

## TH Activity Plan – Shirin-Yoku (Forest Bathing) Walk

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Photo by L. Fleming



**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:** Participants will participate & experience shinrin-yoku forest bathing during a facilitated walk.

**THERAPEUTIC GOALS:**

**Cognitive/Intellectual:** Expand knowledge & understanding of forest bathing, shinrin yoku including the health benefits of connecting with nature & trees

**Physical:** Use breathing exercises to calm self; breathe phytoncides; strengthen core muscles & improve balance & coordination

**Psychological/Emotional:** Practice relaxation techniques; develop strategies for coping with mental fatigue; improve self-regulation

**Sensory:** Recognize & integrate sensory inputs for mind-body relaxation

**Social:** Strengthen social awareness by respecting other's personal boundaries or need for space

**Materials**

Forested area

First aid kit

Water (have participants bring their own if possible)

Note: Ensure participants are dressed appropriately for the weather conditions, including appropriate footwear

**STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:**

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Facilitator selects a forested area for the walk, ensuring the length, grade & accessibility will be appropriate for participants. Ideally the path would be wheelchair accessible.
2. Facilitator begins session by introducing the concept of forest bathing or forest bathing/breathing/walking. Letting participants know the duration, & physical exertion level that will be required to ease any concerns.
3. Facilitator guides participants in 3 exercises described below: *Cognitive Quiet* exercise, *Fractals* exercise, & *Breathing in Mountain Pose* exercise. Add additional exercises that focus on other senses like touch & taste.
4. Facilitators, based on the needs of the group, can add time for debriefing to discuss experiences, emotions, and connecting with nature that occurred during the session. This can be done in a subsequent session, with additional information on shinrin-yoku presented to the group where appropriate.

**APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS:** All populations can benefit from forest bathing. Therapeutic goals can focus on various health domains, depending on participants and their needs. Forest bathing research has identified psychological benefits improving coping strategies for dealing with anxiety. For example, populations that experience stress, a shinrin-yoku (forest bathing) TH session can be used effectively to address this health challenge.

The physical benefits of forest bathing include lowering blood pressure, cortisol levels, blood sugar, along with improving pain thresholds, sleep, concentration, memory, while boosting the immune system (NK cells) and increasing anti-cancer protein production (Li, 2018).

**SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS:** Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts.

**NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:** Breathing in [phytoncides](#) (natural oils released by trees that are part of a tree's defense mechanism), is a fundamental element for shinrin-yoku. Bodies respond to phytoncides by increasing production of beneficial white cells which improves the ability to fight viruses.

Evergreen trees – [pine](#), conifers, [cedars](#), and spruces are the largest producers of phytoncides. Terpenes – d-limonene, alpha-pinene, camphene and beta-pinene have various fragrances including lemon, herb (basil or dill), and pine scent. These phytoncides can be smelled during forest walks (Li, 2018).

Sound is also a key component of shinrin-yoku. Noise impacts health, sleep, blood pressure and concentration, with studies validating negative impacts of child development, reading and verbal skills (p.152). Cognitive quiet, found in the sounds of forests can soothe participants mental health.

#### **Cognitive Quiet Exercise**

Slow down, allowing self to find a spot to sit and relax. Focus on breath, breathing rhythmically, returning to breath when distracted. Listen in all directions in the natural area to birds and wind. Close eyes to listen and hear more intensely. Be still, listening to nature's sounds (Li, 2018).

#### **Fractals Exercise**

Quiet self, looking up at sky, clouds and treetops. Look for nature's patterns in leaves, tree bark, and surfaces of a pond or river. Use visual sense to observe nature's patterns and the splendor of the natural world (Li, 2018).

#### **Breathing in Mountain Pose Exercise**

Stand with arms facing outward. Breathe through nose, raising arms overhead when exhaling. Hold pose for 4 counts. Stretch on tiptoes, reaching higher. Slowly lower arms to side. Pause. Repeat (Li, 2018).

#### **REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:**

Clark, M., & Schultz, J. (2025). [TH activity plan – Forest bathing](#). University of Florida Therapeutic Horticulture Activities Database.

Li, Q. (2018). *Forest bathing*. Viking.

Penguin Books UK. (2018) [The art and science of forest bathing with Dr. Quing Li](#). [Youtube].

Tree Canada (2023). [Trees: Our natural allies for living longer, healthier and happier lives](#). TreeCanada.ca.

Edits were made for THAD purposes in 2026.

TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2026.