

Glancing at a grassy green roof significantly boosts concentration

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A green grassy roof in Toronto, a city renowned for its efforts to balance nature and urban space.

A University of Melbourne study shows that glancing at a grassy green roof for only 40 seconds markedly boosts concentration.

The study, published in the Journal of Environmental Psychology, gave 150 students a boring, attention-sapping task. The students were asked to press a key as a series of numbers repeatedly flashed on a computer screen, unless that number was three.

They were given a 40-second break midway through the task to view a city rooftop scene. Half the group viewed a flowering meadow green roof, the other half looked out onto a bare concrete roof.

After the break, students who glanced at the greener vista made significantly less errors and demonstrated superior concentration on the second half of the task, compared to those who viewed the concrete roof.

The green roof provided a restorative experience that boosted those mental resources that control attention, researchers concluded.

Lead researcher Dr Kate Lee, of the University of Melbourne Faculty of Science, said just a moment of green can provide a boost for tired workers.

"We know that green roofs are great for the environment, but now we can say that they boost attention too. Imagine the impact that has for thousands of employees working in nearby offices," Dr Lee said.

"This study showed us that looking at an image of nature for less than a minute was all it took to help people perform better on our task.

The research focused on micro-breaks, those short and informal breaks, which happen spontaneously throughout the day.

"It's really important to have micro-breaks. It's something that a lot of us do naturally when we're stressed or mentally fatigued," Dr Lee added. "There's a reason you look out the window and seek nature, it can help you concentrate on your work and to maintain performance across the workday."

"Certainly this study has implications for workplace well-being and adds extra impetus to continue greening our cities. City planners around the world are switching on to these benefits of [green roofs](#) and we hope the future of our cities will be a very green one."

The next research project Dr Lee and her team plan to undertake tests whether looking at workplace greening makes people more helpful and creative.

More information: "40-second green roof views sustain attention: The role of micro-breaks in attention restoration," *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Volume 42, June 2015, Pages 182-189, ISSN 0272-4944, [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2015.04.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2015.04.003)

Provided by University of Melbourne

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