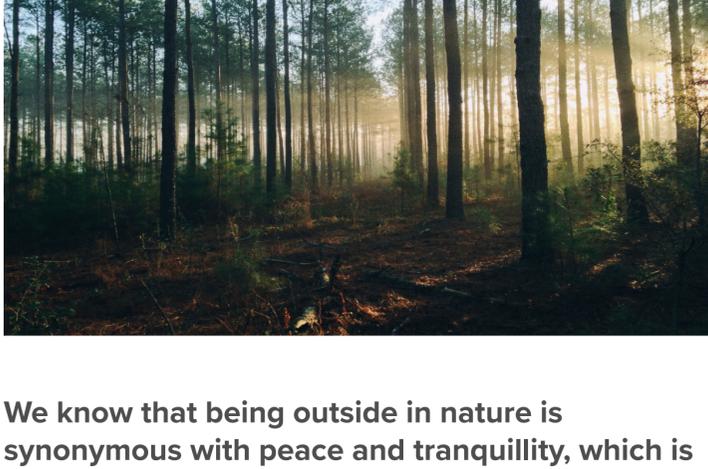


# The benefits of forest therapy

[Tictrac](#) | Jul 29, 2021



**We know that being outside in nature is synonymous with peace and tranquillity, which is something we are all most likely in need of, especially at the moment. One way to satiate an appetite for wholesome nature-led experiences, is to explore the soothing world of forest therapy.**

Inspired by the Japanese practice of **shinrin-yoku**, this concept is based on the idea of allowing nature to heal you. This is traditionally achieved by strolling through a forest at a slow walking pace led by knowledgeable guides who encourage people to experience the joys of their environment, encompassing all of their senses.

This allows people to foster an appreciation for being alive at the moment and is said to reduce stress, increase attention, boost immunity and importantly lift mood [1].

## What exactly is ‘Forest Therapy’?

Emerging from Japan in the 1980’s, forest therapy (otherwise known as forest bathing or ‘shinrin-yoku’) is a mindfulness practice-meets-fitness-phenomena that was created as an antidote to the sudden boom in lifestyles revolved around tech, while promoting the protection of forests and nature in general.



The name literally means immersing yourself in the atmosphere of the forest and whether done with guides or alone, the idea that nature is good for mental and physical wellbeing is a well-recognised one across many cultures.

You don’t need to be an avid lover of nature to reap the benefits of forest therapy, it can be as simple as walking around any natural environment and connecting with your surroundings [2].

## A quick stroll in the park

If you are concerned about how much time practising forest therapy takes, as little as 10 to 20 minutes a day spent engrossed in the outdoors can have a phenomenal impact on our physiological and psychological health [3].

According to a study published by *Frontiers in Psychology*, spending just 20 minutes a day connecting with nature can lower stress hormone levels. As part of the study, 36 people were asked to spend 10 minutes or more in an outdoor place where they could interact with nature three days a week for eight weeks.

It was found that spending at least 20 to 30 minutes immersed in a natural setting was associated with the biggest drop in cortisol levels, but after that time the stress reduction impact was notably lower. So, if you don’t have time for an explorative three-day hiking extravaganza, popping out for 20 minutes of nature (even sitting) is perfect for reducing stress levels [4].

## Mindfulness is key

A common technique in most meditation practices is to bring ourselves into the present moment. Normally past or future worries are where stress and anxiety stem from, so being able to disconnect and truly focus on the now is a powerful tool in our mindfulness arsenal.

Similarly, the sights, sounds and smells of being in nature can all be paramount in leading us to concentrate on the current moment, leaving worries and unpleasant thoughts out of mind [5]. When we truly focus on what is in front of us, we have more chance of actually clearing our head, letting ourselves become refreshed and ready for new tasks and opportunities.



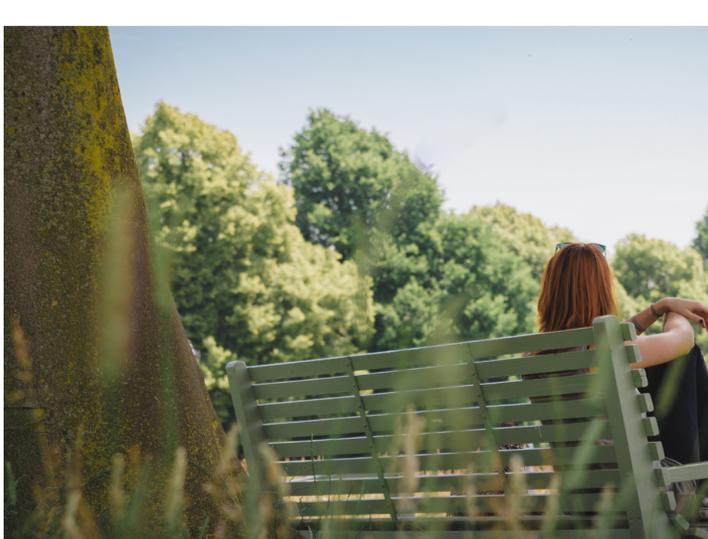
Being in forests, or nature in general provides us with an array of absorbing and calming elements that help us to disconnect from stress.

## Making it work for you

To implement shinrin-yoku into your daily life, try going for a walk and make an effort to really connect with your surroundings.

Turn your phone to silent and focus only on what you’re seeing, feeling, hearing or even smelling instead of any other day-to-day worries that may be running through your mind.

Breathe in the fresh air and notice how your lungs fill up, study the dew on leaves or listen to the meditative crunch of foliage underfoot.



If walking isn’t for you, find a quiet place and use the time in nature to bird watch or simply listen to the breeze in the trees. If you are focusing on the present moment and enveloping yourself in nature, your mind and body will thank you. Appreciate each moment in this calming environment and you will leave feeling restored, serene and ready to tackle any task at hand.

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1. [Can forest therapy enhance health & wellbeing?](#) Harvard Health, May 29, 2020.
  2. [The secret to mindful travel? A walk in the woods](#) *National Geographic*. October 18, 2019.
  3. [Spending time in nature reduces stress.](#) Science Daily, February 25, 2020.
  4. [A 20-minute nature break relieves stress.](#) Harvard Health, July 01, 2019.
  5. [Why forest therapy can be good for your body and mind.](#) Cleveland Clinic, May 6, 2020.