



The Friends of
Pheasant Branch
Conservancy

Forest Bathing Background Info

Forest bathing, or immersion in the forest, is a practice of slow walking or seated meditation in a forested area or other natural setting. We connect with nature through our 5 senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and sometimes even tasting our surroundings. In this way, we can take a break from the high tech and fast-paced world of cell phones, computers, and traffic that make up modern life for many people.

Spending time in nature has been associated with improvements in both physical and mental health. Lower blood pressure, lowered stress hormones, improved immune function to resist illness, and lessening of depression and anxiety can all result from spending time in natural settings. Over a lifetime, immersion in nature regularly may lead to living longer.

Forest bathing, or Shinrin-Yoku, originated in Japan. The health benefits have been studied extensively.



The Wonder Walk project was the original idea of the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy Senior Advisory Council. Wonder Walk mini-lessons can be downloaded from the Friends website (pheasantbranch.org) and will be in backpacks for check-out at various community locations.



Forest Bathing Exploration Guide

Slow Walk Meditation #1

- Walk very slowly with the intent to observe your surroundings, taking in as much detail as possible
- It may help to pretend that you are a stranger to this planet, seeing the trees & plants for the first time - what do you notice?
- Resist the urge to name plants, trees, & birds; simply notice & enjoy the wonder of them
- Notice the patterns of light through the trees
- Notice all the many variations of the color green
- Notice any songs of birds or insects
- Feel the breeze on your skin, the warmth of the sun
- Now breathe more deeply & slowly, in & out, feel a sense of calm & peacefulness

Slow Walk Meditation #2

- Walk slowly, in a relaxed manner, breathing a little deeper, in & out.
- As you walk, look for an object to pick up & carry with you for a time; perhaps a leaf, stone, or stick that you can easily carry.
- After a while, pause for a moment & closely observe your object. Notice: the leaf's shape, vein pattern, variation in color, or texture. Or, the stone's weight and shape in your hand, smooth or rough texture, or colors. Notice the bark on your stick, the color, texture, and feeling of the stick in your hand. Perhaps it would be fun to wave the stick in the air for a minute.
- When you feel finished observing your object, continue to walk slowly. When you feel ready, release your object back to the woods. You may want to say good-bye or thank the object for accompanying you on your walk.
- You may experience feelings about this meditation; perhaps worry that you didn't do it correctly, feeling self-conscious or silly about talking to your object, or frustration with the slower pace. Just notice the feelings, breathe deeply in & out, and let them go.

Seated Meditation

- Find a comfortable seated position
- Close your eyes or soften your gaze
- Spend one minute focused on slow, deep breathing
- Now shift your focus to the sounds around you
- Take in the different sounds of birds, the wind, the movement of trees or plants
- Resist the urge to name the sounds you hear, just allow the sounds to move through you, feeling a kinship with these sounds
- When you feel ready, after perhaps 5 -15 minutes, gently open your eyes & take in your surroundings again
- Notice if you sense anything differently from when you started
- Before you leave, thank your surroundings for allowing you to benefit from and be a part of this natural setting

