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Ready-to-use ESL / EFL Lessons

## **The Breaking News English.com Resource Book**

“1,000 Ideas & Activities For Language Teachers”

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/book.html>

## **Swim with dolphins to reduce stress**

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**26 November, 2005**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **Swim with dolphins to reduce stress**

A new study carried out in Honduras reports that swimming with dolphins helps reduce stress and lift depression. Researchers from England's Leicester University found that 15 people with mild or moderate depression became happier after they swam with dolphins. Playing in the water with the dolphins led to falling levels of symptoms of depression in the patients. No one took drugs or had psychotherapy for four weeks before the study. Researchers saw positive results after just two weeks of the dolphin therapy. They concluded that being with nature is very important for human wellbeing.

The study observed two groups of patients – one played with dolphins, the other swam alone in a pool. The dolphin therapy lifted depression much quicker than results usually seen with psychotherapy or drug therapy. With traditional therapy, symptoms usually improve after four weeks. Researcher Michael Reveley said animals could be used to treat other mental illnesses. He also said dolphins are "highly intelligent animals who are capable of complex interactions, and regard humans positively." He added: "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 information 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 help treat 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 / nature / 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 would love or hate to do and why:

- Swim with dolphins
- Fly with eagles
- Hunt with lions
- Work with ants
- Relax with koalas
- Run with horses
- Climb with monkeys
- Look for food with cockroaches
- Walk across deserts with camels
- Be busy with bees

**6. NATURE 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 medicine and therapies are the best forms of treatment for stress.
- 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 said that dolphins are happier after swimming with people. | T / F |
| c. Patients took drugs for four weeks during the study.               | T / F |
| d. The study suggests nature is important for human wellbeing.        | T / F |
| e. Dolphin therapy is watching dolphins play in a pool.               | T / F |
| f. Depression disappeared overnight after dolphin therapy.            | T / F |
| g. Dolphins usually regard humans with suspicion.                     | T / F |
| h. A researcher recommends using animals to treat mental illnesses.   | T / F |

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

- |                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| a. carried out   | lessen       |
| b. reduce        | health       |
| c. moderate      | difficult    |
| d. psychotherapy | did          |
| e. wellbeing     | get better   |
| f. observed      | counseling   |
| g. traditional   | positive     |
| h. improve       | looked at    |
| i. complex       | average      |
| j. beneficial    | conventional |

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

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| a. swimming with dolphins helps reduce | two groups of patients        |
| b. falling levels of symptoms          | important for human wellbeing |
| c. No one took drugs or had            | intelligent animals           |
| d. Researchers saw positive results    | psychotherapy                 |
| e. being with nature is very           | of depression                 |
| f. The study observed                  | complex interactions          |
| g. symptoms usually                    | stress and lift depression    |
| h. dolphins are highly                 | of the natural world          |
| i. capable of                          | improve after four weeks      |
| j. We are part                         | after just two 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 new study \_\_\_\_\_ out in Honduras reports that swimming with dolphins helps reduce stress and \_\_\_\_\_ depression. Researchers from England's Leicester University found that 15 people with \_\_\_\_\_ or moderate depression became \_\_\_\_\_ after they swam with dolphins. Playing in the water with the dolphins \_\_\_\_\_ to falling levels of symptoms of depression in the patients. No one took \_\_\_\_\_ or had psychotherapy for four weeks before the study. Researchers saw \_\_\_\_\_ results after just two weeks of the dolphin therapy. They concluded that being with nature is very important for human \_\_\_\_\_.

*led*  
*lift*  
*wellbeing*  
*happier*  
*carried*  
*drugs*  
*mild*  
*positive*

The study \_\_\_\_\_ two groups of patients – one played with dolphins, the other swam \_\_\_\_\_ in a pool. The dolphin therapy lifted depression much quicker than results usually \_\_\_\_\_ with psychotherapy or drug therapy. With traditional therapy, symptoms usually \_\_\_\_\_ after four weeks. Researcher Michael Reveley said animals could be used to \_\_\_\_\_ other mental illnesses. He also said dolphins are "highly intelligent animals who are \_\_\_\_\_ of complex interactions, and regard humans \_\_\_\_\_." He added: "We are part of the natural world, and interacting with it can have a \_\_\_\_\_ effect on us."

*treat*  
*seen*  
*beneficial*  
*observed*  
*capable*  
*improve*  
*alone*  
*positively*

## **LISTENING**

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### **Swim with dolphins to reduce stress**

A new study \_\_\_\_\_ out in Honduras reports that swimming with dolphins helps reduce stress and \_\_\_\_\_ depression. Researchers from England's Leicester University found that 15 people with \_\_\_\_\_ or moderate depression became happier after they swam with dolphins. Playing in the water with the dolphins \_\_\_\_\_ to falling levels of symptoms of depression in the patients. No one \_\_\_\_\_ drugs or had psychotherapy for four weeks before the study. Researchers saw positive results after \_\_\_\_\_ two weeks of the dolphin therapy. They concluded that being with nature is very important for human \_\_\_\_\_.

The study observed two groups of \_\_\_\_\_ – one played with dolphins, the other swam alone in a pool. The dolphin therapy \_\_\_\_\_ depression much quicker than results usually seen with psychotherapy or drug therapy. With traditional \_\_\_\_\_, symptoms usually improve after four weeks. Researcher Michael Reveley said animals could be used to \_\_\_\_\_ other mental illnesses. He also said dolphins are "highly intelligent animals who are capable of \_\_\_\_\_ interactions, and regard humans positively." He added: "We are part of the natural world, and interacting with it can have a beneficial \_\_\_\_\_ on us."

## 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 how the natural world changes 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:

- |              |               |
|--------------|---------------|
| • carried    | • patients    |
| • mild       | • lifted      |
| • falling    | • traditional |
| • four weeks | • treat       |
| • two weeks  | • complex     |
| • 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 depression?
- g. Why do some people with happy lives become depressed?
- h. What are the symptoms of depression?
- i. How does the countryside and nature change 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 illnesses do you think animals could 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 feelings and cure many illnesses. With your “animal therapy expert” partners, discuss which animals could be used to help in the problems below. Describe the therapies:

PROBLEM	ANIMAL	THERAPY
Depression		
Lack of confidence		
Fear of heights		
Cannot sleep		
Hay fever		
Morning sickness		
Bullying		
Forgetting English vocabulary		

- Change partners and compare and share your ideas. Give each other feedback. Tell each other 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. carried out   | did          |
| b. reduce        | lessen       |
| c. moderate      | average      |
| d. psychotherapy | counseling   |
| e. wellbeing     | health       |
| f. observed      | looked at    |
| g. traditional   | conventional |
| h. improve       | get better   |
| i. complex       | difficult    |
| j. beneficial    | positive     |

### PHRASE MATCH:

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| a. swimming with dolphins helps reduce | stress and lift depression    |
| b. falling levels of symptoms          | of depression                 |
| c. No one took drugs or had            | psychotherapy                 |
| d. Researchers saw positive results    | after just two weeks          |
| e. being with nature is very           | important for human wellbeing |
| f. The study observed                  | two groups of patients        |
| g. symptoms usually                    | improve after four weeks      |
| h. dolphins are highly                 | intelligent animals           |
| i. capable of                          | complex interactions          |
| j. We are part                         | of the natural world          |

### GAP FILL:

#### Swim with dolphins to reduce stress

A new study **carried** out in Honduras reports that swimming with dolphins helps reduce stress and **lift** depression. Researchers from England's Leicester University found that 15 people with **mild** or moderate depression became **happier** after they swam with dolphins. Playing in the water with the dolphins **led** to falling levels of symptoms of depression in the patients. No one took **drugs** or had psychotherapy for four weeks before the study. Researchers saw **positive** results after just two weeks of the dolphin therapy. They concluded that being with nature is very important for human **wellbeing**.

The study **observed** two groups of patients – one played with dolphins, the other swam **alone** in a pool. The dolphin therapy lifted depression much quicker than results usually **seen** with psychotherapy or drug therapy. With traditional therapy, symptoms usually **improve** after four weeks. Researcher Michael Reveley said animals could be used to **treat** other mental illnesses. He also said dolphins are "highly intelligent animals who are **capable** of complex interactions, and regard humans **positively**." He added: "We are part of the natural world, and interacting with it can have a **beneficial** effect on us."