



# Virtual Forest Therapy

Wendy Figone  
Certified Forest Therapy Guide, Stanford Compassion Ambassador, Myofascial Release Therapist, Certified Yoga Teacher  
and Retreat Leader



# Let's get grounded: Guided Meditation





## *Imagine this...*

- You are at your favorite beach, maybe you are in beautiful Kona, Hawaii.
- It is the most perfect day. Maybe you hear the roar of the ocean nearby.
- Laying down in the warm sand, you feel all parts of your body supported and starting to relax. You can feel the warm sand with your fingertips.
- With every deep breath, you feel your body starting to completely surrender. Maybe you feel the warmth of the sun on your body.
- Let's try 5 deep, diaphragmatic or belly breathes. Maybe letting go a little more after each exhale.
- Your body is becoming one with the earth, you feel safe and supported.

# What is Forest Therapy/Forest Bathing/Shinrin Yoku?

- Shinrin-Yoku began in 1982 in Japan due to a high suicide rate (karioshi).
- In Japan, health care providers Vitals: stress hormones, blood pressure and mood assessment before and after the walk. The walk includes diaphragmatic breathing, light yoga, and resting in the trees, among other things.
- In Japan, you may be guided by Forest Therapy Guides or Physicians and other healthcare providers.
- Virtual Forest Therapy (indoor Forest Therapy) can be done inside looking out a window or with an indoor plant. Example: Sword Fern- used for bedding, or used to treat skin sores. Also used to treat dandruff. Given to me from my three boys, very special.





Shinrin Yoku can be indirectly linked to Shintoism and Buddhism, two prevalent religions in Japan, which both have elements that emphasize harmony with nature.









# Taking in the Phytoncides of the Japanese Hinoki Trees/Tea and Warming Hut





# How We Practice Forest Therapy in America

[Association of Nature and Forest Therapy](#) (ANFT): We are more focused on the relational aspects of forest therapy. Restoring our relationships with self, others and nature. I think most Japanese people tend to view themselves as part of nature more than we do here.

Forest Therapy is a concept that can be practiced indoor with a plant, in the desert, ocean etc... There is a standard sequence that guides you from the head into the heart by activating your senses.

- A forest therapy walk can feel like a outdoor sensorial meditation. We guide people from the busy mind into a very deeply embodied state of presence.
- The walk has a standard sequence that all trained guides follow.



# Health Benefits

- **Stress Reduction:** Immersion in nature lowers cortisol levels, reducing stress.
- **Improved Mood:** Enhances mood by decreasing anxiety and depression symptoms.
- **Boosted Immune System:** Increases natural killer cell activity, enhancing immune defense.
- **Enhanced Focus and Creativity:** Promotes mental clarity and boosts creative problem-solving abilities.
- **Increased Energy Level:** Exposure to natural environments invigorates and revitalizes.
- **Better Sleep:** Natural light exposure helps regulate circadian rhythms, improving sleep quality.
- **Reduced Blood Pressure:** Nature walks have been linked to lower blood pressure and heart rate.
- **Connection with Nature:** Fosters a deeper appreciation for the environment and promotes ecological behaviors.
- **Restores our ability to focus-** attention restoration is healing to screen time.

Article from American Psychiatric Association:

<https://www.psychiatry.org/News-room/APA-Blogs/Forest-Bathing-Benefits-Mental-Physical>



# Let's Practice

**This footage comes from Fitzgerald Marine Reserve in Moss Beach, CA, I am a trained Tidepool Docent here. These are the ancestral lands of the Ramaytush Ohlone people. The Ramaytush Ohlone have inhabited this coastal region for thousands of years, cultivating a deep connection to the land and its resources. As a society something to learn about how to care for each other, ourselves and our land.**







# Resources

Come on a walk with me! I can be reached at [wendyfigone3@gmail.com](mailto:wendyfigone3@gmail.com)

Start your own Forest Therapy Practice: [Book link](#)

For more information, please visit me

<https://www.somaticcotherapy.com/forest-bathing>



# Summary

- Forest Therapy is a very effective way to manage stress and increase immunity.
- Japan has done rigorous research and now in America, Forest Therapy is becoming more popular and recognized as valuable health care.
- You don't need to be in a forest to practice: anyplace outdoors works. You could even just place a plant on your desk and practice indoors.
- Forest Therapy involves activating your senses and staying with each invitation for 10-15 minutes. To get the full impact of a forest therapy session, find a guide near you. Forest Therapy walks generally last three hours and slowly bring you from thinking into a state of being.

# Questions?

Thank you for your time and attention. This presentation is based upon my experience and has been brought to you by CC Health Wellbeing Team. We care about you!