



PROJECT SOOTHE:

A Bank of Visual Images Created for and Created by the Public Using the Innovative Citizen Scientist Approach



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 projectsoothe.com

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Introduction and Aims

Project Soothe bridges the boundaries between art and science in the digital age. Our goal is to create a bank of images for use in psychotherapy and research. We specifically collect images that make people feel ‘soothed’ using an innovative Citizen Scientist approach via our website. Self-soothe is an important concept in compassion theories.

Methods

This is a mixed methods study gathering qualitative photographic, descriptive and quantitative Likert scale data from members of the public to identify images deemed ‘universally soothing’. Survey data is also gathered to gain a better understanding of the concept of ‘self-soothe’.

Results

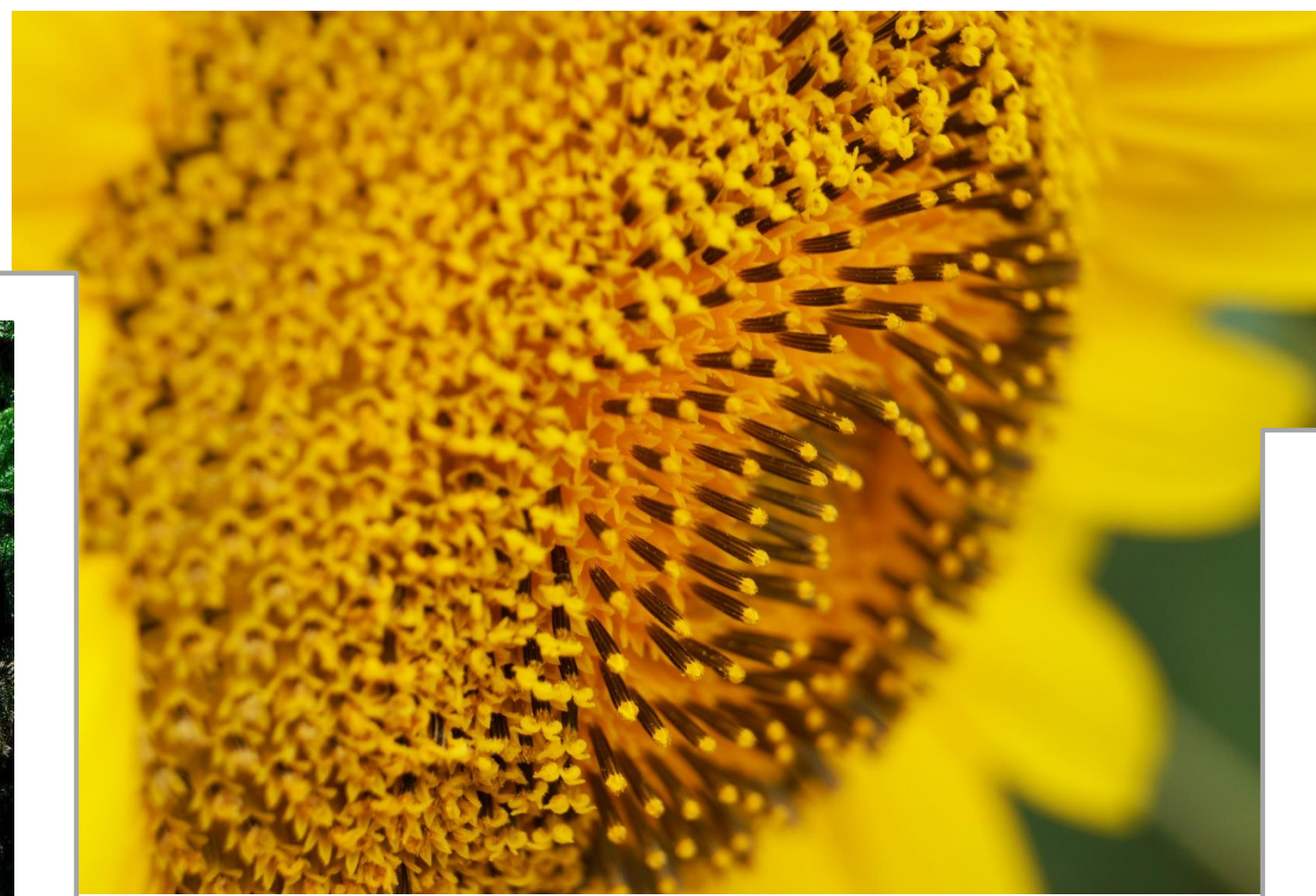
Over 520 soothing images have been digitally submitted so far by people aged 21 to 78 (male 8.32%, female 88.84%, unknown 2.84%) from 23 countries. The public have rated these images for their soothability, via our website, 8689 times and completed our survey over 165 times. We have also engaged over 930 followers on social media including the First Minister of Scotland. The top 5 themes of images submitted are highlighted below:



No. 1
Landscapes



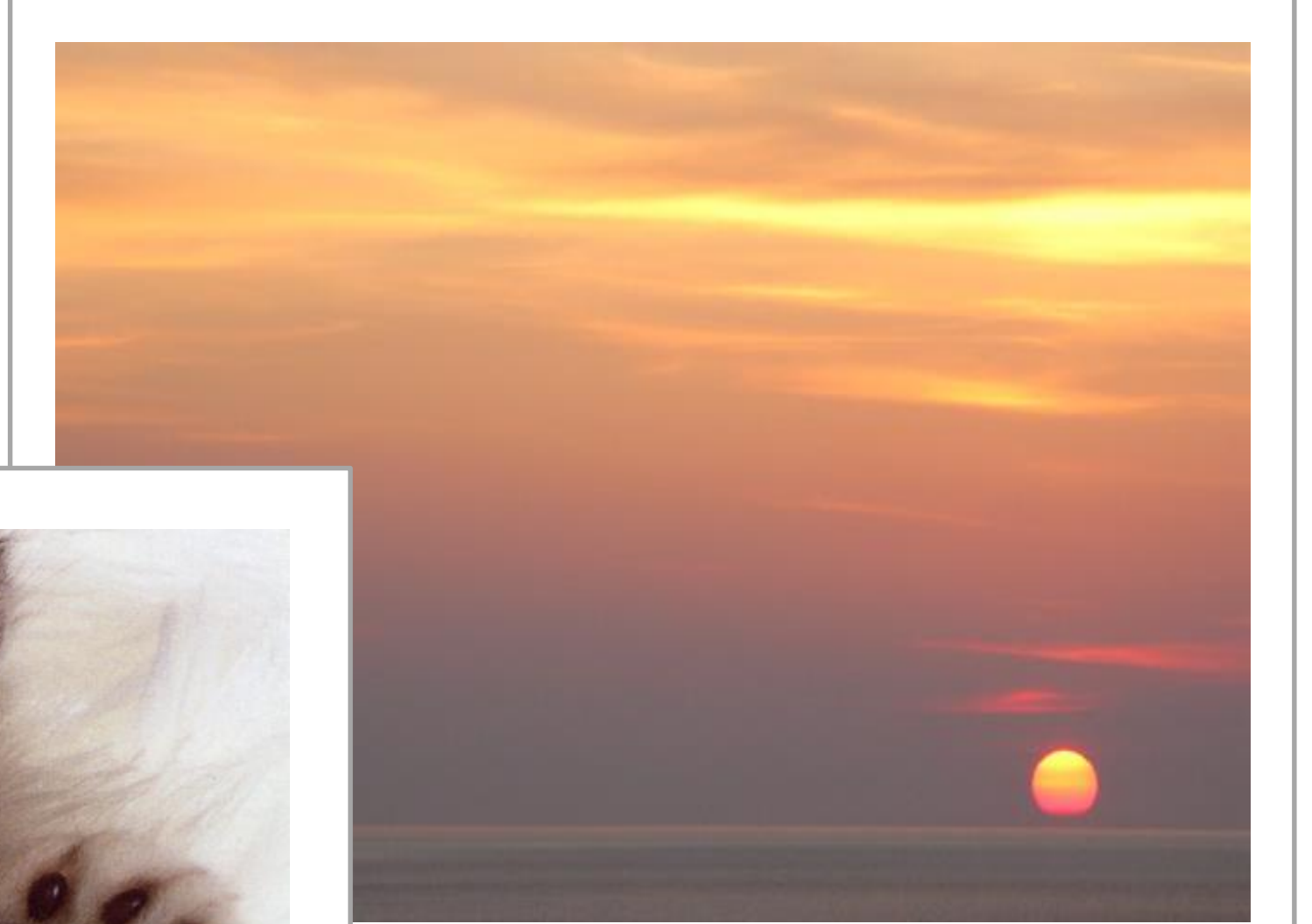
No. 2
Water Features



No. 3
Flowers & Trees



No. 4
Animals



No. 5
Sky

Discussion

Our online Citizen Science approach has allowed us to achieve a more representative sample than in traditional laboratory approaches. Our successful public engagement suggests that ‘soothe’ is a concept that people can resonate with and relate to. It also demonstrates that the digital age offers new opportunities for mental health research.

Future Directions

During the next phase of this research, funded by the British Academy and the University of Edinburgh, Project Soothe will evaluate the potential clinical value that each submitted image offers, with a view to testing images classified as ‘universally soothing’ as a clinical tool for psychotherapy.