

FOREST BATHING BASICS

Let nature be thy medicine.

- How does it differ from a hike in the woods?
- Why is it good for us?
- What does it look like in practice?
- Resources to learn more.



soultrail.ca

**“Between every
two pine trees is a
doorway leading
to a new way of
life.”**

JOHN MUIR

**“That quality of
air, that
emanation from
old trees that so
wonderfully
changes and
renews a weary
spirit.”**

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON



**“Forest bathing
resets our nervous
systems. It does so
quickly and
effectively. It is as
if we have come
home—because we
have.”**

CLIFFORD AMOS Founder,
Association of Nature &
Forest Therapy



WHAT IS IT CALLED?

- Forest Therapy
- Nature Therapy
- *Shinrin-yoku*...
- literal translation “Forest Bathing”



HOW DOES IT DIFFER FROM A HIKE?

- slow moving; pauses for reflection & integration
- terrain is typically unchallenging; distance not great
- gently structured & intentional
- focus is on sensory experience
- encourages interaction with forest by open-ended exercises
- cultivates mindfulness by experiencing familiar woodland environments in novel ways, from unfamiliar perspectives



WHY IS IT GOOD... FOR THE BODY?

- One large tree can produce 5 lb oxygen each day⁹.
- Phytoncides can lower blood pressure by 5-7%⁴; body relaxes, immune system boosted⁸.
- Phytoncides *pinosylvin* in pines & *terpinoids* in cedars both stimulate respiration and act as mild sedatives¹.
- After dedicated periods in woodlands: 40% increase in Natural Killer (NK) cells; a month later still elevated (7%) ¹.
- Forest bathing correlated with higher Heart Rate Variability (parasympathetic-dominant maintenance mode) ⁷.



WHY IS IT GOOD... FOR THE MIND?

- Nature is restorative because it frees up the top-down part of your brain in a way that allows it to recover¹.
- By giving attention to your senses, you turn down the volume on the cacophony of inner thoughts⁷.
- Woodlands provide natural patterns based on fractals¹.
- Nature might be boosting our moods by quieting some brain circuitry governing self-wallowing².
- Awe helps us focus attention on the present moment and potentially helps expand our perception of time¹.



WHY IS IT GOOD... FOR THE SOUL?

- Correlated with reduced incidence or severity of depression, anxiety, and other mood disorders².
- Deeper sense of mental relaxation².
- Increased feelings of gratitude, selflessness & wonder².
- Compared to urban walk, forest walk: 12% decrease in cortisol (the “stress” hormone) levels, 7% decrease in sympathetic nerve activity⁵.
- People more likely to recognize happiness, slower to recognize negative emotions, after viewing nature scenes³.



WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

- Orientation
- Crossing “Threshold of Connection”
- Series of “Invitations” followed by reflection, whether personal or shared
- Tea Ceremony
- Crossing “Threshold of Incorporation”



SOME RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE

📖 The Nature Fix: Why nature makes us happier, healthier and more creative. By Florence Williams (2017)

🎬 Call of the Forest: The forgotten wisdom of trees. Featuring Diana Beresford-Kroeger (2017) calloftheforest.ca

📖 The Joy of Forest Bathing: Reconnect with wild places & rejuvenate your life. By Melanie Choukas-Bradley (2018)

📱 Description & pictures from an introductory-level forest bathing walk: soultrail.ca



FACT FOOTNOTES

1. Williams, Florence (2017). *The Nature Fix: Why nature makes us happier, healthier and more creative*.
2. Study by Bratman (USA), as quoted in (1).
3. Study by Corpela (Finland), as quoted in (1)
4. Research by Mizaki (Japan), as quoted in (1)
5. Study by Mizaki & Lee (Japan), quoted in (1)
6. Hanson, Margaret (2017). *Shinrin-Yoku (Forest Bathing) and Nature Therapy: A state-of-the-art Review*. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health” 14, 851
7. Amos, Clifford (2018). *Your Guide to Forest Bathing*
8. *Call of the Forest: The forgotten wisdom of trees*. (2017) Documentary video-recording featuring Diana Beresford-Kroeger (2017) calloftheforest.ca
9. Kynes, Sandra (2006). *Whispers in the Woods: The lore & magic of trees*.

