

Forest Bathing

Don't worry, this isn't about having a bubble bath in the woods! Forest bathing is a Japanese process of relaxation; known in Japan as Shinrin yoku. It is important that we all take time out to relax our minds and bodies, especially as we are currently spending even more time than usual looking at screens. Being out in nature is proven to have a positive impact on our mental health.

Before you start, turn your phone off or onto silent. This activity is about taking some time to switch off. You can do this in your garden or local park. There are lots of suggestions here, you can have a go at them all or choose a couple to try.



Every breath
you take...



Find somewhere quiet and comfortable to stand, sit or lay. Spend a moment focusing on your breathing. Breathe in for a count of 4 and out for 6. Gradually increase the time it takes for your out breath. Closing your eyes can help you focus. Once you are feeling relaxed, shift your focus to listening to the sounds around you. Can you distinguish between those that are close and further away? Are the sounds you can hear natural or man-made?



Colour
coding...



Try and find different natural objects that create a colour spectrum. If they are not alive and it is safe to do so, you could collect them, or just note them as you look around. It could be that you find lots of different shades of green or brown and organise them from lightest to darkest or find all the colours to make a rainbow or a colour wheel.





Beat it...

Try tapping out a rhythm on a tree trunk or on the ground. This might feel a bit strange at first, but try to relax and just experiment with the sounds that can be made.

You could try using different natural materials as drum sticks and see which one sounds best.

If you are with other people, try tapping out a rhythm for them to copy.

Can you have a conversation without any words?



Tipping the balance...

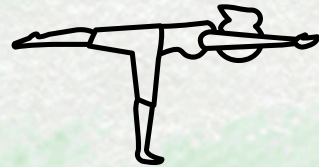
Take a moment to close your eyes and think about how the ground feels underneath your feet.

If it's appropriate, take your shoes and socks off and really feel the ground beneath you.

Wiggle your toes and then anchor them into the ground.

Try to distribute your weight evenly across your feet. Fix your gaze on a still object straight ahead and slowly lift one foot off the ground. If your balance is good, tip forward from your hips and try and take one leg out behind you. Keep your movement slow and controlled – remember to keep breathing!

Now try this with your eyes closed. Don't forget to try each foot. Is your balance better on one side?



I got a feeling...

Find an area of mud, sand, leaves, grass or tree bark.

Gently run your fingers across the surface, noticing how it feels.

Try picking it up and let it fall through your fingers.

Rub it between your finger and thumb.

Enjoy exploring the different textures with your hands.

