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Swim with dolphins to reduce stress

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26 November, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Swim with dolphins to reduce stress

A newly published study conducted in Honduras reports that swimming with dolphins helps alleviate stress and lifts depression. Researchers from Leicester University in England found that patients suffering from depression became happier after they swam with dolphins. Time spent in the water with the aquatic creatures led to falling levels of depressive symptoms in 15 patients diagnosed with mild or moderate depression. None of the participants took antidepressants or had psychotherapy for four weeks before taking part in the study. Researchers reported a noticeable lifting of depression after just two weeks of the dolphin therapy. They say this supports the theory of biophilia – or how human wellbeing is dependent on interacting with the natural environment.

The study entailed observing two groups of patients – one played with dolphins, the other simply swam alone in a pool. The dolphin therapy lifted depression considerably quicker than is the norm for counseling sessions: Researchers said: “Depressive symptoms improved after two weeks....In conventional therapy - psychotherapy or drug therapy - symptoms usually improve substantially after four weeks.” Researcher Michael Reveley attributed this to positive therapeutic feelings created by playing with dolphins. He said the creatures are “highly intelligent animals who are capable of complex interactions, and regard humans positively.” He also said animals could be used to treat other psychiatric illnesses. He added: “We need to remember that we are part of the natural world, and interacting with it can have a beneficial effect on us.”

Source: <http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/331/7527/1231>

WARM-UPS

1. DOLPHIN SEARCH: Walk around the class and ask other students for information on dolphins. Find out as much as you can. After you have finished, sit with your partner(s) and share your information. What were you happy about learning? What surprised you most about dolphins?

2. ANIMAL THERAPY: How can animals help us feel good? Do you think animals could be useful to treat mental illnesses? In pairs / groups, discuss how the following animals could help make us feel better. Which animals do you think would make you feel better?

- Dolphins
- Elephants
- Dogs
- Baby chickens
- Hamsters
- Fluffy white rabbits
- Horses
- Cats

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Honduras / swimming / dolphins / stress / depression / psychotherapy / wellbeing / natural environment / drugs / researchers / creatures / intelligent animals / animals

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. DOLPHIN: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "dolphin". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. DOING THINGS: Would you like to swim with dolphins? What things would you like to do with animals? With your partner(s), talk about which of these things you'd love or hate to do and why:

- Swim with dolphins
- Soar with eagles
- Hunt with lions
- Work with ants
- Relax with koalas
- Gallop with horses
- Climb with monkeys
- Scavenge with cockroaches
- Trek deserts with camels
- Be busy with bees

6. BIOPHILIA OPINIONS: Do you agree or disagree with these statements about the natural world? Talk about them with your partner(s).

- a. Living in the natural world would increase my stress.
- b. Modern medicines and therapies are the best forms of treatment.
- c. It is impossible for most people to have dolphin or other animal therapy.
- d. Loving and helping other people is better therapy than swimming with dolphins.
- e. Not seeing trees and fields makes us less human.
- f. People who are depressed or very stressed should buy a pet.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. People in Honduras swim with dolphins every day to reduce stress. T / F
- b. A study reports dolphins became happier after swimming with people. T / F
- c. Participants took antidepressant pills for four weeks during the study. T / F
- d. The study suggests human wellbeing is intertwined with nature. T / F
- e. Dolphin therapy in the study entailed watching dolphins play in a pool. T / F
- f. Depressive symptoms disappeared overnight after dolphin therapy. T / F
- g. Dolphins generally regard humans with suspicion. T / F
- h. A researcher recommends using animals to treat psychiatric illnesses. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-----------------|------------|
| a. alleviate | average |
| b. aquatic | health |
| c. creatures | marine |
| d. noticeable | involved |
| e. wellbeing | orthodox |
| f. entailed | observable |
| g. norm | relieve |
| h. conventional | heal |
| i. attributed | beasts |
| j. treat | credited |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| a. helps alleviate stress | observing two groups of patients |
| b. Time spent in the water | interacting with the natural environment |
| c. diagnosed with mild | psychotherapy for four weeks |
| d. took antidepressants or had | treat other psychiatric illnesses |
| e. human wellbeing is dependent on | with the aquatic creatures |
| f. The study entailed | capable of complex interactions |
| g. dolphin therapy lifted depression | and lifts depression |
| h. symptoms usually improve | considerably quicker than is the norm |
| i. highly intelligent animals who are | or moderate depression |
| j. animals could be used to | substantially after four weeks |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Swim with dolphins to reduce stress

A newly published study _____ in Honduras reports that swimming with dolphins helps alleviate stress and _____ depression. Researchers from Leicester University in England found that patients _____ from depression became happier after they swam with dolphins. Time spent in the water with the aquatic creatures led to falling levels of depressive _____ in 15 patients diagnosed with mild or _____ depression. None of the participants took antidepressants or had psychotherapy for four weeks before taking part in the _____. Researchers reported a noticeable lifting of depression after just two weeks of the dolphin therapy. They say this _____ the theory of biophilia – or how human _____ is dependent on interacting with the natural environment.

moderate
suffering
supports
conducted
symptoms
lifts
study
wellbeing

The study _____ observing two groups of patients – one played with dolphins, the other _____ swam alone in a pool. The dolphin therapy lifted depression considerably quicker than is the _____ for counseling sessions: Researchers said: “Depressive symptoms improved after two weeks....In conventional therapy - psychotherapy or _____ therapy - symptoms usually improve substantially after four weeks.” Researcher Michael Reveley attributed this to _____ therapeutic feelings created by playing with dolphins. He said the creatures are “highly intelligent animals who are _____ of complex interactions, and regard humans positively.” He also said animals could be used to _____ other psychiatric illnesses. He added: “We need to remember that we are part of the natural world, and interacting with it can have a beneficial _____ on us.”

treat
norm
positive
entailed
effect
drug
simply
capable

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Swim with dolphins to reduce stress

A newly published study conducted in _____ reports that swimming with dolphins helps _____ stress and lifts depression. Researchers from Leicester University in England found that patients suffering from depression became happier after they swam with dolphins. Time spent in the water with the _____ creatures led to falling levels of depressive symptoms in 15 patients diagnosed with mild or _____ depression. None of the participants took antidepressants or had psychotherapy for four weeks before taking part in the study. Researchers reported a _____ lifting of depression after just two weeks of the dolphin therapy. They say this supports the theory of biophilia – or how human _____ is dependent on interacting with the natural environment.

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AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'mild'** and **'moderate'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "STRESS AND NATURAL WORLD" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about stress and the effects the natural world has on our feelings.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| • conducted | • pool |
| • suffering | • norm |
| • falling | • substantially |
| • four weeks | • complex |
| • lifting | • treat |
| • wellbeing | • beneficial |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Do you like dolphins?
- c. Would you like to swim with dolphins?
- d. Why do you think swimming with dolphins has a positive effect on our wellbeing?
- e. What do you do to relieve your stress?
- f. Do you ever suffer from anxiety or depression?
- g. Why do some people with seemingly happy lives become depressed?
- h. What are the symptoms of depression?
- i. What effect does the countryside and nature have on your feelings?
- j. What have you been most depressed about in your life?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. What other animals do you think could be used to treat stress and depression?
- d. In what other ways do you think doctors could use animals to help patients?
- e. Do you think dolphins can understand when someone is depressed?
- f. Do you think dolphins are more or less intelligent than humans?
- g. Do you think people should get back to nature?
- h. What kinds of stress does living in cities give you / people?
- i. How often and in what ways do you interact with the natural world?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

ANIMAL THERAPY: Imagine you are an expert in how animals can be used to make humans feel better. You know how animals can change people’s state of mind and cure many illnesses. With your “animal therapy expert” partners, discuss which animals could be used to help in the problems below and describe the therapies:

PROBLEM	ANIMAL	THERAPY
Depression		
Lack of confidence		
Fear of heights		
Insomnia		
Hay fever		
Morning sickness		
Bullying		
The forgetting of English vocabulary		

- Change partners and compare and share your ideas and give each other feedback. Focus on why the therapies might not work.
- Decide on the best animal and therapy for each problem.
- Make and give a presentation about the best therapy you have.
- In pairs / groups, discuss the content and quality of the presentations and vote on the one you thought was best.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on dolphins. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. ANIMAL THERAPY: Describe a problem you have in your life (physical, mental or personal). Design an imagined therapy for how you think animals could help you with this problem. What abilities do animals have that could help you? Explain what you wrote to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all have similar ideas?

4. DOLPHIN ME: You are a dolphin. Write your dolphin diary/journal for a day in your life. Write also about what you think of humans. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. F c. F d. T e. F f. F g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------|------------|
| a. alleviate | relieve |
| b. aquatic | marine |
| c. creatures | beasts |
| d. noticeable | observable |
| e. wellbeing | health |
| f. entailed | involved |
| g. norm | average |
| h. conventional | orthodox |
| i. attributed | credited |
| j. treat | heal |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| a. helps alleviate stress | and lifts depression |
| b. Time spent in the water | with the aquatic creatures |
| c. diagnosed with mild | or moderate depression |
| d. took antidepressants or had | psychotherapy for four weeks |
| e. human wellbeing is dependent on | interacting with the natural environment |
| f. The study entailed | observing two groups of patients |
| g. dolphin therapy lifted depression | substantially after four weeks |
| h. symptoms usually improve | considerably quicker than is the norm |
| i. highly intelligent animals who are | capable of complex interactions |
| j. animals could be used to | treat other psychiatric illnesses |

GAP FILL:

Swim with dolphins to reduce stress

A newly published study **conducted** in Honduras reports that swimming with dolphins helps alleviate stress and **lifts** depression. Researchers from Leicester University in England found that patients **suffering** from depression became happier after they swam with dolphins. Time spent in the water with the aquatic creatures led to falling levels of depressive **symptoms** in 15 patients diagnosed with mild or **moderate** depression. None of the participants took antidepressants or had psychotherapy for four weeks before taking part in the **study**. Researchers reported a noticeable lifting of depression after just two weeks of the dolphin therapy. They say this **supports** the theory of biophilia – or how human **wellbeing** is dependent on interacting with the natural environment.

The study **entailed** observing two groups of patients – one played with dolphins, the other **simply** swam alone in a pool. The dolphin therapy lifted depression considerably quicker than is the **norm** for counseling sessions: Researchers said: “Depressive symptoms improved after two weeks....In conventional therapy - psychotherapy or **drug** therapy - symptoms usually improve substantially after four weeks.” Researcher Michael Reveley attributed this to **positive** therapeutic feelings created by playing with dolphins. He said the creatures are “highly intelligent animals who are **capable** of complex interactions, and regard humans positively.” He also said animals could be used to **treat** other psychiatric illnesses. He added: “We need to remember that we are part of the natural world, and interacting with it can have a beneficial **effect** on us.”