Tree Therapy

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Tree therapy reported in ABC News in Science 3 May 2010 and ScienceDaily 26 July 2010. Researchers at University of Essex have analysed a number of studies of the health benefits of "green exercise", i.e. exercise in natural settings. The activities included walking, gardening, cycling, fishing, boating, horse-riding and farming. The studies involved people of both genders, across the age and social spectrum, and included people with mental health problems. All benefitted from the outdoor exercise, with the young and mentally ill benefitting most. All kinds of green spaces had beneficial effects, but the effects were enhanced if they included water.

These results fit with previous studies that show living in, or visiting, places with trees has also been found to reduce stress, improve moods, reduce anger and aggressiveness and increase overall happiness. People also recover faster after stressful or concentration demanding situations in natural environments, rather than urban settings. Time spent in natural environments had positive effects on heart rate, blood pressure and muscle tension, and led to decrease in stress-related hormones. According to Eeva Karjalainen, of the Finnish Forest Research Institute, Metla, "Many people feel relaxed and good when they are out in nature. But not many of us know that there is also scientific evidence about the healing effects of nature."

ABC, ScienceDaily

Editorial Comment: Man's first home was a garden full of trees that were "good for food and pleasing to the eye", with a river flowing through it as Genesis 1 and 2 remind us. When God completed the Garden of Eden and gave it to the first man and woman, He declared it to be "very good". Therefore, it is no surprise that health researchers find that environments like this are good for human beings, physically and mentally. Urban planners and environmental engineers should read Genesis and consider the environment provided by God for human beings to live in and make their plans accordingly. (Ref. vegetation, well-being)

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