

Science on the Slopes

Environmental Education & Wellness Program



Health & Wellness

The Benefits of Forest Bathing



Time.com

Shinrin in Japanese means “forest,” and ***yoku*** means “bath.” So *shinrin-yoku* means bathing in the forest atmosphere, or taking in the forest through our senses. Even a small amount of time in nature can have an impact on our health. A two-hour forest bath will help you to unplug from technology and slow down. It will bring you into the present moment and de-stress and relax you.

'Forest Bathing' Is Great for Your Health. Here's How to Do It

First, find a spot. Make sure you have left your phone and camera behind. You are going to be walking aimlessly and slowly. You don't need any devices. Let your body be your guide. Listen to where it wants to take you. Follow your nose. And take your time. It doesn't matter if you don't get anywhere. You are not going anywhere. You are savoring the sounds, smells and sights of nature and letting the forest in.

The key to unlocking the power of the forest is in the five senses. Let nature enter through your ears, eyes, nose, mouth, hands and feet. Listen to the birds singing and the breeze rustling in the leaves of the trees. Look at the different greens of the trees and the sunlight filtering through the branches. Smell the fragrance of the forest and breathe in the natural aromatherapy of **phytoncides**. Taste the freshness of the air as you take deep breaths. Place your hands on the trunk of a tree. Dip your fingers or toes in a stream. Lie on the ground. Drink in the flavor of the forest and release your sense of joy and calm. This is your sixth sense, a state of mind. Now you have connected with nature. You have crossed the bridge to **happiness**.

From **FOREST BATHING: How Trees Can Help You Find Health and Happiness** by Dr. Qing Li, published on April 17, 2018 by Viking, an imprint of Penguin Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. Copyright © Qing Li, 2018.

What has the greatest effect, however, are the scents (phytoncides) given off by trees. Phytoncides are the natural oils within a plant, and they're part of a tree's defense system against bacteria, insects, and fungi. Phytoncides have been shown to help lift depression and anxiety and decrease the level of stress hormones. And in (Dr. Li) my research, I discovered that they also boost natural killer cell activity and the production of anti-cancer proteins.