NEWS LESSON

A Walk in the Park Can Lift Your Mood



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	**evidence**	☐	A	giving all your attention to one thing
2	**review**	☐	B	tests that scientists do to learn something
3	**access**	☐	C	facts or signs that show something is true
4	**disability**	☐	D	a way to reach or use something
5	**opportunity**	☐	E	a careful study of what other people have found
6	**experiments**	☐	F	worries about something
7	**concerns**	☐	G	a chance to do something good
8	**concentration**	☐	H	a condition that makes some activities harder for a person

3 Read

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

Researchers found good evidence that time outside makes people feel calmer. The evidence for memory and concentration was much weaker.

1 Imagine that you have had a stressful morning. You could sit inside and scroll through your phone, or you could go for a short walk through a park. Many people believe that fresh air and trees will make them feel better. But is there any science behind this idea?

2 Researchers have studied how time in nature affects our minds. A review published in the Journal of Environmental Psychology in 2025 examined experiments with adults. It found good evidence that natural places can improve people's mood. People may feel calmer or experience fewer negative emotions after spending time outside.

3 However, the results were not the same for everything. The evidence that nature improves memory and concentration was much weaker. Studies of stress also produced mixed results. This means a walk in the woods may help someone feel happier without automatically making them better at difficult mental tasks.

4 There are many possible reasons why a walk feels good. Moving the body can be enjoyable, and getting away from noise and traffic may help people relax. Trees, birds and water also give our attention something different to focus on. Not everyone needs a mountain or a large forest to experience these things.

5 Of course, access to nature is not equal. Some people live beside beautiful parks, while others have to put up with busy roads and few green spaces nearby. Bad weather, disability and safety concerns can make outdoor activities harder too.

6 It is also worth remembering that we do not all experience nature in the same way. One person may feel happy beside the sea. Another may prefer a peaceful garden or a mountain path. Someone who lives in a crowded city might enjoy a small local park because it is easy to visit every day.

7 Nature can be a shared experience too. Walking with a friend gives people time to catch up without being distracted by phones or loud music. If a park is nearby, you do not need expensive equipment to use it. But towns and cities must take care of these spaces so that they are welcoming to children, older adults and people with disabilities.

8 Nature is not a cure for every problem, but it may offer a simple opportunity to feel better. Perhaps the next time a day feels difficult, a short walk is worth trying. You do not need to count every step or turn the experience into another task.

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. The evidence for memory and concentration was equally strong. T F NG
2. Not everybody can reach good green spaces easily. T F NG
3. The review suggested that time in nature can lift people's mood. T F NG
4. The review was paid for by a government. T F NG
5. The writer says people must count every step for a walk to help. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

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

crowded **cure** **distracted** **equipment** **noisy** **route** **welcoming**

1. There is no magic _____ for a bad mood, but a walk can help.
2. It is hard to read a book when you are _____ by loud music.
3. The beach was so _____ that there was no space to put down a towel.
4. The new library is bright and _____ , so everyone wants to visit.
5. Swimming is cheap, but some sports need special _____ .

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Researchers _____ how time in nature affects our minds for many years. (STUDY)
2. A review _____ in 2025 examined experiments with adults. (PUBLISH)
3. People may feel calmer after _____ time outside. (SPEND)
4. Last week, a friend _____ me to a small park near her house. (TAKE)
5. You do not need _____ every step. (COUNT)

7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Collocations are words that go together naturally. Learn the pair, not just the single word.

air	emotions	friends	roads	spaces	tasks	weather

1. Open a window to let in some fresh _____ .
2. I try to avoid walking along busy _____ with lots of traffic.
3. Hiking is difficult in bad _____ , especially when it rains all day.
4. Many cities are planting trees to create more green _____ for residents.
5. Shouting at people rarely helps you deal with negative _____ .

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

4 True, false or not given

1 F · 2 T · 3 T · 4 NG · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 cure · 2 distracted · 3 crowded · 4 welcoming · 5 equipment

6 Verb forms

1 have studied or have been studying · 2 published · 3 spending · 4 took · 5 to count

7 Language focus

1 air · 2 roads · 3 weather · 4 spaces · 5 emotions

This lesson is free. If it saved you time, you can support johnplusnews at **ko-fi.com/johnplusenglish**