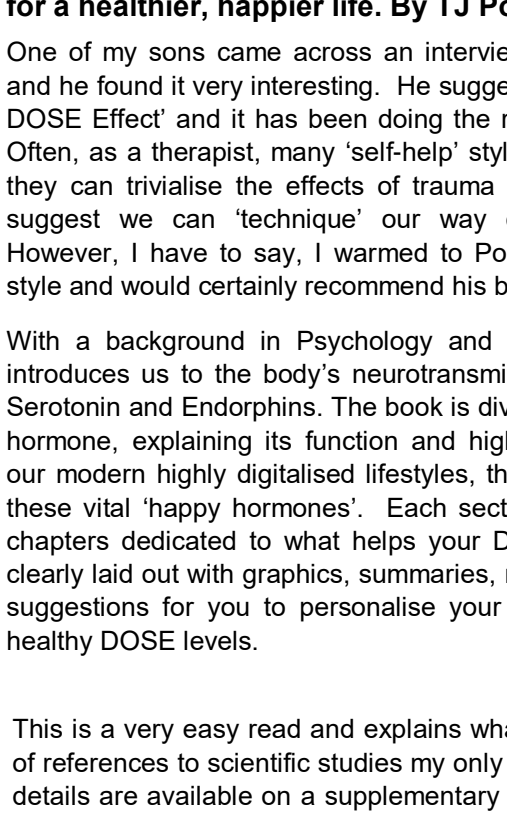
The workshop will be held in person Friday 17th- Sunday 19th April 2026. This will count for 17hrs CPD and is open to Therapists, Other Professionals from Healthcare, Social Work/Care, Education and Community Support. We will cover some theory, client vignettes, experiential exercises, practical advice, and much more, all while being immersed in the outdoors in Co Clare. With a max number of 8 participants the fee is €400 for the 3 days and this includes tea/ coffee scones on arrival, snacks, and lunch on the final day. Any past participants from my 3 day online version of this training will get a 20% discount if they would like to join in person.



Here's some feedback from the last in person workshop:

- "Thank you for running and facilitating such an amazing workshop, I knew I wanted to incorporate nature more into my practice but I am even more inspired to do so now!"
- "I found the workshop to be excellent on a personal and professional level. I took more from it on a personal level than I expected, and found that I was so well regulated and grounded and inspired when leaving on all three days."
- "Professionally, I found it exceeded expectations, and helped me to become more comfortable with my practice. I am happier with the idea of nature therapy that works for me, rather than pursuing some idea of what 'proper' nature therapy would be."
- "This experience has really shifted something in me. It has expanded my perspective in ways that words cannot capture."
- "Joanne held space in a way that allowed me to access the depth of emotions, whilst also making plenty of space for play. That integration of both energies was what made this weekend so magic and expansive."
- "The workshop has helped me deepen my connection to place, and deepen my relationship with all the living beings in our natural world. So grateful for a weekend that I'll never forget, and will probably be integrating for a long time!"

Express an interest: [Expression of Interest for Early 2026 Ecotherapy Workshops – Fill in form](#)

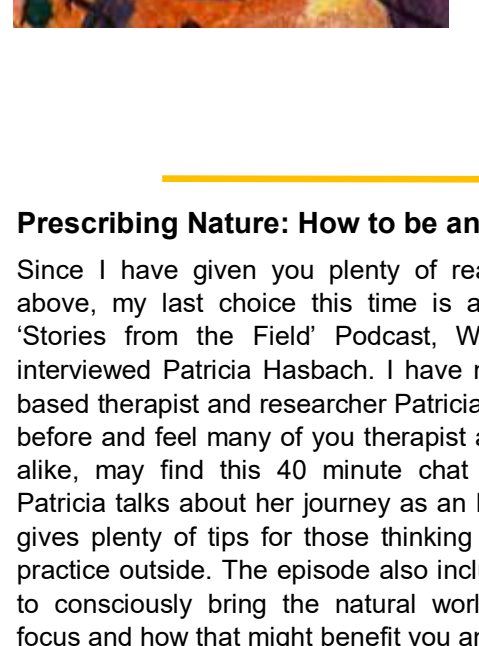


Date for your Diary – Next Nature Network Café

I'm so glad I started these online get togethers. Those who join find them an easy space to meet other likeminded folk. Natural easy seasonal themes help slow us down and take stock of ourselves. It's also a great way for me to meet people from my mailing list that I haven't met before. They are **Free to join** and my next 1 hour online café will be held on **Thursday March 12th**. Emails and zoom links will be sent in advance with an open invitation to join. See more about my 12th & 13th café below in the 'What I've been up to'

Interesting Books, Podcasts & Articles

Here are a snippet of books and interesting resources that I've read or listened to over the last few months. I hope you enjoy them



'Nature Boy' by Seán Ronayne

I recently listened to 'Nature Boy' by Ornithologist Seán Ronayne. This is an absolutely beautiful book. The audio version is narrated by the author, which is certainly an added bonus

For me I enjoyed this book on many levels. Firstly, it is an inspiring human story of Seán's experiences from childhood to mid-thirties. From a small boy obsessed with birds to a young man challenged by social situations, Seán shares his vulnerabilities and his neurodivergent super powers. And yes, I shed some tears, but that's not too unusual for me!

Seán has always found regulation in nature, and the book not only follows his personal life but his total devotion to birds and wildlife, and his related career. I am by no means a birder, and can only identify relatively few birds by sight or call, but I learned so much from this book. I found the stories of migratory patterns and bird mimicry fascinating. Seán is an absolute amazing fountain of knowledge

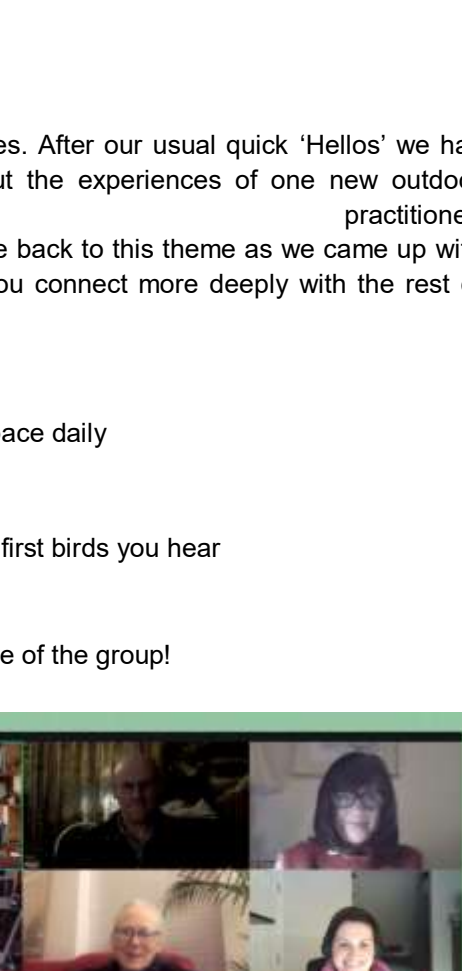
With a shocking 63% of Irish birds in decline, degradation of our landscape, and an huge loss in biodiversity, above all, this book is a call to action. It is plea for us to help the rest of nature. Seán encourages reflection on behaviours such the use of weedkillers, and implores us to connect more deeply with the rest of nature.

In my opinion 'Nature Boy' certainly deserved its place on the 2025 Wainwright Long List for Nature writing. It's message, that humans, and the more-than-human world, are all part of the same ecosystem and depend on each other for survival needs to be delivered and heard by all of us including politicians and policy makers alike. I would also recommend attending one of Seán's talks or watching his documentary 'Birdsong'.

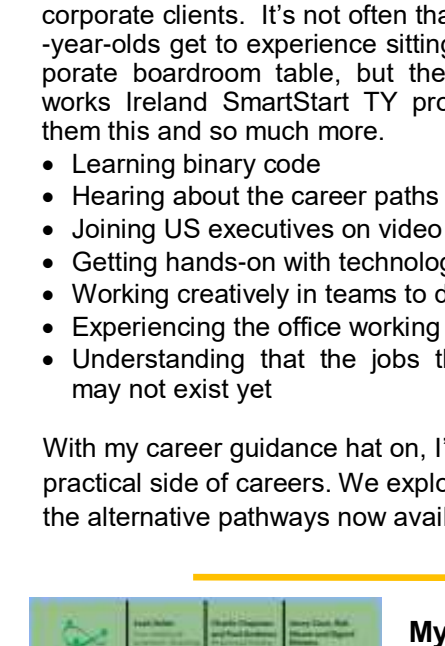
The Dose Effect – Everyday habits to balance your brain for a healthier, happier life. By TJ Power

One of my sons came across an interview with TJ Power recently and he found it very interesting. He suggested we buy his book 'The DOSE effect' and it has been doing the rounds of the family since. Often, as a therapist, many 'self-help' style books bother me. I feel they can trivialise the effects of trauma and stress and somehow suggest we can 'technique' our way out of all our struggles! However, I have to say, I warmed to Power's holistic and realistic style and would certainly recommend his book.

With a background in Psychology and Neuroscience TJ Power introduces us to the body's neurotransmitters Dopamine, Oxytocin, Serotonin and Endorphins. The book is divided into sections on each hormone, explaining its function and highlighting issues related to our modern highly digitalised lifestyles, that effect the production of these vital 'happy hormones'. Each section then has a number of chapters dedicated to what helps your DOSE. Chapters are very clearly laid out with graphics, summaries, mini challenges and lots of suggestions for you to personalise your approach to encouraging healthy DOSE levels.



This is a very easy read and explains what could be complex material in a highly relatable way. With plenty of references to scientific studies my only disappointment with the book was that the bibliography and citation details are available on a supplementary website and not at the back of the book which I always like to flick to. Maybe that's just the academic in me – it didn't seem to be an issue for others!



Towards an Ecopsychology by Mary-Jayne Rust

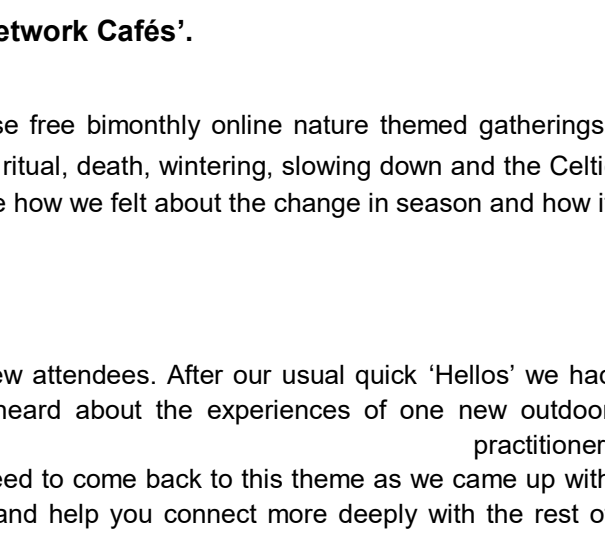
I am often asked for recommendations of Ecotherapy books, so if you are looking for a concise, interesting and insightful introduction to the field I would certainly suggest Mary-Jayne Rust's book. Myself and Mary-Jayne met, and both had the pleasure of giving keynote addresses at the 2018 CONFER conference entitled "Psychotherapy and the Natural World" in Glendalough Co. Wicklow. An Art Therapist and Jungian Analyst, Mary-Jayne was one of the earliest voices in the Ecopsychology movement in the UK.

Her book provides background to the field and clinical vignettes from both her indoor and outdoor psychotherapy practice. In the context of our ecological crisis, natural disasters, forced migration and increasing eco anxiety and grief, Mary-Jayne suggests that we "need a new form of cultural psychotherapy that helps us through this mother of all rites of passage".

This is a quick, well referenced read, and is not overly theoretical. In the last ten years I'm delighted to see the increase in literature in this area and there is now lots of choice but if you are looking for somewhere to start this would be one of my recommendations.

Prescribing Nature: How to be an Ecotherapist

Since I have given you plenty of reading suggestions above, my last choice this time is a podcast. On his 'Stories from the Field' Podcast, Will White recently interviewed Patricia Hasbach. I have mentioned Patricia as based therapist and researcher Patricia in my newsletters before and feel many of you therapist and non-therapists alike, may find this 40 minute chat interesting. In it Patricia talks about her journey as an Ecotherapist. She gives plenty of tips for those thinking about taking their practice outside. The episode also includes ideas of how to consciously bring the natural world more into your focus and how that might benefit you and the planet.



Watch the Episode here: [Video](#)

What I've Been Up To

An Update on some of my activities over the past 3 months,

During the Winter season I hosted two 'Nature Network Cafés'.

Nature Network Café #12

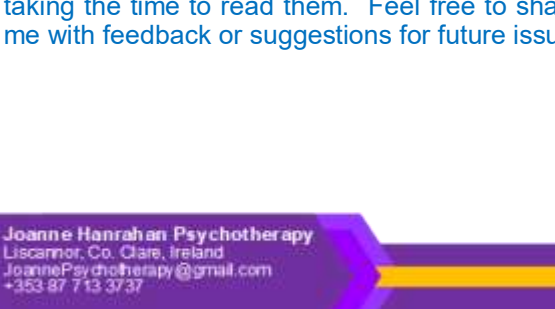
November marked two years since I began to host these free bimonthly online nature themed gatherings. With a Samhain theme we reflected on winter, darkness, ritual, death, wintering, slowing down and the Celtic new year. It seemed like a nourishing safe space to notice how we felt about the change in season and how it comes up in our work with others.

Nature Network Café #13

January's Café was a lovely gathering of regular and new attendees. After our usual quick 'Hello's' we had laughs, chats and beautiful natural reflections as we heard about the experiences of one new outdoor psychotherapy practitioner. So then it was on to our 'Green Goals' for 2026 - I might need to come back to this theme as we came up with so many ideas! Here's a few I hope might inspire you and help you connect more deeply with the rest of nature.

- Decide on a minimum short daily walk regardless of the weather.
- Walk without headphones
- Spend a few mindful moments in your garden or close outdoor space daily
- Sea dip at least once a month
- Get a list of forests and heritage sites near you and plan visits
- Step outside each morning (maybe even dawn) and listen for the first birds you hear
- Get first light on your face and stand barefoot in the grass!

We finished our session with an Imbolc poem written and read by one of the group!

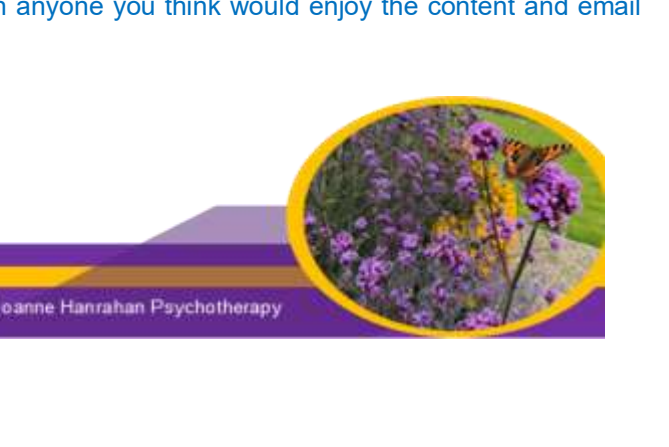


Extreme Networks TY Programme

I love doing these TY Programmes as one of my corporate clients. It's not often that a group of 16 year-olds get to experience sitting around a corporate boardroom table, but the Extreme Networks Ireland SmartStart TY programme gives them this and so much more.

- Learning binary code
- Hearing about the career paths of employees
- Joining UX executives on video calls
- Getting hands-on with technology
- Working creatively in teams to design apps
- Experiencing the office working environment
- Understanding that the jobs they end up in may not exist yet

With my career guidance hat on, I'm delighted that the team, invited me back in November to help with the practical side of careers. We explored subject choices, career and college research, and the importance of the alternative pathways now available.



Thank you for reading !!

