

# Qualification Unit

This unit forms part of a regulated qualification.

**Unit Title:** Psychological Approaches in Outdoor and Adventure Therapy

**Unit Reference Number:** J/651/7995

**Level:** Four (4)

**Credit Value:** Eight (8)

**Minimum Guided Learning Hours:** 40

Learning Outcome (The Learner will):	Assessment Criterion (The Learner can):
1. Understand the psychological mechanisms underlying anxiety and emotional regulation	1.1 Define 'anxiety'
	1.2 Define 'emotional regulation'
	1.3 Describe the psychological and physiological mechanisms of anxiety and emotional dysregulation
	1.4 Explain key theories underpinning emotional regulation and distress tolerance
	1.5 Analyse how outdoor environments and nature-based interventions support emotional regulation and anxiety management
2. Understand cognitive-behavioural techniques for emotional exploration outdoors	2.1 Describe cognitive-behavioural approaches to exploration
	2.2 Explain how to apply cognitive reframing and thought-challenging techniques in outdoor and adventure-based sessions
3. Be able to apply emotional regulation techniques in Outdoor and Adventure Therapy	3.1 Describe the techniques for: a) practical self-soothing b) distress tolerance
	3.2 Analyse the use of practical self-soothing and distress tolerance techniques
	3.3 Explain how exposure to green spaces supports emotional regulation

	3.4	Describe how mindfulness can be safely used during outdoor therapeutic activities
	3.5	Describe how breathwork techniques can be safely used during outdoor therapeutic activities
4. Understand meaning-making processes in Outdoor and Adventure Therapy	4.1	Identify narrative therapy principles
	4.2	Explain how narrative therapy principles are applied through outdoor metaphor and storytelling
	4.3	Describe how nature-based narrative techniques can support emotional processing
	4.4	Identify an ACT principle
	4.5	Explain how ACT-based interventions are demonstrated in Outdoor and Adventure Therapy
	4.6	Describe the role of symbolic and play-based techniques in meaning-making
5. Be able to apply resilience-building and self-efficacy strategies in Outdoor and Adventure Therapy	5.1	Define resilience and self-efficacy in the context of Outdoor and Adventure Therapy
	5.2	Identify outdoor activities and interventions that promote resilience building and self-efficacy
	5.3	Analyse the use of strategies to support resilience building and self-efficacy development in outdoor and adventure sessions
6. Understand strategies to support the transfer of new skills into everyday life	6.1	Explain the concept of skill transfer and generalisation in Outdoor and Adventure Therapy
	6.2	Identify techniques that promote the transfer and maintenance of new skills after Outdoor and Adventure Therapy sessions

Indicative Content	
LO1	<p><b>AC 1.1</b> Learners <b>must</b> develop an understanding of emotional regulation and anxiety as both psychological and physiological processes.</p> <p><b>AC 1.2</b> Learners <b>must</b> explore the mechanisms involved in emotional dysregulation, including the fight-flight-freeze response, nervous system dysregulation, and cognitive distortions.</p> <p><b>AC 1.3</b> Key theories that underpin emotional regulation and distress tolerance <b>must</b> be covered, including Polyvagal Theory, the Window of Tolerance, the stress response, and the impacts of trauma and chronic stress.</p> <p><b>AC 1.4</b> Learners <b>must</b> understand how outdoor environments and nature-</p>

	<p>based interventions support emotional regulation and anxiety management by activating the parasympathetic nervous system, reducing cortisol levels, supporting co-regulation, and promoting sensory engagement with natural spaces.</p>
LO2	<p><b>AC 2.1</b> Learners <b>must</b> describe cognitive-behavioural approaches relevant to emotional exploration, including the identification of negative thought patterns, cognitive distortions, and maladaptive beliefs.</p> <p><b>AC 2.2</b> Learners <b>must</b> know how to apply techniques such as cognitive reframing and thought-challenging strategies within outdoor and adventure-based sessions. The focus should be on supporting clients to explore and shift unhelpful thought processes in a nature-based environment, using outdoor experiences to illustrate and reinforce cognitive flexibility.</p>
LO3	<p><b>AC 3.1</b> Learners <b>must</b> be able to describe the different techniques used.</p> <p><b>AC 3.2</b> Learners <b>must</b> be able to analyse the use of emotional regulation and distress tolerance techniques suited to Outdoor and Adventure Therapy.</p> <p><b>AC 3.3</b> Learners <b>must</b> describe how sensory connection to nature supports emotional self-regulation and stress recovery.</p> <p><b>AC 3.4 &amp; 3.5</b> Learners <b>must</b> describe strategies including grounding activities, mindfulness exercises and breathwork. The importance of trauma-sensitive delivery of mindfulness and breathwork techniques should also be covered, ensuring learners show they could apply regulation strategies safely and responsively during outdoor sessions.</p>
LO4	<p><b>AC 4.1 &amp; 4.2</b> Learners <b>must</b> identify narrative therapy principles and explain how they can be applied outdoors through metaphor, storytelling, and symbolic activities.</p> <p><b>AC 4.3</b> Learners <b>must</b> understand how nature-based narrative techniques can support emotional processing, identity exploration, and reframing of personal experiences.</p> <p><b>AC 4.4 &amp; 4.5</b> Learners <b>must</b> identify key Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) principles such as values clarification and radical acceptance, and <b>must</b> explain how ACT-based interventions can be adapted to outdoor settings using nature-based activities (demonstrated in Outdoor and Adventure Therapy).</p> <p><b>AC 4.6</b> Symbolic and play-based techniques, such as journey metaphors, tree of strengths activities, or creative storytelling walks, <b>must</b> be introduced as ways to support meaning-making and emotional growth.</p>
LO5	<p><b>AC 5.1</b> Learners <b>must</b> understand and define the concepts of resilience and self-efficacy within Outdoor and Adventure Therapy. They <b>must</b> identify how progressive challenges, achievement experiences, mastery tasks, and goal-setting activities can be used to build emotional resilience and belief in personal competence.</p> <p><b>AC 5.2</b> Learners <b>must</b> identify outdoor interventions that promote resilience, such as structured adventure tasks, graduated exposure to manageable challenges, and positive reinforcement through nature-based activities.</p>

	<p><b>AC 5.3</b> Strategies for supporting the development of resilience and self-efficacy <b>must</b> be analysed appropriately in sessions or simulated activities.</p>
LO6	<p><b>AC 6.1</b> Learners <b>must</b> explain the concept of skill transfer and generalisation within Outdoor and Adventure Therapy. They <b>must</b> understand how to support clients in recognising therapeutic gains made outdoors and applying these skills in daily life.</p> <p><b>AC 6.2</b> Techniques such as future planning, reflective consolidation, strength-based reviews, and metaphorical linking of outdoor achievements to real-world challenges <b>must</b> be understood. Learners <b>must</b> understand methods that promote the maintenance and transfer of emotional regulation skills, resilience strategies, and cognitive techniques beyond the therapy setting into clients' everyday environments.</p>