

## FOREST BATHING



Countries around the world are uncovering scientific proof about the healing effects of nature. **Japan** and **South Korea** have even created the wonderful practice of Shinrin-Yoku, forest bathing. With our overloaded minds, overworked bodies, and overwhelmed souls, connecting to nature can yield surprising results.

**Forest bathing** is the practice of immersing yourself in nature in a mindful way, using your senses to derive a whole range of benefits for your **physical, mental, emotional and social health**. It is also known as Shinrin-yoku. 'Shinrin' means forest and 'Yoku' stands for bathing. The idea took birth in Japan in the 1980's and proved to be a very effective tool to overcome the ill effects of a hectic life and stressful work environment.

As humans, we have evolved in nature. Research on the healing potential of nature has shown a variety of benefits for our physical, and mental health. Forest bathing provides an easy and effective way for avoiding **stress, anxiety, depression**, as well as reducing their side-effects.

Connecting with nature boosts our **body's immunity, energy levels and healing ability**. It improves our **mood, sleep, memory** as well as **focus**. Nature also has a soothing influence on our **relationships** and **emotional well-being**.

## Forest & Nature Therapy

### HEALTH BENEFITS

Connecting with nature allows the stressed portions of your brain to relax. Positive hormones are released in the body. You feel less sad, angry and anxious. It helps to avoid stress and burnout, and aids in fighting depression and anxiety. Being in nature is known to boost immunity and leads to lesser days of illness as well as faster recovery from injury or surgery. **Nature has a positive effect on our mind & body. It improves heart and lung health, increases focus, concentration and memory.**



Certain trees like conifers emit oils and phytoncides to safeguard themselves from microbes and pathogens. These molecules improve our immunity too. Breathing in the forest air boosts the level of natural killer (NK) cells in our blood. NK cells are used in our body to fight infections, cancers and tumors.

Nature connections also strengthen emotional intelligence and self-confidence, leading to improved relationships and better social health. Being able to renew your head and heart, body and soul, is a priceless skill. Nature makes it easy as well as engaging for all ages.

## SHINRIN-YOKU

### WHY FOREST BATHING?

Surrounded by addictive screens and stressful news, connecting with nature can make a big difference to our lives. We spend so much time and money on unhealthy entertainment, but nature is totally free. When you are in nature it becomes easier to reach a peaceful state of mind. By paying attention to our senses and moving in the forest mindfully we can not only get all the benefits of meditation for our mind, but also boost our immunity and create good health for our body. It's because we are guided by the greatest teacher of all – Nature.

### BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION

- Learn to switch off unwanted thoughts.
- Feel less angry, anxious and sad.
- Increase self-worth and confidence.
- Overcome fear, self-doubt and wavering mind.
- Avoid stress and burnout.
- Get better sleep and rest.
- Strengthen the ability to control cravings
- Give up addictions
- Find peace and happiness in the Present
- Build empathy. Improve relationships.
- Find answers for important questions & decisions.



## NATURE & FOREST THERAPY

A trained Forest Therapy Guide facilitates a connection to the forest environment through a series of invitations that cultivate mindfulness, calm, and wellbeing. Invitations are offered to encourage presence, connect participants to their sensory experiences, and awaken joy and wonder. Guides open the doorways for participants to experience the therapeutic power of the forest.

On Forest Bathing walks, people have a wide range of experiences, some of which they feel are significant, even profound. Guides are trained in the skills and perspectives needed to be supportive witnesses of these experiences. **The forest is the therapist, the guide opens the door. Changing the way you experience nature, changes everything.**

You can practice activities in nature-rich spaces, neighborhood parks, city forests, or even your own garden. Involve your friends and family for any of these walks or do them alone. Create some wonderful memories. Discover new ideas that will aid you through your life.

You can practice forest bathing in any safe nature space. If you don't have an easy way to get outdoors, indoor plants can provide similar benefits. Hence you can create your own indoor nature sanctuary.

The main principles are to **go in silence** and **go slow**. Use your senses to find things in nature that bring you peace and happiness.

Through **nature connection activities** and **sense exercises**, you can alter your mood and energy levels resulting in a host of benefits. Participating in a guide nature and forest therapy walk allows you to experience and explore new nature connections which you can then adapt as a practice in your personal life.

Recommended time for forest bathing is at-least 2 hours a week.



## VIRTUAL FOREST BATHING WALKS

During the pandemic, in times of fear, it can be easy to forget our connectedness, to recoil from the world in an attempt to numb ourselves. These are the times when the spirit and the heart of Forest Therapy is needed most. Whatever happens in the next few months, we hope that you will continue to reach towards connection. If these times are a threshold, let us cross it together, with each other and with the More than Human World.

For those able to be outside, we suggest that you dress appropriately for the weather and maybe a little warmer than usual since you will be moving slowly and possibly sitting on the ground. Having a small mat, bag, or cushion to sit on can also be nice.

For those of you inside, may we suggest sitting near a plant(s) and/or a window with a view outside, if possible. Guides will be sharing their view, so you can "experience" the outdoors through your screen as well. Please practice group etiquette by keeping your phone on mute unless invited to share. In the bottom left corner of your screen, there is a little microphone. Click on it to mute or unmute yourself.

In order to ensure the best experience for everyone, please commit to fully participating while you are on the group call and refrain from answering texts or emails.

## BENEFITS OF NATURE & FOREST THERAPY

- Reduced blood pressure and heart rate
- Reduced cortisol levels which can
- Lower stress
- Reduce risk for heart disease
- Reduce anxiety, depression & weight problems
- improve memory and concentration
- Improved immune system
- Increased Natural Killer (NK) cells
- Improved parasympathetic nerve activity
- Better sleep
- Reduced sympathetic nerve activity
- Reduced impacts of stressful events
- Improved sense of wellbeing
- Improved attention and focus