**Forest Bathing**

***A selection of facts and resources supported by research***

**2024**

**Overview**

Forest bathing is based on the Japanese concept of *shinrin-yoku*. It is generally practiced in an area with many trees but can also be done in a more urban setting such as a city park. It differs from hiking and exercising outside in **that the goal is to slow down and use your senses to notice smells and other sensations.** There are numerous health benefits associated with forest bathing, and it can be adapted to different cultural practices and circumstances.

**Mindful Exercises**

* Each forest bathing experience will be different, but some key components include **being aware of beauty, relationships between sun and leaves, and celebration of imperfection and impermanence.** There is significant overlap with the concept of “mindfulness” (*Why Forest Therapy Can Be Good for Your Body and Mind*, n.d.).
* Some practices include noticing your breath, feeling or smelling the texture of a tree or rocks, imagining the experiences of these objects and life-forms, and expressing gratitude (Hughes, n.d.).

**Benefits**

* **Forest Bathing is associated with reduced stress, reduced anxiety, and lower blood pressure** (Farrow and Washburn, 2019).
* It can be done for as little as **10 minutes**, but two or more hours are associated with larger benefits (Segarra 2023).
* Based on a comprehensive review of current research, **forest bathing is considered a cost-effective public health strategy to promote well-being**. It is seen as a supplement to other physical and mental health practices. Research is still emerging on its potential to treat diseases (Antonelli et al, 2022).

**Cultural Considerations**

* Multiple Indigenous scholars have pointed out that although there has been a lot of attention in the media promoting forest bathing as a new concept**, the core of the concept reflects many Indigenous ways of knowing and relating to the world**, which have been advocated but dismissed for many years. This acknowledgement also suggests the importance of worldviews that center relationality among all living and non-living aspects of the world (Ghemmour, 2020).
* In one study of forest bathing across different countries, **natural sounds were consistently one of the elements most associated with benefits to wellbeing**. Additionally, women experienced higher benefits, as did people living in the Southern hemisphere or with hot, long-day seasons. No significant difference in effect was found between natural and urban parks, although areas designated as nature resorts did see higher benefits (Subirana-Malaret et al., 2023).

**Case Studies**

**Experiencing Forest Bathing: Cheverly Town Park, Maryland**

* An intern with Corazon Latino who wrote about their first forest bathing experience described how a guide helped their group see, smell, and touch the forest to be more aware of their surroundings. Saveri describes the personal and group observations as a calming and relaxing experience, especially in comparison to frequent screen time in day-to-day life (Nandigama, 2019).

**Self-Love in Nature: South Holland, Illinois**

* Light of Loving Kindness is one example of a group that leads forest bathing walks and other events that are free at a public location and include guidance in both English and Spanish (*Light of Loving Kindness*, n.d.). Eventbrite can be a helpful online platform to share events with your local community.

**Buffalo Bayou Park Wellness Walk: Houston, TX**

* This is another example of a free outdoor event, led in English and Spanish, through a partnership with a public organization.  Covering 3 miles in 1.5 hours may be slightly faster paced than a typical forest bathing experience, but the event does focus on the benefits of spending time outside (*Buffalo Bayou Park Wellness Walk – Buffalo Bayou Partnership*, n.d.).

**Resources**

**Websites**

[Association of Nature and Forest Therapy Guides and Programs](file:///C:/Users/maryd/AppData/Local/Temp/MicrosoftEdgeDownloads/8dd6d6dc-8440-4737-9afa-eff89c6ac276/Association%20of%20Nature%20and%20Forest%20Therapy%20Guides%20and%20Programs): <https://www.anft.earth/guide-training/training>

**References**

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*Light of Loving Kindness*. (n.d.). Eventbrite. Retrieved April 12, 2024, from <https://www.eventbrite.com/org/18228502530?ref=eofblike>

Nandigama, S. (2019, June 17). *From the Intern’s Desk: Experiencing Forest Bathing*. Corazón Latino. <https://www.corazonlatino.us/blog/intern-first-forest-bathing>

Segarra, M. (2023, October 24). Spending time in a forest can boost health and lower stress. Here’s how. *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/2023/08/22/1195337204/a-guide-to-forest-bathing>

*Self-Love in Nature: Forest Bathing (Spanish & English)*. (n.d.). Eventbrite. Retrieved March 17, 2024, from <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/self-love-in-nature-forest-bathing-spanish-english-tickets-682748498137>

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*Why Forest Therapy Can Be Good for Your Body and Mind*. (n.d.). Cleveland Clinic. Retrieved April 12, 2024, from <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/why-forest-therapy-can-be-good-for-your-body-and-mind>