

De-stress with a forest therapy activity by Carolynne Crawley

Transcript of forest therapy podcast available on the [TD Tree Days website](#)

Introduction

Carolynne Crawley (CC): Forest bathing can be enjoyed and adapted to different circumstances, locations and abilities. For example, you can still gain health benefits by following the podcast while looking at images of nature through a window, in a photograph or from memories of your favourite natural setting. Feel free to adapt the vision and hearing prompts to whichever senses are available to you, in a way that feels comfortable for you. For example, hearing prompts can be expanded to sensing vibrations; cues that connect to our vision can be adapted to awaken people to a full awareness using all available senses, or to consider which emotions or sensations you're feeling throughout the experience. We encourage you to wear headphones to increase the sensation of vibrations from sounds throughout the session. We hope you enjoy connecting with nature.

Forest therapy activity

CC: Hello, my name is Carolynne Crawley and I'm a certified forest therapy guide located in Toronto, Canada, which is the traditional territory of the Wendat, Anishnabeg, and the Haudenosaunee and a place where people from many Indigenous nations, including Inuit and Metis, now reside. I am also an Indigenous woman. I'm Mikmaq with African and Irish ancestry originally from the East Coast.

Today we'll have an opportunity to have a forest therapy experience. The practice of forest therapy is inspired by Shinrin-yoku which is a term coined in the 1980's in Japan. It's translated meaning is "bathing in the forest atmosphere." This practice focuses upon the many health benefits of forest bathing. The Japanese had been studying these benefits for several decades when the government noticed the adverse effects of the tech boom amongst the population.

But forest therapy is also an ancient practice. All of our ancestors at one time in history have been in a relationship with nature in their own unique and cultural way. For tens of thousands of years, Indigenous people of North America and around the world have been and continue to be in a deep relationship with the land.

Forest therapy helps us to slow down and connect with our surroundings in nature using all of our senses. I'm going to guide you through a forest therapy experience. I invite you to explore it in any way that feels comfortable for you. There is no right or wrong way of doing it. It's all about your own individual experience.

So, we're going to take a few minutes to arrive in this present moment while I guide you to tune into your senses. I invite you to use this time to connect with your surroundings and take a moment to get comfortable where you are.

If it feels right for you, close your eyes or have a soft gaze focusing upon one spot. Let's take a moment to slow down the rhythm of your breath by inhaling slowly through the nose, if possible, and slowly exhaling through your mouth.

[Silence for 10 seconds]

CC: As you continue to slow down the rhythm of your breath, perhaps bringing your awareness to the orchestra of sounds that are surrounding you in this moment.

[Silence for 8 seconds]

CC: Perhaps noticing the sounds that are coming from the land in all forms, including the sounds being created by humans, and finding a way to welcome it all in.

[Silence for 15 seconds]

CC: Now directing your attention to the closest sound you may be noticing in this moment in any way that feels comfortable for you.

[Silence for 10 seconds]

CC: And slowly expand your awareness to the furthest sound.

[Silence for 13 seconds]

CC: Feel free to exaggerate the sound of your own breath just loud enough for you to hear so that it too can become part of the orchestra of sounds.

[Silence for 23 seconds]

CC: Now bringing your awareness to our sense of touch, noticing any sensations you may be experiencing. Perhaps it's a breeze. Or the feeling of the sun's rays.

[Silence for 15 seconds]

CC: And if it feels right for you, feel free to bring your hands together to notice that sensation of touch.

[Silence for 30 seconds]

CC: Take a moment to notice your sense of smell. Noticing any scents or fragrances that may be in the air. Feel free to move your head from side to side, up or down, to get a whiff of any scents. There's no right or wrong way of doing it.

[Silence for 30 seconds]

CC: Now let's take a moment to notice your sense of taste. I wonder if there's any taste in the air. Feel free to stick out your tongue or gulp the air if that feels right for you. Or perhaps notice any tastes that may be lingering in our mouth. It's all about your own individual experience.

[Silence for 25 seconds]

CC: In a moment I'm going to invite you to open your eyes and return them to a full gaze. But before I do, perhaps take a moment to "bathe" in or focus upon one of these senses that's giving you the most pleasure. Just be with that sense and find a way to welcome it in.

[Silence for 30 seconds]

CC: If possible, feel free to open your eyes, or return them to full gaze. Perhaps looking upon your surroundings as if seeing them for the very first time.

[Silence for 5 seconds]

CC: Take a couple of minutes to notice where you are.

[Silence for 35 seconds]

CC: And now bring our awareness back to my voice as I'm going to lead you into an invitation to find a spot on the land to take a wellness break. Sitting on the land is an ancient practice. It was a way for all of our ancestors to connect and learn from the land. For their own survival, it was necessary to notice seasonal changes, signs of weather patterns, and movements on the land that told a story of what's happening in that place. Perhaps you want to sit or stand, whatever feels right for you. Feel free to be there for 10 minutes or longer, whatever serves you in this moment.

While at your spot perhaps gaze upon the land while noticing any movements happening or noticing the smallest of details. Or you may gaze upon the sky and notice the movements of clouds as they pass by, or any of their formations. Or perhaps noticing the shades of green or how the light and the shadows play on the land.

Just be there with all of your senses. If any gratitude arises within you during this time perhaps find a way to express it in whatever way feels comfortable for you.

I invite you to visit this place at least once a week to receive the many health benefits of being in nature. Perhaps prioritizing it as you would spending time with a loved one. This will create an opportunity to deepen one's relationship with the land. When we're in a deeper relationship with the land, we're more inclined to care for and protect the land, waters and all beings as we do with our relationships with our loved ones. Thank you for joining me today. And may the forest be with you!