



The Adore Your Outdoors Guide to doing Forest Bathing Alone

STEP 1 – Settle in

Once you are sat or stood comfortably, bring your focus to the breath. Begin inhaling deeply and exhaling slowly. I recommend breathing in for a count of 3 and out for 4 or 5.

This activates the parasympathetic nervous system which aids relaxation. Wander slowly around the area until you feel you'd like to stop and sit for a while. I'd suggest sitting by a tree. Put a mat down if you like, and I like to pull my hood up so when I lean back, I don't worry about creepy crawlies getting into my hair. You want to maximise your comfort and minimise unhelpful distraction.

Spend some time becoming acquainted with the area. Breathe deeply and slowly. Look up to the sky. Spend some time really noticing the colour of the sky and the appearance of the clouds. Bring your awareness to how the clouds move and their different layers and colours. Notice the branches and leaves in the canopy. Also notice any bodily sensations, feelings and emotions as they come.

We don't often look up in this way, and it can be a very soothing experience. Looking at fractals (patterns that repeat smaller and smaller copies of themselves) such as branching trees are known to aid relaxation. And then slowly bring your gaze lower and lower, until you get to the forest floor. Look at the ground and really notice it, pay attention to what you see. Spend some time to feel your connection to the earth beneath you, feel grounded, feel supported.

STEP 2 – Focus on your sense of touch

Spend at least 20 minutes exploring your sense of touch with openness and curiosity.

Feel the breeze on your bare skin, as it blows across your face, your hands, in your hair. Move your hands to face different directions and see how the experience changes for you. Feel free to remain seated or stand up and engage with your natural surroundings in this spot you've chosen. Touch the ground beneath you, the texture of the forest floor and the bark of the trunk you're leaning on. Pay attention to how the different surfaces feel and notice whether it's pleasant or not. Stay with it if it's enjoyable. I am often amazed at how smooth to the touch tree roots are, and how utterly sumptuous and squishy the moss is. Feel how it is for you to be supported by the tree and the ground. Feel connected and grounded, and enjoy the sense of belonging. By going Forest Bathing alone, you have complete freedom to explore whatever you are called to explore.

If you feel drawn to sketch or journal, go ahead. I like to use the prompt, "Here in the natural world, I feel connected to..." and write, but sometimes I just like to doodle. If your



mind wanders, bring your attention back to the breath and the present moment, acknowledge and thank the thoughts, and let them go.

STEP 3 – Take a slow walk noticing movement

Another Forest Bathing exercise you can do alone is to wander through the forest at a snail's pace engaging all your senses. Focus on the movement around you for this invitation. Align your rhythms with the rhythms of the forest and return to your natural way of being (instead of rushing about or juggling multiple tasks). When you become aware of a particular sensory experience, stay with there and see if you can connect with it more deeply. This could be noticing a dangling leaf spinning in the breeze and watching it for some time, with awareness of how you feel as you watch. Or perhaps you become aware of the sound of the breeze blowing through the leaves, so stop a while and listen. When you feel ready to move on, continue wandering very, very slowly.

Aim to cover no more than 100 metres in a 20-minute period noticing the movement and aliveness of the forest as you wander. This is v.e.r.y s.l.o.w so if it feels like you are dawdling and this brings up some discomfort, you are doing it 'right'.

Step 4 - Connect with gratitude for Forest Bathing alone

Wander again slowly, breathing deeply, noticing your surroundings. Using your body radar (your gut instinct), stop at a place where you'd like to spend some time. Using the natural materials around you build a gratitude gift for someone or something in your life you feel thankful for. Take only what will help you and try to do minimal damage to any living beings. Feel into the feelings of gratitude as you create and allow any emotions or sensations in the body to be felt. Go ahead if you'd like to journal or sketch, and I often photograph my creation (but make sure phone is on aeroplane mode so you don't see all the queued up notifications as you open the camera app). Leave this gift in place when you finish, as a gift to the forest and anyone or anything else that passes.

Step 5 – Take a Forest Bathing 'Walk of Praise'

As you leave the forest, walk slowly, and stop each time you notice that another being has given you something. It could be a moment of visual beauty, a scent, the support of the earth beneath you.... whatever you are drawn to. When you stop, find a way to acknowledge the being through gratitude; some words, a touch, a bow or simply staying with that feeling of thanks for a while. When you are ready, continue walking until you connect with the next thing that captures your attention, repeating the steps until you reach the edge of the forest.