



NATURE-BASED EMPOWERING PHOTOGRAPHY (Paradigm-breaking methods)

This method utilises a nature-based approach, appreciating the concept of Empowering Photography developed by photographer Miina Savolainen in 1998. Empowering Photography is a pioneering example of arts-based social innovation.

In the context of the green transition, smartphone photography is used as a tool for observation. Health and care participants observe what they observe, thus structuring and organising their own and their colleagues' meta-awareness in a natural environment. Participants can examine themselves, their surroundings and their role in nature. Photography offers participants the opportunity to explore and strengthen their environmental identity through images, creating connections to nature and their inner selves.

What is required:

- Openness from participants to explore themselves and their environment through photography.
- Willingness to use photography and natural elements as means of expression.
- Opportunity to reflect on one's relationship with nature and related emotions through photographs.
- A natural environment where participants can take photographs and experience connections with nature.

Level of difficulty: 1-3. The method does not require prior experience in photography. It is open to anyone willing to explore themselves and their environment through photography.

Time required: 30–90 minutes, depending on the depth of photography and reflection, and the number of photos participants take and examine. More time can be allocated for deeper reflection.

Materials:

- Smartphone with a camera
- Natural environment (forest, park, coastline, etc.)
- Opportunity to write notes or keep a journal
- (Printing photos or using a projector if sharing and reflecting on images collectively)

Participants: At least 3 people, but it works best in small groups or individually. The number of participants can vary, but the group size should allow each person time and space for reflection.

How to use:

1. Introduction: Start by presenting the method and its purpose. Explain that the aim is to explore personal feelings and connections with nature through photography.
2. Photography: Participants go into nature and take photos of their favourite places and details of nature. The aim is to focus on the details.



3. Reflection: Once the photos are taken, participants consider what the images tell them about themselves and their environment. How do they experience the connection with nature through the images? They can write down their reflections or discuss in small groups.
4. Sharing images: Group members can share their photos and discuss them, opening opportunities for collective reflection and understanding.
5. In-depth discussion: Discuss the meanings of the photos and roles and experiences with nature. How do natural elements affect the participants?

When to use:

- At the beginning: Can be used for self-reflection and getting to know group members
- Supporting change: A good method for strengthening environmental partnership and self-esteem in change situations
- Holistic wellbeing: The method can support mental and physical wellbeing, especially for improving connection with nature

Why to use:

- Self-awareness: Helps participants examine their identity and relationship with nature
- Empowerment: The nature-based approach and photography provide participants with tools for self-expression and empowerment
- Connection to nature: Strengthens the connection to the environment and the effects of nature
- Supporting creativity: Offers a creative and arts-based way to explore personal feelings and experiences

How to document:

- Photographs: The photos taken are the main part of the documentation. They can serve as the basis for discussion and reflection
- Notes: Participants can write their reflections on the significance of the photos and their experiences
- Discussions: Group discussions can provide additional documentation that can be recorded in notes

The roots of the method can be found here: The method is based on Miina Savolainen's Empowering Photography concept (www.voimauttavavalokuva.net), which focuses on creating and reflecting on photographs. Savolainen's method has been influenced by artistic and social innovation approaches, where new perspectives on individual experiences and self-esteem are opened through photography. Empowering Photography can serve as a tool that opens new ways for participants to perceive themselves and their connection with nature and society.