NEWS LESSON

Why a Walk in Nature Is Easier for Some of Us



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Where would you go for a walk if you had twenty minutes?
2. Would you rather walk somewhere familiar or explore a new route?
3. What helps you notice your surroundings?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**randomised**	☐	A	done in an organised way, following a clear method
2	**systematic**	☐	B	promises that something will definitely happen
3	**cognitive**	☐	C	people who decide official plans and rules
4	**guarantees**	☐	D	chosen or arranged by chance, not by choice
5	**obstacles**	☐	E	things that block your way or make progress hard
6	**policymakers**	☐	F	fair treatment of everyone
7	**justice**	☐	G	connected with thinking and understanding
8	**exposed**	☐	H	open and not protected from wind or weather

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

A 2025 review found stronger evidence for mood than for attention or stress. Not everyone has a safe, pleasant park within reach.

1 A walk outdoors can change the feel of a day. The difficult question is what does the helping: the movement, the company, the time away from a screen or the surroundings themselves? Researchers have tried to separate those effects. The results are more useful than the promise that nature fixes everything.

2 A systematic review published in the Journal of Environmental Psychology in November 2025 assessed randomised studies of natural environments and adult wellbeing. Researchers found relatively strong evidence that exposure to nature improved mood, while findings concerning memory and attention were inconsistent. Measures of stress produced mixed results. The contrast is important: feeling emotionally better after a walk does not necessarily imply improved performance on a cognitive test.

3 There are plausible explanations for why natural places feel restorative. They can reduce exposure to some urban demands, invite gentle physical activity and encourage a different relationship with our surroundings. Yet experiments struggle to tease apart these ingredients. Is the benefit produced by greenery, walking, social company, reduced noise or a combination of all four? Still, research findings are averages, not guarantees. A crowded park, unsafe footpaths or unpleasant weather can change the experience considerably, while mental-health difficulties rarely have one straightforward solution.

4 A second 2025 review also suggested modest attention-restoration benefits in some settings, with substantial variation across studies. These differences underline why headlines should not present scientific uncertainty as failure. It is entirely possible for an activity to improve mood while offering less predictable effects on other aspects of cognition.

5 There is an environmental justice dimension too. Advice to visit nature assumes that attractive, safe spaces are available and accessible. Residents of neighbourhoods dominated by traffic, poor maintenance or limited public transport may come up against obstacles that personal motivation cannot solve. That raises a wider policy question. If accessible green space contributes to wellbeing, its availability should not depend entirely on someone's income, neighbourhood or ability to travel.

6 The uneven availability of nature also illustrates why wellbeing cannot be reduced to personal choice. Residents of affluent neighbourhoods may have access to maintained parks and quiet walking routes, while others must negotiate traffic, pollution or unsafe public spaces. The potential benefits of exposure are therefore partly determined by decisions about urban planning, funding and transport.

7 Moreover, the type of environment matters: a crowded urban park, an exposed coastline and a remote forest provide different experiences, and there is no one-size-fits-all setting. Rather than interpreting the research as another instruction to individuals, policymakers might regard it as evidence supporting accessible, well-designed public spaces. A recommendation to spend time outdoors is more meaningful when the outdoors offers somewhere pleasant and safe to go.

8 The evidence therefore supports a measured conclusion. Natural environments can contribute to wellbeing, especially emotional wellbeing, but they are neither a guaranteed psychological treatment nor a substitute for healthcare. Protecting accessible parks and public green spaces may be a sensible social investment, even without promising that every visitor will emerge healthier, calmer and more intelligent.

Sources: Journal of Environmental Psychology. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Both 2025 reviews gave strong support to the idea that nature improves attention. T F NG
2. The writer argues that the research should mainly be used to urge individuals to spend more time outdoors. T F NG
3. Advice to visit nature would be harder to follow in a neighbourhood with heavy traffic and few public transport links. T F NG
4. The reviews included studies carried out in more than one country. T F NG
5. The two reviews appeared in the same month. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

dominated	exposure	modest	negotiate	plausible	substantial	underline	undermine

1. Several _____ explanations were put forward, but none could be proved.
2. The scandal served to _____ how little oversight the industry had.
3. Wheelchair users often have to _____ broken pavements and steep kerbs.
4. The new tax produced a _____ increase in revenue, far more than had been forecast.
5. The skyline was _____ by a vast glass tower.
6. Prolonged _____ to loud noise can damage hearing.

6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. The effects of the treatment proved far less _____ than the doctors had hoped. **(PREDICT)**
2. The council was criticised for years of _____ cuts that left the footpaths in poor condition. **(MAINTAIN)**
3. The _____ of the old canal took nearly a decade. **(RESTORE)**
4. Critics questioned the _____ of conclusions drawn from one small sample. **(RELIABLE)**
5. The scheme's success is wholly _____ on volunteers. **(DEPEND)**

7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Test each pair for register as well as meaning. Fluent writers expect a particular adjective, verb or noun in formal phrases.

investment	measured	motivation	planning	raises	solution	uncertainty

1. The article _____ an important question about who gets to use parks.
2. The minister gave a _____ response, neither dismissing nor welcoming the report.
3. Many economists regard early childhood education as a sound social _____ .
4. City councils employ specialists in urban _____ to decide where new homes and parks should go.
5. There is rarely a straightforward _____ to complex social problems.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What would make it easier for more people to spend time outdoors?
2. Does a walk need to be somewhere beautiful to be worthwhile?
3. Would you protect a daily walk if it meant leaving another task unfinished?

9 Role-play: our local park

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the council officer

You have money for one job in the park this year: new lights, new benches or a new path. Ask the resident two questions, then decide what to offer. You can say yes, no, or yes to part of the request.

Student B · the resident

The park near your home is hard to enjoy. The path is broken and there are no benches. Ask the council to fix it, explain who needs it most, and try to get a date.

Useful phrases

I'd like to talk about the park near my house.
It's hard for older people to use it.
We've only got money for one thing this year.
What matters most to you?
I'm afraid I can't promise a date.
Could we agree on a small first step?

Afterwards, tell the class what the council decided and whether you think it was fair.

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 D · 2 A · 3 G · 4 B · 5 E · 6 C · 7 F · 8 H

4 True, false or not given

1 F · 2 F · 3 T · 4 NG · 5 NG

5 Vocabulary

1 plausible · 2 underline · 3 negotiate · 4 substantial · 5 dominated · 6 exposure

6 Word forms

1 predictable · 2 maintenance · 3 restoration · 4 reliability · 5 dependent

7 Language focus

1 raises · 2 measured · 3 investment · 4 planning · 5 solution

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