



**May the Forest be with you!**

**Forest Therapy** uses direct sensory experience of the healthy natural forest to activate and strengthen the parasympathetic relaxation response. It is a powerful natural antidote to the ongoing stress of our fast paced civilized lives.

Studied in Japan where it is called Shinrin Yoku, (bathing in the atmosphere of the forest), researchers have demonstrated significant .lasting beneficial effects for our stress neurophysiology and overall experience of well being.

This new scientific appreciation has resulted in a various guided programs to help people most fully access this benefit, and through preserving many natural areas that are

designated for Forest Bathing.

It can be practiced in other landscapes and natural settings, but an older natural forest is especially potent in what has been dubbed Vitamin N.

**How it works.**

When we focus our attention on sensory input, we tune into the radiant sea of electromagnetic, chemical, sound and tactile sensations of nature humans evolved within. Our bodies naturally relax and shift into rest/digest wine/dine parasympathetic response. our physiological counter balance to the chronically active stress response.

Modern humanity is uprooted from our evolutionary foundations in nature and we have forgotten how to be present to the ongoing sensory flow. Instead we are immersed in a world of concepts, ideologies, electronic media and controlled environments. There are many benefits to our technologically supported experience, but to go forward we need to re-member ourselves in the greater sea of being. .The Forest helps us remember and teaches without words.

When we immerse all our senses in the forest, we become receptive to the energizing sea of sensation. Activities like

hiking or fishing also infuse us with vitamin N but it is the quality of consciousness that determines how much benefit is received. The relaxed attentive receptive sensory state can be developed with practice and results in an increase of wellness on all levels and deep appreciation of nature, which is also good for the Forest.

**Forest Guides**

Help people re-enter this sensory domain. They have a magic backpack full of fun explorations and exercises that help people deepen their sensory awareness to the encompassing presence of the forest.

**Guided Forest Therapy Excursions** are often done in small groups because the sensory activities and meditations are especially fun and enjoyable to share. It brings us closer to each other as well as to nature.

**Spiritual Effects.** As we learn how to deepen our presence to nature, nature becomes truly present to us. We can experience expanded states of consciousness and nature can speak to us personally, mirroring and demonstrating to us how to live in balance, and revealing our unique place within the inter-being of it all.

## **The Neurophysiology:**

Forest Therapy is a simple practice that strikes at the heart of all chronic modern disease which is known to result from unprocessed and unabated stress. Just thinking activates the stress response and we don't know how to stop thinking, so we are continuously flooding our bodies with potent substances that create inflammation and are meant to be used infrequently for emergencies.

The antidote is to strengthen the parasympathetic relaxation response; to strengthen the tone and capacity of the Vagus nerve and its functions.

Certain activities like breathing exercises, shaking, toning, focusing on the heart, and Forest Therapy have been shown to support this. With a sustained heart focus/heart breathing/heart feeling attention, the heart rate variability goes into a state of coherence. When this is sustained the entire body will entrain into a very beneficial state of coherence and system harmony. . Forest Therapy synergizes this.

Learning to carry the peace of the forest with us, this carries over into our daily life, giving us grace and ease even under pressure.

## **Ways to Experience Forest Therapy**

Forest Therapy can be taught individually and retreats and vision quests are great immersions into this practice. It is a wonderful practice to do on your own and it is most enjoyable in groups.

### **Forest Therapy Luncheon Retreats**

This can be a half or a whole day and includes meeting space for your group with a healthy luncheon and 90 minutes to 3 hours of Forest Therapy. You will be amazed at the resulting creativity and harmony that is generated. .

Join a **Forest Therapy Workshop** at the Earthwalk Retreat or organize a Forest Therapy Excursion at your favorite place.

**Give a loved one the gift of relaxed inner nourishment.** Buy a **gift certificate** for your favorite care giver

**Learn to be a Forest Guide.** The Mission of the Forest Therapy Institute of Virginia is to train others to offer this activity in order to make it more available to all populations. Recreational therapists, environmental educators, activities directors in nursing homes, people working with vets and others with PTSD, those who work with the handicapped, healers and Yoga instructors

and a cadre of volunteers at many favorite local places.

To do this the institute will offer training to be a Forest Therapy Guide. Certificates and ceu's for those who can use them will be available. We are also identifying and promoting various wonderful outdoor places where people can offer and find this program.

We envision Forest Therapy available everywhere so that people and nature come together as much as possible. It could easily be offered in venues from botanical gardens and neighborhood parks to resort hotels, and of course local, state and national parks. Forest Therapy excursions could be a popular vacation experience in all kinds of wonderful locations deepening enjoyment of the natural beauty and deepening the benefits of the vacation.

For more information please contact

**Earthwalk Ways  
Forest Therapy Institute & Retreat.**

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