

# Shinrin-Yoku Forest Medicine

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**Go to a Forest. Walk slowly. Breathe. Open all your senses.**

**This is the healing way of Shinrin-yoku Forest Therapy, the medicine of simply being in the forest.**





Shinrin-yoku is a term that means "taking in the forest atmosphere" or "forest bathing." It was developed in Japan during the 1980s and has become a cornerstone of preventive health care and healing in Japanese medicine. Researchers primarily in Japan and South Korea have established a robust body of scientific literature on the health benefits of spending time under the canopy of a living forest. Now their research is helping to establish shinrin-yoku and forest therapy throughout the world.

The idea is simple: if a person simply visits a natural area and walks in a relaxed way there are calming, rejuvenating and restorative benefits to be achieved.

We have always known this intuitively. But in the past several decades there have been many scientific studies that are demonstrating the mechanisms behind the healing effects of simply being in wild and natural areas. (some of this research is available [here](#)). For example, many trees give off organic compounds that support our "NK" (natural killer) cells that are part of our immune system's way of fighting cancer.

The scientifically-proven benefits of Shinrin-yoku include:

- Boosted immune system functioning, with an increase in the count of the body's Natural Killer (NK) cells.
- Reduced blood pressure
- Reduced stress
- Improved mood
- Increased ability to focus, even in children with ADHD
- Accelerated recovery from surgery or illness
- Increased energy level
- Improved sleep

Just as impressive are the results that we are experiencing as we make this part of our

regular practice:

- Deeper and clearer intuition
- Increased flow of energy
- Increased capacity to communicate with the land and its species
- Increased flow of eros/life force
- Deepening of friendships
- Overall increase in sense of happiness



Opening our senses to nature also develops our intuition. We learn to contact in new ways the world around us.

We recognize that forest therapy approaches such as Shinrin-yoku have roots in many cultures throughout history. John Muir wrote, “Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home. Wilderness is a necessity.” He is one of many people who we include when we think about the origins of the practice.

Our approach to Shinrin Yoku Forest Therapy combines leisurely walks on gentle paths under

forest canopy with guided activities and meditations to help you open your senses, hone your intuition, and experience the forest as you never have before. We draw upon mindfulness meditation practices, and the techniques of deep nature connection mentoring. We also use the Way of Council for group discussions at several points along the walk, which helps participants learn from and teach other as we discuss what we are experiencing together.

## **The purpose of Shinrin-Yoku.org...**

1. To organize Shinrin-yoku forest therapy walks in our local areas so people can directly experience the practice and its benefits.
2. To increase public awareness and acceptance of shinrin-yoku, forest therapy, and other practices that mobilize the connective and healing power of nature.
3. To establish areas of natural forests on public lands as designated sites for forest therapy activities, such as walking and meditation.
4. To provide leadership toward development of a training and certification program for shinrin-yoku forest therapy guides, and to programs whose services incorporate forest therapy.
5. To be a resource for information and advocacy for forest therapy and nature connection.
6. To transform our cultural relationship to forests through fostering deeper relationships and positive experiences with forested areas.

**"You didn't come *into* this world.**

**You came *out* of it, like a wave from the ocean.**

**You are not a stranger here."**

**Alan Watts**

Shinrin Yoku is Japanese for "Forest Bathing" - A gentle path to wellness accessible to almost everybody.  
shinrin-yoku.org