

Woodland gives city kids better mental health

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Children who live near woodland in a city have better mental health than children who do not. Researchers say children who visit and experience the great outdoors every day develop better thinking skills. They

also have a lower risk of behavioural and emotional problems. Lead author of the research Mikael Maes, from University College London, talked about his research. He said: "These findings contribute to our understanding of the natural environment as an important protective factor for [a child's] cognitive development and mental health." Another report author, Professor Kate Jones, said seeing and hearing the sounds of nature provides psychological benefits for children.

In the four-year study, researchers studied 3,568 children aged between 9 and 15 at 31 schools in London. They examined the links between the natural environment and thinking skills, mental health and overall well-being. The researchers calculated how going to woodland and parks, and "blue space" like rivers, lakes and the sea, affected children's health. They asked children to take memory-based tests. The children who visited woodland every day scored higher on the tests. They also had a 17 per cent lower risk of emotional and behavioural problems. Mr Maes recommended all children experience "forest bathing" or "forest therapy". This is "being immersed in the sights, sounds and smells of a forest".

Sources: cnn.com / phys.org / zmescience.com

Writing

All towns need to grow more trees. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

children / woodland / mental health / researchers / outdoors / emotional / sounds / environment / thinking / skills / space / memory / tests / forest / bathing / therapy

True / False

- 1) The article says children who live in cities have poor mental health. T / F
- 2) Children who spend time in the great outdoors have better thinking skills. T / F
- 3) The research is from a university of forestry in Canada. T / F
- 4) A professor said the sounds of nature benefit children psychologically. T / F
- 5) Researchers looked at the mental health of over 3,500 children. T / F
- 6) The researchers said woodland was better for children than the sea. T / F
- 7) Children who went to woodlands did better on memory-based tests. T / F
- 8) A researcher said forest therapy was much better than forest bathing. T / F

Synonym Match

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

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| 1. near | a. connections |
| 2. risk | b. immersed |
| 3. understanding | c. advantages |
| 4. protective | d. worked out |
| 5. benefits | e. chance |
| 6. links | f. psychological |
| 7. overall | g. close to |
| 8. calculated | h. safeguarding |
| 9. emotional | i. general |
| 10. buried | j. awareness |

Discussion – Student A

- a) How important is woodland to you?
- b) How often did you play in woodland when you were younger?
- c) How can woodland benefit children?
- d) What helped your thinking skills to develop?
- e) How does the natural environment help mental health?
- f) How do the sounds of nature make you feel?
- g) How do the sounds of the city make you feel?
- h) Is the real jungle or the concrete jungle better?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Children who live near woodland in a city | a. well-being |
| 2. experience the great | b. the sounds of nature |
| 3. a lower risk of behavioural and | c. scored higher on the tests |
| 4. an important protective | d. and smells of a forest |
| 5. seeing and hearing | e. emotional problems |
| 6. mental health and overall | f. experience forest bathing |
| 7. They asked children to take | g. have better mental health |
| 8. children who visited woodland every day | h. memory-based tests |
| 9. recommended all children | i. outdoors |
| 10. immersed in the sights, sounds | j. factor |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- Is it better to grow up in a city or the countryside?
- How might cities affect children's health?
- Which is better - the countryside or the seaside?
- How do you do on memory-based tests?
- What do you think of the idea of 'forest bathing'?
- Would you like to be immersed in the sights, sounds and smells of woods?
- What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Spelling

- experience the great sudtrooo
- evdploe better thinking skills
- antomoeil problems
- an important protective acrfto
- hearing the sounds of anuret
- psychological iseetfnb for children
- They iemdeanx the links
- The researchers lleduactca how
- fdecafet children's health
- take mmyreo-based tests
- forest arhpyet
- the ssghti, sounds and smells

Answers – Synonym Match

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

Role Play

Role A – Woodland

You think woodland is the best way to improve thinking skills. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): exercise, sleep or apps.

Role B – Exercise

You think exercise is the best way to improve thinking skills. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): woodland, sleep or apps.

Role C – Sleep

You think sleep is the best way to improve thinking skills. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): exercise, woodland or apps.

Role D – Apps

You think apps are the best way to improve thinking skills. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): exercise, sleep or woodland.

Speaking – Thinking Skills

Rank these with your partner. Put the best things to improve thinking skills at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|------------|----------------|
| • Woodland | • Meditation |
| • Bananas | • Music |
| • Exercise | • A nice chair |
| • Sleep | • Apps |

Answers – True False

1 F	2 T	3 F	4 T	5 T	6 F	7 T	8 F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.