Nature can reduce anxiety and boost mental health

12th September 2024

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We all know that being in nature is good for us. New research suggests that being in the natural world for just 10 minutes can help our mental health. The research also says spending time with others in natural environments can help relationships. Even being in city parks and gardening can make a difference. A study from the City University of Hong Kong found that nature increases how we see other people as "fully human". The researchers say this makes us help and cooperate with others more. We become more sociable. This makes us feel better about ourselves. We feel more positive, so our mental health improves. Helping other people can also reduce our stress and anxiety.

Mental health is an issue that is growing around the world. More people are suffering from anxiety, depression and other psychological disorders. The National Alliance on Mental Illness in the USA reported that one in five Americans has mental health problems. The research contains good advice on how nature can help with these issues. It says time spent among trees or in fields is linked with better sleep and improved concentration. One study from Chiba University in Japan found that even flowers have positive effects on mental health. Researchers found that employees who had a vase of roses on their desk became calmer and less stressed after just four minutes.

Sources: psypost.org / *theccoldown.com* / *theguardian.com*

Writing

We should spend longer in nature than on smartphones. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

being in nature / the natural world / mental health / parks / gardening / help / stress / anxiety / depression / advice / trees / fields / concentration / sleep / roses / desk

True / False

1) The article says a minute in nature can help our mental health. T / F

2) Researchers say 10 minutes in the garden can help our mental health. T / F

3) People who do not spend time in nature are not fully human. T / F

4) Researchers say helping people can increase our stress. T / F

5) Mental health issues are decreasing around the world. T / F

6) Spending time among trees can help us sleep better. T / F

7) A study from a French university said flowers help our health. T / F

8) Having a vase of roses on our desk can help our mental health. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

1.	suggests	a.	problem
2.	relationships	b.	work together
3.	cooperate	c.	focus
4.	sociable	d.	worry
5.	anxiety	e.	family ties
6.	issue	f.	illnesses
7.	disorders	g.	workers
8.	linked	h.	shows
9.	concentration	i.	connected
10.	employees	j.	friendly

Discussion – Student A

a) What do you think about what you read?

b) Why do you think mental health issues are growing?

c) What advice do you have for people with depression?

d) Where are your favourite places to go in nature?

e) What can we do to get better sleep?

f) How do flowers in your home make you feel?

g) How much do you worry about nature disappearing?

h) What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Phrase Match

1. We all know that being
2. being in city parks and gardening can make
3. We become more
4. This makes us feel better
5. Helping other people can also reduce
6. More people are
7. psychological
8. The research contains good
9. flowers have positive
10. a vase

a. sociable
b. advice
c. our stress and anxiety
d. of roses
e. suffering from anxiety
f. in nature is good for us
g. effects on mental health
h. disorders
i. about ourselves
j. a difference

Discussion – Student B

a) What do you think of nature?
b) How does your feeling change when you are in nature?
c) Do you worry about your mental health?
d) How do you feel when you are in nature with other people?
e) What do you think of gardening?
f) Are you a sociable person?
g) Do you feel positive about yourself?
h) What makes you feel stressed?

Spelling

1. new research sseugstg that
2. natural vmtsenernnio
3. nature reenisacs how we see other people
4. help and roopteace with others
5. We become more scialoeb
6. reduce our stress and xtianey
7. More people are fgnfsuire
8. ospnreeids and other psychological disorders
9. The research contains good cadiev
10. positive ftfeces
11. a seva of roses
12. became camrel and less stressed

Role Play

Role A – Forests
You think forests are the best places to be in nature. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their places. Also, tell the others which is the least beneficial of these (and why): city parks, beaches or gardens.

Role B – City Parks
You think city parks are the best places to be in nature. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their places. Also, tell the others which is the least beneficial of these (and why): forests, beaches or gardens.

Role C – Beaches
You think beaches are the best places to be in nature. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their places. Also, tell the others which is the least beneficial of these (and why): city parks, forests or gardens.

Role D – Gardens
You think gardens are the best places to be in nature. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their places. Also, tell the others which is the least beneficial of these (and why): city parks, beaches or forests.

Speaking – Being in Nature

Rank these with your partner. Put the best places to be in nature at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Jungles
- Mountains
- Beaches
- River banks

- Forests
- Gardens
- City parks
- Deserts

Answers – Synonym Match

1.	h	2.	e	3.	b	4.	j	5.	d
6.	a	7.	f	8.	i	9.	c	10.	g

Answers – True False

1	F	2	T	3	F	4	F	5	F	6	T	7	F	8	T

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.