

Book Review

Title: *Green Care: For Human Therapy, Social Innovation, Rural Economy and Education*

Editor: Christos Gallis

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Green Care: For Human Therapy, Social Innovation, Rural Economy and Education, edited by Christos Gallis, is a compilation of writing from all over the world about the importance of nature on human health and in therapy. Although Green Care is not a new concept, this work sparks new ways of thinking about issues surrounding it. The book has four parts: 1) Introductions: Origins, Definitions, and Theories of Green Care; 2) Effects of Green Care on Human Health: Current Scientific Research Results; 3) Social, Political, and Education Aspects of Green Care; and 4) Green Care in the World: Practice and Trends in Europe, Japan, and U.S.

The book was written in hopes of becoming the main textbook for multidisciplinary scientists, teachers, university professors, decision makers, and students of all levels, including PhD candidates, and practitioners. Gallis feels the book is relevant for all disciplines, as Green Care has many widespread health, social, economic, and educational benefits. For example, Sempik and Bragg, in the chapter, "Green Care: Origins and Approaches," cite numerous authors around the topic of Green Care's benefits, concluding:

"Combining the effects on health of physical activity and contact with nature, recent studies have found that 'green exercise' (the synergistic effect of engaging in physical activities whilst simultaneously being directly exposed to nature) results in significant improvements in mental well-being, self esteem and mood measures, as well as leading to significant reductions in blood pressure" (p. 20).

While I believe this is an important and relevant resource, I hesitate to recommend this book, or any book for that matter, as *the* main resource for everyone. A single book simply cannot provide all pertinent information about Green Care's wide spectrum of activities and contexts. This book, however, provides enough information to pique one's interest in Green Care, thus serving as a gateway to additional resources and necessary learning. One of the biggest strengths of this book is its variety of international authors and examples of Green Care's successes from around the globe. For example, chapter nine's authors from the United Kingdom discuss how Green Care socially connects people, providing benefits to participants' well-being. Chapter fifteen's author from Japan discusses the benefits of horticulture and animal assisted therapy. Chapter sixteen provides an American view on the benefits of farming for health. I appreciate the multiple perspectives of the benefits of farming, gardening, forest bathing (visiting

a forest park for relaxation and recreating while breathing in earth aromas similar to aromatherapy), and interacting with animals in nature, to name a few activities. Examples like these clearly show Green Care is essential to our health and well-being. The book has universal and personal appeal, such as Green Care's ability to: create connections between people as well as with the environment; build and sustain healthier physical bodies so we are more energetic and productive; and provide a natural framework that fosters appreciation and gratitude. With positive benefits such as these, Green Care seems like a possible solution to many challenges we currently face in American society.

In addition, the book's description of Green Care is inclusive, focused on building community instead of creating barriers. It has a Person First approach, inherently valuing our strengths as well as addressing needs. The book includes examples of how Green Care can help people with physical and mental disabilities, such as the use of Green Care farming with people with psychiatric diagnoses to foster healthy relationships, animal care for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, and gardening with people with physical disabilities to strengthen motor skills and educational goals. However, the main point of the book seems to be how Green Care is *good for all people*. Green Care for all—with or without disabilities-- simply makes sense.

If you are open to learning about health and wellness from a holistic, non-pharmaceutical perspective, this book is a must read. It provides a multitude of invaluable insights, compelling readers to immediately put down the book and go outside to experience Green Care firsthand.

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