

Forest Bathing for Mindfulness & Well-Being



In Japan, there is a practice called forest bathing, or *shinrin-yoku*. *Shinrin* means “forest,” and *yoku* means “bath.” So *shinrin-yoku* means bathing in the forest environment or experiencing the forest through our senses.

While Japan is credited with the term *shinrin-yoku*, the concept at the heart of the practice is not new. Many cultures have long acknowledged the importance of the natural world to human health.

Forest bathing can be simplified as being in and connecting with nature through our senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch.

We know how good we feel when we spend time in nature. How it can ground, calm, energize, and uplift us. The fresh, clean air, the richness of colors, and the awareness of being part of something bigger than ourselves are just a few of the benefits we can experience.

For centuries we’ve intuitively known the benefits, and now numerous [scientific studies](#) can back up the health claims. The great news is that with even short exposure to nature, we can reap the rewards, and best of all - it’s free!

Some of us have been practicing forest bathing long before we knew it had a name. It was just an instinct. We feel drawn to green spaces, the rushing sound of a river, and the smell of the ocean- and for good reason.

When we can regularly sneak away to reconnect with the earth, we become quiet and can enter an altered state of deep calm. Our nervous system regulates, increasing our parasympathetic (rest) response and decreasing our sympathetic (stress) response. Our heart rate and blood pressure lower. Senses become heightened. Suddenly, vision can sharpen, and every step, sound, smell, and sensation fills our consciousness. Everything else we let go of, if only for the moment. Essentially, nature teaches us to be present and can, therefore, enhance our well-being and our mindfulness practice.

Although for many this is a moving practice, the goal of forest bathing isn’t to get anywhere. It is to be fully where you are and allow your state of being to be transmuted inherently by your environment.



To deepen your connection to nature, try this fun example of a forest bathing activity: Going from tree to tree, tune in to each trees' subtle, unique life force. Place your hands on its surface, close your eyes, silence your mind, and just pay attention to what you feel.

Keep in mind that shinrin-yoku does not solely apply to the forest as its name implies. It can be practiced at a lake, ocean, on a mountain, in a field, or anywhere else in nature. Play with how your sensory experience is different in these environments.

Our connection to nature is vital and planning regular exposure to it should be a key part of our formula for optimal health.

In BC, nature is plentiful if you seek it and offers many opportunities to practice [forest bathing](#).

Try some of these techniques for yourself and find what nurtures you.

Works Cited:

Google Scholars/ Articles/ Scientific studies on forest bathing

The physiological effects of *Shinrin-yoku* (taking in the forest atmosphere or forest bathing): evidence from field experiments in 24 forests across Japan

Authors: Bum Jin Park, Yuko Tsunetsugu, Tamami Kasetani, Takahide Kagawa & Yoshifumi Miyazaki (2010)

Forest bathing: a narrative review of the effects on health for outdoor and environmental education use in Canada

Authors: Sandrine Mathias, Patrick Daigle Needham Dancause Kelsey Tegwen Gadais (2019)

What the Heck is Forest Bathing? 5 Things You Didn't Know About Shinrin-Yoku in BC

Author: Carolyn Ali November 17, 2018