

Information booklet 2023-24

BUSH ADVENTURE THERAPY (BAT) SERVICES















According to the *Australian Association for Bush Adventure Therapy* (AABAT):

Bush Adventure Therapy is a diverse field of practice combining adventure and outdoor environments with the intention to achieve therapeutic outcomes for those involved (see page 8 for more information).

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QUICK LOOK



Meet our team



What is BAT?



Getting in touch

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About us

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We wish to begin by acknowledging the Wadawurrung people of the Kulin Nations, and all first peoples and Traditional Owners of the lands in which we work.

Geelong Adventure Specialists (GAS) has provided specialty outdoor programs and experiences since 2013. In 2017 GAS became NDIS accredited, proudly contributing to the provision of diverse and innovative support options in the Geelong Region.

Since then we have seen a growing demand for our therapeutic supports that incorporate nature-based approaches. Our team now facilitates a wide range of outdoor experiences, individually tailored to meet the unique needs of each participant.



Our passion and experience runs much deeper than 10 years with co-owners Jeremy and Shelley each bringing more than 25 years of experience in outdoor education, tourism, disability support, psychosocial rehabilitation and counselling whilst guiding bushwalking, mountain bike riding, rock climbing, skiing and multi-day expeditions.

Some of the organisations and businesses that we work with are:

- Melbourne Legacy
- Adventure Works Australia
- Victoria Police
- The Salvation Army

- Vision Australia
- Helping Heroes
- Mackillop Education
- Barwon Child Youth & Family
- Deakin University

- The Gordon TAFE

- Cottage by the Sea

- Gateways







Shelley - BAT Facilitator BEd, MEd, MCouns

Shelley is an outdoor all-rounder. Working across many domains with a wide range of people, she has developed a unique professional profile. With the common thread of outdoors and adventure weaved throughout, she has developed a range of education programs for secondary and tertiary students and therapeutic programs for adults and adolescents. Shelley specialises in matching adventure experiences to intended therapeutic outcomes.

Over the years Shelley has completed a BEd (Outdoor Education), MEd (Experiential Learning & Development / Adventure Therapy) & MCounselling and is a member of the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA). Shelley loves 'walking and talking' in nature, sitting around a campfire, and sharing outdoor adventures with others.

Specialties: adventures in the outdoors, counselling, psychosocial recovery, experiential education, collaborative partnerships

Josh - BAT Facilitator

BHIthSc, MPH, MSW, Cert. IAT

Josh is a Master of Public Health and Master of Social Work practitioner who brings a diverse range of health practice responses, strategies, experience and knowledge to GAS. He started his career in a community based hospital setting working on drug and alcohol prevention and mental health programs. And has been taking university students on Social Work placements to help train/ educate allied health workers interested in nature-based practices.



Josh is continuing his research with the Australian Association for Bush Adventure Therapy (AABAT) - Research and Policy Unit on 'Outdoor Healthcare'. And collaborating with many other professionals in their respective nature-based fields of practice. His main focus is still on ensuring the delivery of the safest and most effective practices for everyone and anyone who could benefit from these services.

Specialties: youth mental health (teenage boys), one-to-one outdoor counselling, group facilitation, bush craft, fishing, board games, card games, bike riding and art therapy



Molly - BAT - Allied Health Assistant Cert. IV Mental Health

Molly is passionate about re-connecting people with nature and has spent the past few years designing and running nature immersion programs for children and families to promote eco connection and stewardship.

Molly originally trained and worked as an Art Teacher but over the past years has ventured down a more therapeutic route, completing a Mental Health cert 4 and currently completing a Master's of Counselling.

Molly utilises a person centred, strengths based approach and has a deep appreciation for nature as a healer. She can often be found using the ancient art of Qi Gong and Tai Chi to feel grounded and connected with herself and the world around her.

Specialties: art teacher (secondary school trained), nature play, nature crafts, Forest School, Qi Gong and Yin Yoga (certified to teach both)

Matt - BAT - Allied Health Assistant

Dip Outdoor Recreation, Cert. IV Fitness

Matty is a people focused practitioner who loves utilising the ocean, the bush and a multi activity approach to Bush Adventure Therapy. Matty has a Diploma of Outdoor Recreation. and has 18 years experience working in tourism, education and the mental health sector as a guide, facilitator and instructor. Matty has particular passions and much experience as a climbing guide and coach, leading boys to men Rites of Passage programs.



Matty believes strongly in the health and power of story. Matty relishes opportunities to provide space for the listening to and sharing of story. Having strong roots in his own family, Matty works to support the individual, family and thus the communities which his clients live. Matt enjoys the G.A.S family approach to business and appreciates the quality humans which make up the G.A.S team.

Specialties: talking circle facilitation, creating intentional ceremony, disability support, climbing guiding, team building, leading teams, leadership development, collaborative practice, and integrated holistic health applications



Lisa - BAT Allied Health Assistant

BOutdoorEdExt, Cert. IV Theology

Lisa has a primary background in Outdoor Education and a passion for connecting purposefully with others through outdoor experiences. She loves how nature invites us into an unhurried rhythm of being and the way it awakens curiosity, awe and new perspectives.

Over the years Lisa has been part developing and implementing therapeutic camping programs for adolescents as well as one-on-one mentoring.

In her role as an Allied Health Assistant, Lisa continues to develop the skills and knowledge required to support the well-being of others engaging in the field of Bush Adventure Therapy.

Specialties: outdoor and experiential education, river and bush journeys, moss enthusiast, youth mentoring & group facilitation



Meet our Therapy Dogs



Sunny - BAT Dog

K9 Support

Sunny is a bubbly 5 year old kelpie/poodle who loves the outdoors and hitting the road with her human companions. She is confident and curious around new people and will let you know what she wants e.g. fetch, cuddles/ pats, practicing tricks.

Sunny's favourite place to go on an adventure is the beach, and the thing she likes most about the outdoors is exploring.

Sunny completed her training with K9 Support in 2022 and is certified as a 'therapy dog team' with our BAT Facilitator Shelley.

Specialties: Walking, running, fetching, sniffing, cuddling, going for drives and napping at work

Our Therapy Dogs are certified by...







Myrtle - BAT Dog

Therapy Dogs Australia

Myrtle is a 3 year old whippet (aka small greyhound) who loves to play fetch and then sleep all day in front of the fire. She can be shy and nervous meeting new people, but once she gets to know you she gets really excited to see you again (tail wagging and running around in circles with a toy in her mouth). She is always up for an adventure and most of all a cuddle and treat afterwards.



Myrtle went through the Therapy Dogs Australia (TDA) training in 2021 and is certified as a 'therapy dog team' with our BAT facilitator Josh.

Specialties: running super fast, playing fetch, snuggling, giving big cuddles and asking for pats

What is BAT?



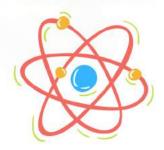
Bush Adventure Therapy (BAT) is therapy delivered mostly outdoors.

BAT is not a one-size-fits-all approach; each session is carefully tailored to respond to the participant's interests and their purpose for being there. Different elements of BAT will be more important at different times. These include connection to the natural world, physical activity and adventure, social relationships and the application of clinical modalities.

DOMAINS

BUSH ADVENTURE THERAPY (BAT) - MECHANISMS OF CHANGE

BIOLOGICAL



Physical Activity and Adventure

- EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING active participation and reflection on real situations
- MOVEMENT somatic and sensory integration
- · EFFORT physical activity and engagement
- CHALLENGE opportunity to explore capabilities and try new responses
- MASTERY experience of calm, control, focused effort to accomplish a goal
- SUCCESS positive outcome expectations may be applied to future events
- PLAY enjoyment, exhilaration, exploration and immersion
- PERCEIVED RISK necessitates action (physical, cognitive, social)
- ADVERSITY demands vigilance for the health and wellbeing of self and others

PSYCHOLOGICAL



Pscyhological Care and Counselling

- THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP collaboration and mutuality
- SAFETY professional care bound by an ethical code and practice standards
- EVIDENCE INFORMED application of appropriate fields of practice
- HOLISTIC bio-psycho-social-eco (BPSE) approach to health, well-being and healing
- PARTICIPANT VOICE co-designed practice responses
- CHOICE fluid and responsive to participant needs
- TRANSFER OF LEARNING integration to wider life

SOCIAL



Social Relationships and Responsibilities

- CONNECTION needing and being needed by others
- CONTAINMENT feeling of safety, trust, support and freedom
- FUN making significant positive memories
- RELATIONSHIP peer influence as motivator and teacher
- SOCIALISATION opportunity to communicate, express opinions, show respect and compassion
- CONTRIBUTION co-construction of group dynamics / participant agency

ECOLOGICAL



Time in Nature

- · EFFORTLESS ENGAGEMENT nature is innately fascinating and mentally restorative
- MULTI-SENSORY immersive experience
- AFFECTION innate tendency to seek connection with nature
- FAMILIAR COMFORT a place that is stable, predictable and fair
- AWE & WONDER awareness and opportunity for emotional and spiritual engagement
- TIME OUT alternate environment, circumstances, activities and opportunities
- SIMPLICITY openness to information that might otherwise be ignored
- CONCRETE EXPERIENCE emotional anchor

Who is it for?

Everyone and anyone. Although this statement is true, it ultimately depends on the individual participant / group needs. **We start where the participant is**. This means that a BAT experience can look very different from person to person. Just as no two people are the same, no two BAT programs or experiences are the same.

SOME OF THE COMMON CHALLENGES OUR PARTICIPANTS FACE

- Autism (Asperger's syndrome)
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)
- Complex trauma
- Insomnia and sleeping difficulties
- Non-communicable disease (NCDs) i.e. obesity, diabetes, and asthma
- Schizophrenia / Schizoaffective disorder

- Anxiety and Depression
- · Bi-polar
- Personality disorders
- Various psychiatric conditions
- Physical disability
- Intellectual disability (ID)
- Developmental Delay (DD)
- Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD)
- Family Violence
- Screen / gaming / online addiction
- Psychosocial difficulties



EXAMPLES OF BUSH ADVENTURE THERAPY EXPERIENCES

- One-to-one counselling whilst walking side by side on a bushwalk
- Living in community and learning from others on a week-long canoe journey
- Returning to a place on a regular basis to observe seasonal changes and daily rhythms
- Mountain bike riding and coaching to master new skills
- Co-designing your own tailored BAT adventures e.g. multi-day hike / camping and more...

What could a BAT session with GAS look like?

While each Bush Adventure Therapy (BAT) experience is tailored to individual and group needs, the following two stories demonstrate the potential therapeutic outcomes that can be achieved from initial intake and assessment to ongoing (weekly, fortnightly or monthly) sessions.

*NATHAN'S STORY

Social and emotional development in the outdoors

'I need a job and I don't know how to do an interview' *Nathan stated during one of our sessions.

Nathan (16), has a passion for reptiles, dinosaurs, monsters (cryptids), creative drawing and imaginative play. He is one of two adopted children in his family, and experiences Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Anxiety with daily medication.

When the family first approached GAS they were looking for a service that could provide both counselling and therapeutic support for Nathan to get more active outdoors and strengthen his social and emotional skills. Our first session was back in August, 2021. Through consistent weekly sessions this lead to a conversation around casual employment, a successful first interview and a job with a competitive applicant turn out.

Fast forward to Jan 1st, 2023 and Nathan has now been employed with the same organisation for 14 months and recently offered a dream volunteer position working with reptiles. Achievements that both he and his family have been so proud of and something they have attributed to his time in our Bush Adventure Therapy program with GAS.

Some of the focused psychological strategies (FPS) used to support Nathan included (but weren't limited to) a:

- Strengths-based approach Using Nathan's love of nature as a 'safe' place to discuss social and emotional development and his aspirations for meaningful change
- Solution-focused practice highlighting what Nathan wants to achieve e.g. casual employment/ his purpose rather than the challenges he faces
- · Mindfulness a relaxation strategy in nature that has assisted with present moment awareness







*Nathan and his family have given permission to share his story



Adventure experiences in counselling

'My client needs support to process recent traumatic events' *stated a Case Worker on referral to GAS

Leah loved school, she loved being part of the community and she enjoyed the challenge of learning new things. Leah is a clever, ambitious and sociable young woman who approaches life with an energetic fervour.

Life at primary school was difficult at times for Leah, she was often in conflict with her peers, she struggled with behavioural expectations and regulating her emotions, and her capacity to make academic progress was hindered by circumstance. In her final year of primary school Leah was removed from her family due to longstanding neglect and violence. Leah describes this as the hardest year of her life.

Leah began year seven at a new school feeling unsettled and fearful. In the first term she was expelled due to violent and antisocial behaviour. Leah was referred to GAS during her transition to an alternative learning environment. Leah felt humiliated, abandoned and deflated.







ory.

Leah had a team of support people surrounding her and her family across many domains at this time. What GAS provided, that others could not, was 'counselling on the move'. Sitting still was difficult for Leah so we rode bikes and chatted side by side in our first session. Leah hoped that Bush Adventure Therapy would help her get some confidence back.

With a Narrative Therapy lens abseiling and lighting a campfire with flint & steel provided experiential learning opportunities that gave Leah concrete examples of her preferred narrative. The outdoor adventure activities thickened the stories of Leah's life that positioned her as a quick learner, courageous and determined, fun and likable. This challenged her dominant narrative of worthlessness and feeling dumb all the time. Leah began to position herself as the chief storyteller, providing opportunity to process trauma and shed light on aspirations she holds for the future.

Leah now attends an alternative school where she is flourishing with the continued support of her excellent team.

- Shelley (GAS - BAT Facilitator)



What our participants say

*Anonymous (Melbourne Legacy)



I can do things that sometimes feel impossible.

(Canoe Trip - Glenelg River)

*Nathan, 15



Relieving. And then filled with awe. Wow. I just did that.

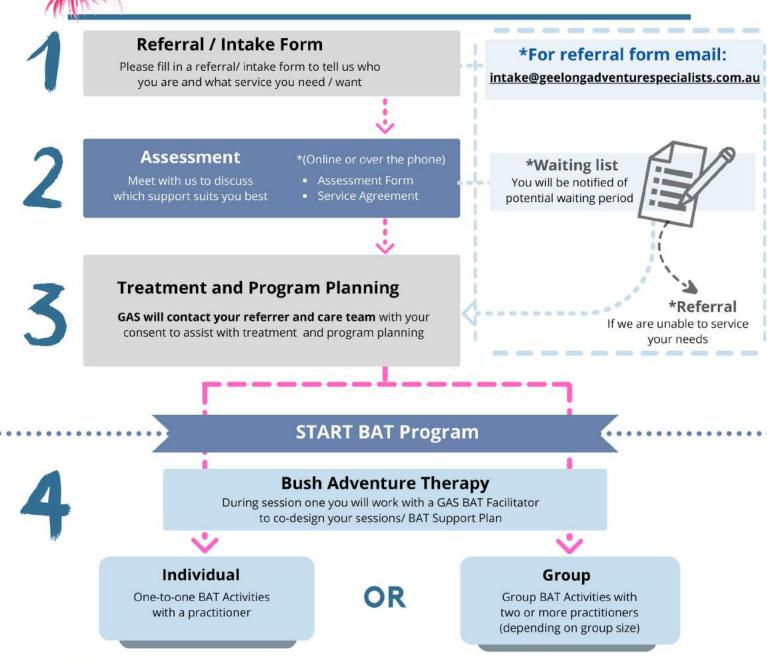
(Snow Camping - Aust Alps)

*Daniel, 13



Fishing has helped me to relax at school and at home. It has helped me a lot.

(Fishing - Geelong)



BAT Intake process

ADVOCACY

Need assistance to engage with us? You can contact:

- Assert 4 All A: 48 McKillop Street Geelong 3220 PH: 5221 8011 W: www.bdrc.org.au
- **Rights Information & Advocacy Centre Inc** A: 11/23-31 Gheringhap Street Geelong 3220 PH: 5222 5499 W: https://riac.org.au
- Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative A: 62 Morgan Street North Geelong 3215 PH: 5277 0044
 W: www.wathaurong.org.au

Other languages

If you need an interpreter, please call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 131 450 and ask them to telephone GAS on 0490 037 699.

*Camps and group programs are quoted individually

COUNSELLING		COST
Indoors at GAS HQWalk and talk from GAS HQ	GAS Headquarters 22/11 Newcastle Street Newtown, Geelong	• \$150/hr BAT Practitioner
BUSH ADVENTURE THERA	APY (BAT)	COST
BAT ACTIVITIES Low-Tech adventure activities Bushwalking Fishing Vehicle touring Rature Play Campfire BAT TECH-ASSISTED ACTIVITIES Tech-assisted adventure activities Rock climbing Abseiling Mountain bike riding Canoeing Bushcraft Cooking Therapy Dog Adventures	Geelong and surrounds • You Yangs • Brisbane Ranges • Surf Coast • Bellarine • Werribee Gorge • Otways • And more Geelong and surrounds • You Yangs • Brisbane Ranges • Surf Coast • Bellarine • Werribee Gorge • Otways • And more	 \$160/hr BAT Practitioner \$85/hr BAT Assistant \$170/hr BAT Practitioner \$95/hr BAT Assistant
PROVIDER TRAVEL		COST
Pick up and drop off at agreed tin	nes and locations	• \$160/hr BAT Practitioner • \$85/hr BAT Assistant \$1/KM

NDIS GAS is a registered NDIS provider.

Funding line items

CORE

- 01_741_0128_1_3 Assessment, Recommendation, Therapy or Training Other Professional
- 01_799_0128_1_1 Provider Travel Non-Labour-Costs
- 04_210_0125_6_1 Community Social and Recreation Activities
- 01_058_0115_1_1 STA And Assistance

CAPACITY BUILDING

- 15_621_0128_1_3 Assessment Recommendation Therapy or Training Social Worker
- 15_799_0128_1_3 Provider Travel Non-Labour-Costs
- 09_008_0116_6_3 Innovative Community Participation
- 15_053_0128_1_3 Therapy Assistant Level 2
- 15_043_0128_1_3 Assessment Recommendation Therapy or Training Counsellor

• \$85/hr BAT Assistant

Getting in touch

FOR BUSH ADVENTURE THERAPY

Contact GAS:

intake@geelongadventurespecialists.com.au 0490 037 699 PO Box 2001 East Grovedale, 3216

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GENERAL ENQUIRIES

For all other enquiries including disability support:

info@geelongadventurespecialists.com.au 0499 217 990 PO Box 2001 East Grovedale, 3216

Frequently asked questions

WHERE DID BUSH ADVENTURE THERAPY COME FROM?

The term **Bush Adventure Therapy** (BAT) came from discussions between practitioners in Australia and New Zealand back in 2004, and is part of the emerging Outdoor Healthcare sector in Australia, alongside other evidence-informed nature-based practices such as Equine Therapy, Ecopsychology, Eco/ Green Social Work (to name a few). Prior to this there have been many names used for BAT, with some still used today such as; Wilderness Therapy, Outdoor Therapy, Adventure Therapy, Outdoor Adventure Interventions etc. However, there has been a push to make our practices in the South West Pacific region increasingly culturally appropriate, avoiding such terms as 'wild / wilderness' as they can have colonial connotations implying 'people-free' environments.

HOW DO I KNOW IF BAT IS RIGHT FOR ME (OR MY CHILD, DEPENDENT, PARTICIPANT OR GROUP)?

Please get in touch with one of our friendly and helpful staff at GAS to discuss further. See page 15 for contact details about admissions and general enquiries.

WHAT TYPE OF SCREENING DO YOUR STAFF GO THROUGH?

All GAS staff must complete the following:

- National Police Check
- Working With Childrens Check
- First Aid Training
- NDIS Worker Screening Check
- Registration e.g. AASW / PACFA or supervised by someone who is registered

WHAT TRAINING DO YOUR STAFF HAVE?

At GAS, our BAT facilitators fall under the umbrella term 'Allied Health Professional'. This means our BAT Team are university qualified and in most cases have trained for 6-8 years in multiple qualifications in order to offer targeted therapeutic work safely and effectively outdoors.

Our BAT **Allied Health Assistants** are not a substitute for our BAT Facilitators, however they are recognised under the professional supervision of a registered social worker/counsellor and the NDIS scheme to deliver targeted therapeutic supports.

HOW MANY SESSIONS DO YOU NEED TO SEE CHANGES?

We have had families contact us after the first session to express the immediate changes they have seen. We have also had participants where it has taken consistent work over years to achieve similar results. Again, it is dependent on the individual needs. We do not create 'formulas', as we recognise that everybody is different and will require a tailored BAT experience and / or program to meet their therapeutic needs.

DOES BAT WORK?

It can, yes. A Meta-Analysis conducted by Bowen & Neill (2013), reviewed 197 Adventure Therapy outcome studies to find:

Adventure therapy is effective in facilitating short-term change compared to alternative and no treatment, and that these changes are retained over the longer-term.

WHAT HAPPENS IF BAT IS NOT WORKING?

Our number one priority at GAS is to provide safe and effective practice responses. If we are unable to, we act quickly and transparently to ensure a referral or feedback is obtained to move closer to an outcome that does work for all involved.

CAN ANYONE DO THIS?

The short answer is 'YES'. The term 'adventure' can be misleading. Some participants who have an affinity for nature may choose to be supported to bird watch in their local parks. Some may choose mountain bike riding on steep and technical terrain. The threshold for adventure will be different for each person / group and sessions can be adjusted accordingly to meet those needs.

IS THERE A MINIMUM OR MAXIMUM AGE LIMIT?

GAS currently works with children 12+ years, adolescents and adults.

ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?

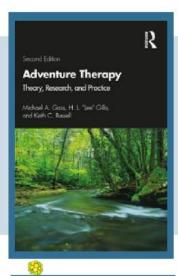
Contact us and we will endeavour to provide you with an answer.

Recommended resources

WEBSITES AND OTHER VIC-BASED ORGANISATIONS

- www.aabat.org.au Australian Association for Bush Adventure Therapy
- www.adventureworks.org.au Adventure Works Australia
- www.outdoorhealthcare.org.au Outdoor Healthcare
- www.berrystreet.org.au Berry Street Wilderness Program
- <u>www.each.com.au/service/wild-2/Each</u> EACH WILD Program
- www.outdoorsinc.org.au/ Out Doors Inc.
- www.gippslandadventuretherapy.com.au Gippsland Adventure Therapy

BOOKS

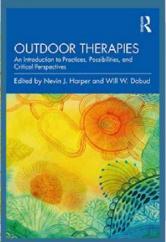


Adventure Therapy: Theory, Research and Practice - Michael Gass, "Lee" Gillis and Keith Russell (2020)

Now in its second edition, this text book provides a large volume of information substantiating the field of (Bush) Adventure Therapy. While aimed at health professionals, it is still an accessible read for many.

This book includes:

- · Evidence-based and informed research
- · Best practices in the field
- Real client cases and practical information

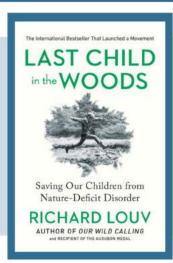


Outdoor Therapies: An Introduction... - Edited by Nevin Harper and Will Dobud (2020)

This recently-published work contains some of the world's leading practitioners in what the editors classify as 'Outdoor Therapies'. A short, yet considerably concise piece of work covering diverse practices.

This book includes:

- An overview of various practices
- World-leading practitioners
- · Evidence-based and informed research

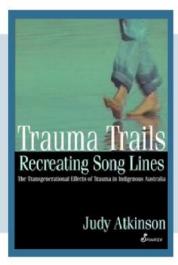


Last Child in the Woods - Richard Louv (2008)

This book provides an accessible read to understanding the importance of nature connection, especially for the health and well-being of our children. Louv was awarded the Audubon Medal in 2008 for his work, a medal awarded in the past to the likes of Rachel Carson and E.O Wilson.

This book includes:

- Well-researched and explained history
- Practical advice on how to help children
- A clearly-defined rationale for these practices

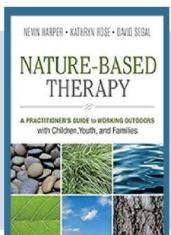


Trauma Trails: Recreating Song Lines - Judy Atkinson (2003)

This landmark work from Indigenous Professor Emeritus Judy Atkinson takes the reader on a journey to better understand the First People's of Australia, the very real impacts of colonialism and continued healing that is required for both people and Country as one.

This book includes:

- · Storytelling from First People's accounts
- Extensive research evidence
- Author's lifetime experience



Nature-Based Therapy: A Practitioners Guide... - Nevin Harper, Kathryn Rose and David Segal (2019)

Again another publication aimed at health professionals, although very accessible for those wanting to understand how nature-based practices operate. This book is written by Canadian based practitioners.

This book includes:

- Evidence-based practice and research
- Practical information
- Real case studies and lifetime experiences

JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

- Bowen, D., & Neill, J. (2013). A meta-analysis of adventure therapy outcomes and moderators. *The Open Psychology Journal*, 6(1), 28-53.
- Pryor, A., Carpenter, C., & Townsend, M. (2005). Outdoor education and bush adventure therapy: A socio-ecological approach to health and wellbeing. *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education*, 9(1), 3-13.
- Fernee, C., Gabrielsen, L., Andersen, A., & Mesel, T. (2017). Unpacking the black box of wilderness therapy: a realist synthesis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 27(1), 114-129.

What is Bush Adventure Therapy (BAT)?

How does it differ to disability and other mental health supports?

Who is it suitable for?

Where can I find more information on this?

Geelong Adventure Specialists (GAS) has provided specialty outdoor programs and experiences since 2013. In 2017 GAS became NDIS accredited, proudly contributing to the provision of diverse and innovative support options in the Geelong Region.

Since then we have seen a growing demand for our service to offer not only Disability Support, but increasingly tailored nature-based therapeutic experiences to meet the unique individual needs of our participants.

FOR BUSH ADVENTURE THERAPY

Contact Shelley:

intake@geelongadventurespecialists.com.au 0490 037 699 PO Box 2001 East Grovedale, 3216

GENERAL ENQUIRIES

For all other enquiries:

info@geelongadventurespecialists.com.au 0499 217 990 PO Box 2001 East Grovedale, 3216

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