

Forest Bathing Gives New Meaning to Term “Treehugger”

Ok, guys, we know, we know! It may seem a little “out there” but we are all dealing with a lot these days between work, home, and everything in between, so, why not relieve a little stress by hugging a tree! Now, the term “treehugger” doesn’t literally mean to hug a tree but the new trend called “forest bathing” or “forest therapy” encourages us to do just that.

Forest Bathing differs from other outdoor and hiking activities in that it is a more meditative and much slower stroll through the forest. By using all your senses with each step taken you are able to really connect, mentally melt the stress away and start noticing things you wouldn’t otherwise notice. Little worlds, the sun highlighting the leaves, the slightest of breezes caressing your skin, you get the picture! But really, not having to rush around, and simply escaping the hustle and bustle, can do amazing things for your health...mentally, spiritually and physically.

In fact, researchers at the National Center of Atmospheric Research (NCAR) have discovered that forest plants release a chemical form of aspirin when responding to stress. Significant amounts of this chemical, methyl salicylate, are released into the atmosphere. This chemical actually boosts the immune system, protects against bacteria and viruses, improves mental health and more! Other studies show forest bathing also lowers cortisol levels, heart rate, and even blood pressure.

Though forest bathing has only been trending in western society for a few years now, the Japanese have been embracing this practice; they call “Shinrin-Yoku” which means “taking in the forest atmosphere” since the mid-80’s.

What would happen if everyone took just a few hours out of their stressful lives to just forget work, time, and social media? Maybe it would give way to childhood memories of cloud watching, tree climbing and running through fields. Maybe it would remind us that life exists literally everywhere! Imagine the possibilities.

To find a certified tour in your area go to www.natureandforesttherapy.org

To plant a tree for \$1 and help fight global deforestation go to <http://www.onetreeplanted.com>