



A GUIDE TO

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Forest Bathing

An introduction to Shinrin Yoku

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A slow walk to peace

Shinrin Yoku is a Japanese wellbeing practise. It translates to 'forest bathing'. You keep your clothes on but immerse yourself in nature.

It takes the benefits of meditation and mindfulness and combines it with the benefits of being in nature, and adds a bit extra.

In Japan it is prescribed by doctors and research has found many physical and psychological benefits, as you'd imagine. It is even thought that the deep breathing of the tree oils may help people with cancer.

I started doing it before I knew it had a name. Struggling with being a new mum, I would take my baby to the woods, breathe deep, and hug the trees. I got strength from their strength. I felt part of the cycle of life. Part of a continuum.

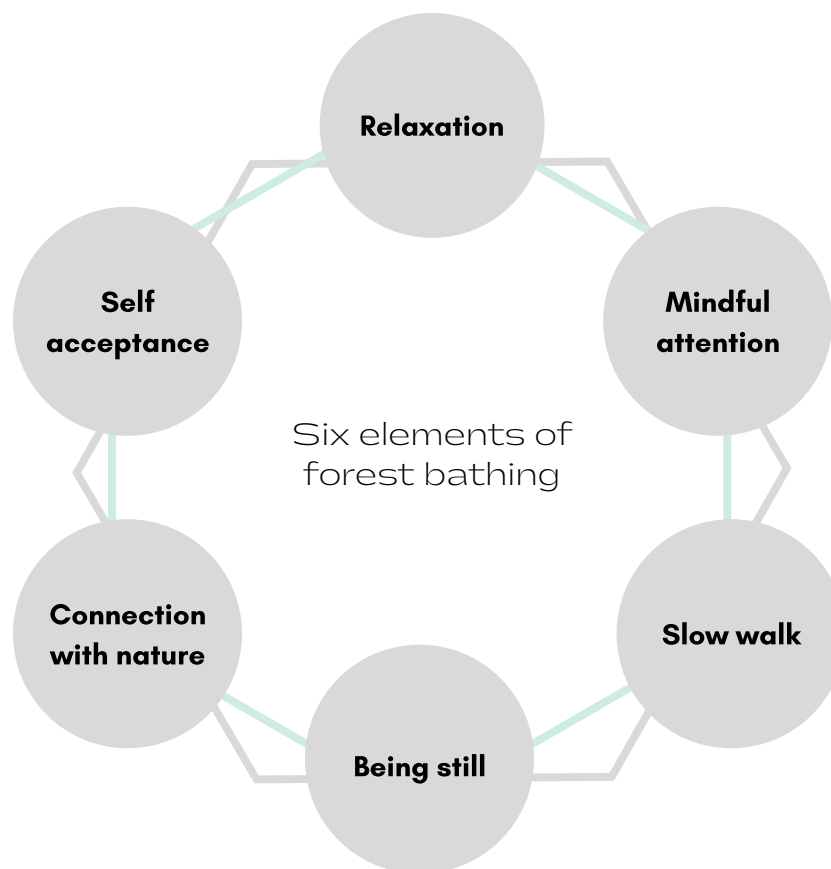
It is easy to feel disconnected from nature, disconnected from each other, disconnected from ourselves. Forest bathing heals our mind, our bodies.

What is forest bathing?

These are the main elements of Shinrin Yoku. You can create your own forest bathing experience using these, and doing your own thing.

On the next page are some thoughts to guide your forest bathing experience, and then some poems/prose to reflect on.

On page 6 I have outlined a simple forest bathing experience that you can do in your garden, or anywhere in nature.



Forest bathing thoughts

Take off your thoughts and worries about yesterday and all the yesterdays. And hang them on an imaginary peg. Take off your thoughts and worries about tomorrow and all the tomorrows. Fold them and leave them on an imaginary chair.

Take a deep breath in and slowly out. Let your shoulders drop. Step into your forest bathing experience. Immerse yourself, surround yourself in the natural world.

Take a few moments to ground yourself in the place. Look around, up to the sky, down to the ground. Out to the wider world. In to the tree or plant in front of you.

Notice. Notice shapes, lines, curves, colours, shades, shadows. Listen. Smell. Touch. Find a leaf, a trunk.

Have an open heart. Full of gratitude. Gratitude for being here, having this time.

Wander very very slowly. Notice the different plants and animals.

Think about how they all co-exist. We co-exist with nature. Connections.

All of nature breathes, grows, cycles. It all has a place. You have a place in this too. You are part of nature.

Spend time in quiet contemplation.

Bring attention to your breath. Deep breaths in and out. Breathe in the freshness of the air filling your lungs, giving you life. It goes into every cell in your body. Breathe in the smell of the woods, the oil of the trees. Feel it strengthen you. Breathing in and out like every organism on the planet.

Close your eyes. Notice your body.

Give thanks for your feet that connect you to the earth. Your legs, that walk the paths. Your trunk, your centre. Your lungs to breathe and your heart to send the oxygenated blood around your body. Your arms and your hands. Your eyes, ears, nose.

Your head to learn and think.

Open your eyes and see with new eyes, hear with new ears.

Get ready to leave your forest bath.

Come back, and as you do pick up the thoughts and worries from the chair and the peg. You can leave some behind. Think about what new things you are taking with you.

Words to reflect on

Sometimes poets and writers can sum it up best. Here are some of my favourite prose and poems that relate to the forest bathing experience.

Trees by Ram Dass

When you go out into the woods and you look at trees, you see all these different trees. And some of them are bent, and some of them are straight, and some of them are evergreen, and some of them are whatever. And you look at the trees and you allow it.

You see the way it is. You sort of understand that it didn't get enough sunlight, and so it turned that way. And you don't get all emotional about it. You just allow it. You appreciate the tree.

The minute you get near humans, you lose all that. And you are constantly saying "you're too this" and "I'm too that". That judging mind comes in. And so I practise turning people into trees. which means appreciating them just the way they are.

Wild Geese by Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.

Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

Excerpt from The Colour Purple by Alice Walker

I think it pisses God off if you walk by the colour purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it. People think pleasing God is all God cares about. But any fool living in the world can see it always trying to please us back.

A 10 minute* forest bathing experience

*you can make it longer or shorter

1

Before you step into your forest bathing experience:

- take a deep breath
- let your shoulders drop
- give yourself permission to take this time out of your day

2

Take a moment to ground yourself.

- Look down to the ground.
- Look up to the sky.
- Look around you and take in the edge of what you can see.
- Move your feet to feel the ground beneath you.

3

Walk really slowly for a few minutes. Pay attention to your senses:

- what can you hear? near, far
- what can you see? light, shade, colour, lines, shapes
- what can you feel? under your feet, on your cheeks, with your fingers (*only touch plants you know aren't poisonous*)
- what can you taste? in the air, from your last food
- what can you smell?

4

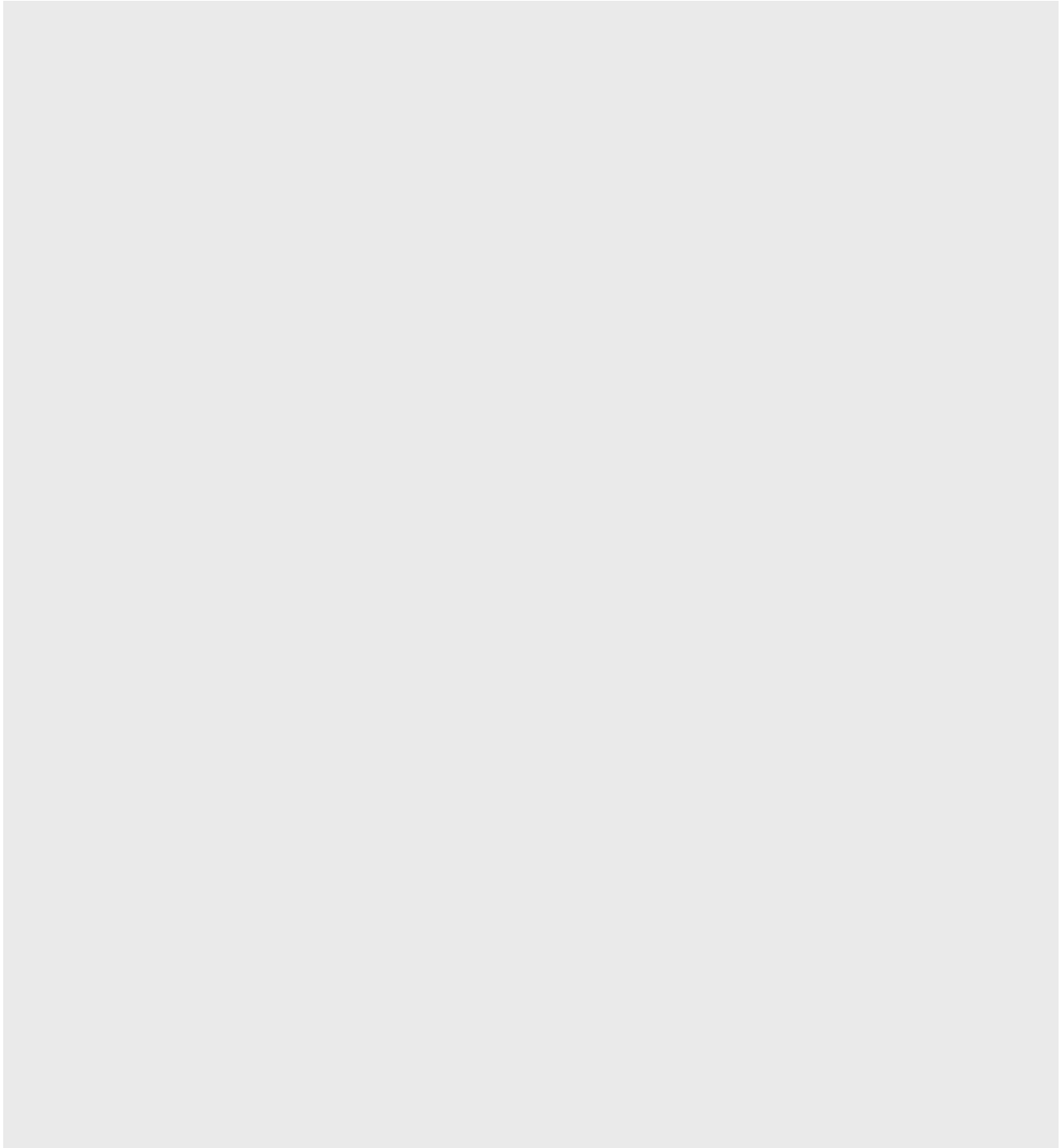
Stop and spend a few minutes looking at one thing: a leaf, a beetle, a plant. Really study it. Notice it. Think about it.

5

Finish your forest bathing experience with gratitude. Gratitude to the natural world. Gratitude to being able to experience it. Gratitude to yourself for spending time with it. Breathe deeply. Let go of the experience. Step back into your life.

Reflection Page

The impact of forest bathing is greater if you spend some time before and after to check in with yourself and how you are feeling, and to notice any differences. There are no good or bad feelings, or experiences. Simply notice, write, and reflect.



Hi! I'm Chilled Mama Cathy

I help parents and parent-to-be to find and follow their own path.

I love forest bathing and sharing it with my clients, especially on my relaxation retreats. I hope one day you can join me.

I used forest bathing to help me cope when I was a new mum, but I didn't know what it was called. When I read about Shinrin Yoku in a magazine a light bulb came on in my brain. I trained to be a Shinrin Yoku guide with Therapy and Nature, in 2017.

I also lead labyrinth walks, and other interesting stuff.

Let's keep in touch

chilledmama.co.uk/chilled-you

