

City living makes it harder to concentrate

21st February, 2013



A new report says living in a city makes it harder for people to concentrate. The research found that people who live in rural areas can focus better than people in urban

areas. The study is from Goldsmiths College, which is part of the University of London. Head researcher Dr Karina Linnell and her team studied how two groups of people did the same "thinking tasks". The team went to a remote part of Namibia, southwest Africa, to study the Himba tribe. Himba people live a very basic life in the desert, doing traditional farming. The team also studied members of the same tribe who had moved to the nearest town. Dr Linnell said the tribe who lived in the desert did much better on the tests than those in the town.

Dr Linnell's research may change the way companies operate. In the future, workers may relocate from cities to live and work in the countryside. Linnell said there are too many things around us in the city that stop us from thinking about one thing for a long time. This means we do not work at our best. She asked: "What if, for example, companies realised certain tasks would be better carried out by employees based outside of the urban environment where their concentration ability is better?" The past century has seen billions of people move from the countryside to big cities. If Dr Linnell's research is true, this century might see many of those people return to the great outdoors.

Sources: BBC / Medical Xpress

Writing

Living in the city is better than living in the countryside. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

report / rural areas / urban areas / thinking tasks / remote / very basic life / tribe / operate / relocate / in the city / employees / concentration / billions / this century

True / False

- A new report says it's difficult for people to study cities. T / F
- People who live in the countryside can focus better than city people. T / F
- The research team studied a tribe in South Africa. T / F
- The team studied two different tribes from the town and country. T / F
- The research might change how companies work in the future. T / F
- The researcher said many things around us help us think better. T / F
- Billions have relocated to urban areas in the past 100 years. T / F
- Many people originally from the countryside might return. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. harder | a. out of the way |
| 2. focus | b. last |
| 3. remote | c. relocated |
| 4. basic | d. done |
| 5. moved | e. work |
| 6. operate | f. concentrate |
| 7. realised | g. go back |
| 8. carried out | h. more difficult |
| 9. past | i. understood |
| 10. return | j. simple |

Discussion – Student A

- Would you prefer to work in the city or countryside?
- What are the pros and cons of working in the countryside?
- What things in the city can stop us concentrating?
- How does your mobile phone or computer stop you concentrating?
- Should people meditate to help them concentrate?
- Would you like to take a "how to concentrate better" course?
- Is it a good idea for millions of people to move back to rural areas?
- What questions would you like to ask Dr Karina Linnell?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. living in a city makes it harder | a. remote part of Namibia |
| 2. two groups of people did | b. at our best |
| 3. The team went to a | c. who lived in the desert |
| 4. Himba people live a | d. the urban environment |
| 5. the tribe | e. the same "thinking tasks" |
| 6. workers may relocate | f. outdoors |
| 7. we do not work | g. for people to concentrate |
| 8. employees based outside of | h. from cities |
| 9. The past | i. very basic life |
| 10. return to the great | j. century |

Discussion – Student B

- What springs to mind when you hear the word 'concentrate'?
- Are you good at focusing on one thing for a long time?
- What can people do to increase their concentration?
- Is your room a good place to concentrate?
- How good are libraries to think and get lots of work done?
- Do you think rural areas are better for people who want to concentrate?
- How are cities better than the countryside?
- Are you good at thinking tasks?

Spelling

- harder for people to oanrtecctne
- live in raulr areas
- people in anrbu areas
- a mteero part of Namibia
- liairntdtoa farming
- the tribe who lived in the rseetd
- change the way companies roeaetp
- workers may eecaoltr from cities
- iectnar tasks
- onlbiisl of people
- this crtuyen
- trruen to the great outdoors

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. f	3. a	4. j	5. c
6. e	7. i	8. d	9. b	10. g

Role Play

City lover - You think living in the city is much better than living in the countryside. Tell the other three reasons why. Tell the people who live in rural areas to move to the city. Tell them the city makes them think about more things.

Countryside lover - You think living in the countryside is much better than living in the city. Tell the other three reasons why. Tell the people who live in the city to move to the countryside. Tell them the countryside makes them think better.

Thinking expert - You think it's not important where you live. Everyone can concentrate at the same level in the city or countryside. Tell the other three reasons why. The most important thing is being alone in a room that is quiet.

Student - You are studying English but are having big problems concentrating. You cannot study in the countryside or city. Tell the other three reasons why. Ask the others for advice on how and where to study.

Speaking

Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the biggest thing at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| • other people | • sleepy |
| • food | • music / TV |
| • bored | • thinking about someone |
| • traffic sounds | • stressed |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	F	d	F	e	T	f	F	g	T	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.