

Embrace from nature – A student's reflections on connection during the pandemic

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During the past few weeks, I am still trying to adapt to a life of social distancing without human touch. Even after a period of over a year I can't get used to this. And maybe that is a good thing as it indicates that I am still a human being who wants to interact in a social and physical environment.

As a physiotherapy student who's currently doing an internship, I am privileged to still be able to work hands on. Of course, while adhering to safety restrictions, but we are allowed to touch patients if needed. For me personally this leads to the feeling that I am turning into a machine. Working with my hands, using my body as an instrument to support patients and always focusing on someone else's process.

At the same time, being able to work at all is a welcome distraction from pandemic reality and keeps my brain and body active during the day. Every day I am searching for the simple things within complexity to personalise treatment and rehabilitation. By trying to become a better professional, there is however one thing I cannot ignore: My own personal development, including my mental health. Am I getting lost in professionalisation due to the lack of a personal life? Is this in return restricting my professional development?



My search for the things I like beside physiotherapy, and sports sciences, got me into nature. When it is not possible to stand close to another person, get a hug or simply look over the shoulder of a colleague to watch a video on his screen, there are still ways to feel connected with your environment. I found this in walking through the woods, along rivers and on small, secluded trails. Every weekend I enjoy the wind around my face, and the alternating weather circumstances that change the experiences of one single walk. Looking for the way to go, and walking towards unexpected, but stunning views over the Dutch landscapes around my hometown, makes me feel alive. These natural elements can partly replace (a small piece of) the need of human contact in my personal life. It sometimes starts feeling like an embrace from nature.



Samantha Meijer

(MSc Sports Science, Physiotherapy Student)

Samantha is a sports scientist and upcoming physiotherapist from the Delta stream at the HAN University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands). She enjoys being and interacting with nature and loves to try out many different kinds of sports activities.