

Subject: [Fwd: Mountain biking (a "green" activity?) decreases stress??]

Date: Tue, 22 Mar 2005 13:11:30 -0800

From: Brian Platts <bplatts@shaw.ca>

To: Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>

Subject: Mountain biking (a "green" activity?) decreases stress??

Date: Tue, 22 Mar 2005 12:32:52 -0800

From: M E Craver <mecraver@shaw.ca>

To: Mayor and Council - DNV <Council@dnv.org>

CC: "FONVCA (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>

Dear Mayor and Council:

This article was in the Vancouver Sun Newspaper the other day. I could not believe this reporter thought that mountain biking decreases stress and anxiety levels. Like the Sesame Street song --Which of these things do not belong together?? Of all the stress reducing activities mentioned, mountain biking does not belong in this category of stress and anxiety-reducing green activities mentioned in this article. Unbelievable how this extreme sport weedles its way into everything. Instead mountain biking increases the stress and anxiety levels of those who have to share the trails with them on foot-- humans and wildlife, alike. All the other activities mentioned in the article are compatible, except the extreme sport of mountain biking (which dearly needs to be contained to an area that does not disturb the other forest users and those that inhabit the forest). Please do not allow mountain biking on Fromme. Thank you.

--Monica Craver--

Mother Nature decreases stress, doctors find
Studies show 'green' activities boost self-esteem

Thea Jourdon
Daily Telegraph

March 21, 2005

LONDON -- Helena Singleton leans to stroke Nobby the sheep and takes a deep breath of country air. She smiles with pleasure as she buries her hands in the ram's thick fleece. Helena, 14, lives in urban Blackpool. She has never been this close to a live sheep before.

She is one of 1,500 schoolchildren taking part in Countryside Live, a fair sponsored by the Countryside Agency, which is dedicated to bringing the countryside to pupils of inner-city schools. As well as meeting rare sheep breeds, gun dogs and wild birds, students are encouraged to try fishing, willow weaving and cheese-making.

"Being out in the country is really calming," Helena says. "Just looking at a beautiful scene makes me feel better."

There is increasing evidence to show that getting close to nature can make people feel less stressed and better about themselves. A new study, from the University of Essex, shows that "green" exercise can boost mood, physical fitness and self-esteem.

Professor Jules Pretty, who led the study, measured the mood and self-esteem of 263 people who took part in 10 different "green" activities, such as walking and **mountain biking**.

"We found that there was a significant improvement in self-esteem in nine out of 10 case studies," says Pretty. "The majority of people also found that, after participating in the activity, their anxiety levels dropped. They felt less depressed and more upbeat."

In biochemical terms, the participants experienced enhanced moods because hormones such as oxytocin and endorphins were circulating around their bodies. "Levels of these hormones went up, which activated the pleasure centre in the brain," Pretty explains.

Fishing is one of the best ways to enjoy the feel-good factor of the natural world. The sport, which boasts a following of 3.8 million people in Britain, tops the study's list for boosting self-esteem and mood. This does not surprise Martin James of the National Federation of Anglers: "Fishing is a kind of therapy. It's also a great way to reduce stress. When you fish, you are concentrating on the rod and the water, and everything else is forgotten."

Essex University's research also found that, when measuring the impact of green activities on mental wellbeing, their duration was not significant. "A half-hour walk gave the same benefit as a six-hour fishing trip," says Pretty, who has made another interesting discovery: Even gazing at an image of the countryside is good for your health.

Tests conducted on 100 healthy volunteers who ran on treadmills showed that looking at a pleasant rural view caused blood pressure to fall. Conversely, looking at an unpleasant urban environment had a huge impact: Blood pressure rose by an average of eight points.

The findings are supported by a study at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Doctors focused on two groups of patients who were in hospital, awaiting operations. While they listened to piped sounds of birds and running water, one group was shown an image of a landscape. The other group was left in a room with no view and no sound. Following their operations, the former required significantly less pain control and left hospital sooner than the latter.

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