



DIALOGUE WITH NATURE

Thank you for allowing me to share with you a journey into the natural world through Shinrin Yoku or more commonly known as forest bathing. Shinrin Yoku is a forest therapy designed for your well-being.

If you've not done this before, you can always take it easy and slowly. The forest doesn't judge or hurry. However, if you are the type who meditates and are aware of topics of mindfulness and self-awareness, then you'll find Shinrin Yoku to be a refreshing way to go deeper into yourself with the help of nature's pure energy.



BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Make sure you have identified a park, an eco-zone or a forest near you. Just be sure that these spaces are not hindered by noise pollution such as highways or construction sites. I would also suggest that you begin your forest bathing session between 7.30 - 8.00 am. This is the best time as you can then hear the birds chirping, feel the trees' morning presence and plants beginning their day as they look forward to the refreshing morning sun.

CHOOSING 'INVITATIONS' BY THE FOREST

You can go through the exercise in the following pages. They will be called "invitations". Every invitation allows you to open up your senses to nature. That's how you connect with every living being in the forest or the park of your own choosing.

I would suggest that you stay in each invitation for at least 15-20 minutes at a minimum. You can use your phone timer to keep you informed. At the end of each invitation, ask yourself this question: *What am I noticing?* Remember, there is no right or wrong answer. This is where you can express yourself fully without judgement.



WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING WITH YOU

Things you need to bring with you when you are on your forest bathing session:

- A small and light backpack
- A small notebook and a pen/pencil
- A small bottle of water

Your backpack should not be heavy as it will get in the way of your experience. Forest bathing sessions are meant to be calming, relaxing and easy. Let the forest or the trees/plants bring you to their place of presence. Nothing should weigh you down when you are forest bathing.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Remember to slow down each time you find yourself picking up the pace. The moment you feel tired or as if you've just went on a hike, then you're not forest bathing. You are just working out.

Slow down. You are walking and being in forest time.

The natural world and our concrete world are 2 different worlds. To enter the natural world, there would be a way for you to bring your mind and your consciousness level to nature's level. We will need to create a doorway, in our minds, to enter that world. It is a simple method which marks the beginning of your forest bathing session.



HERE'S HOW YOU BEGIN...

1. Ask for permission

Once you're in the forest, park or an ecozone of your choosing, look for a stick or a branch. This will be your tool to create that gateway in to the natural world. Find a spot, lay the stick on the ground (imagine there is a line or a door). Then establish an introduction and ask the forest this question out loud or in your heart: "Hello, I'm here now and I am ready to enter your amazing and beautiful world. Can I enter, please?"

You will know instinctively when you are given the permission. In your own way, you can thank the forest for permission to enter. Remember to keep the stick or branch with you.

2. Set an intention

We all have some questions or challenges in life which we want answers to. And nature is one of the best guide to help you navigate through them. Ask the forest any questions - health, career, relationship, etc. You are welcome to seek counsel. After all, the forest is now your therapist. Be open and receive the answers nature is about to give you.

3. Open your senses to the forest

We will be connecting with the forest with our senses. This is how you will communicate with nature. Close your eyes when you perform the exercises below:

1. Take a long, deep breath. Hold and exhale very, very slowly. Do this at least 5 times.
2. Hold your arms out, feel the air around you. Move your arms around, just take your time to feel the atmosphere around you. Do you feel any sensations? The slight breeze? Or the cool, crisp morning air?
3. Listen deeply. Single out a sound. Then focus on the furthest sound. What can you hear? Birds chirping, leaves rustling, your own breath? It can be anything. Just notice.
4. Lastly, hold your arms out with your palms facing forward. Treat yourself like a human radar sensing the environment with your palms. Now turn around, slowly. Stop when you feel it in you that it's the right direction. Then gently open your eyes. And take a snapshot of what you see, like taking a Polaroid picture.



You can now start with the invitations...

Walk in forest time (20 mins)

There is nowhere to go or to be in the forest. Focus on your steps and nature's surroundings. Walk slower than you usually do (50% slower) and take in the presence around you, from the trees right down to every single blade of grass under your feet. You can do this for at least a minimum of 20 mins. And if you like it, you can pro-long it. Take as much time as you need with this invitation. Let the trees and plants reveal themselves to you as you walk slowly.

Then ask yourself: What am I noticing?

Have a conversation with a tree (15 mins)

Find a tree that you're attracted to. You can stand in front of it, sit underneath it or lean on it. Introduce yourself to the tree. Take your time when you are trying to listen for a reply. Sometimes their responses can come in a form of leaves rustling or sometimes a feeling you get from deep within. It doesn't really matter how because you will know. From there, you can then talk further openly or in your heart. Treat the tree like a new friend at the playground. It's meant to be fun when you are talking to a tree. You can speak out loud, whisper or just speak from your heart.

Then ask yourself: What am I noticing?

Write a letter to a tree or a plant (15 mins)

This invitation requires you to write what you feel like expressing to a tree/plant. Choose a tree or a plant that you feel like you are connect to. Stand in front of it and feel its presence. Then start writing a letter to the tree or plant. The content in the letter does not matter. It's up to you what and how you want to express your thoughts and feelings to it. Once you're done, put down your pen and notebook. Then inhale and exhale deeply. Do this 3 times. Now go back to the letter you've just written and read it.

Then ask yourself: What am I noticing?



Leaving the more-than-human world

Now find a space or a spot where you can put that stick/branch down. Next, consider the experiences and the gifts the tree/plants have given you. Invite them into your deepest awareness and these gifts will be somewhere alive within you. Thank the trees/plants in your own way. Then step across the stick/branch leaving the more-than-human world and back to your world, carrying the gifts nature has given you.

REMEMBER...

You can do this session with the same invitations mentioned over and over again and each time, you'll feel a difference from the previous one. This is because we're never be the same person from the previous day/week/month/year. Hence, the different experience and sentiment you get with each Shinrin Yoku session. We are meant to grow and evolve to our next potential.

And with the gifts from nature, you can bloom beautifully in your life.



About Me



"We are all one with nature." Those are the words that kept me looking for ways to get the world and its people to see that nature is all we have on the planet, one way or another.

My name is Ong Sue Yin and I'm on a quest to be the storyteller for Mother Nature. I'm a Yasei Shinrin yoku guide and I'm the voice behind Dialogue With Nature (facebook.com/DialogueWithNature/).

I have devoted my life to studying and practicing the teachings of Shinrin Yoku while guiding those who came across my path and more who will.

As I guide those in my charge through the forest, I open up all their senses so they can receive the forest's energy in full openness of heart, body, mind and soul. I truly believe that there is no greater energy to be experienced and harnessed than nature's energy.

When you're with me, all I'll tell you is to just be and let the forest do what it wants with you and for you. Because that's when you'll begin to understand the immense power of nature. See trees in a new light. Hear how the leaves rustle in their playfulness. Feel the gentleness of the flowing stream. Taste the breeze in the forest. Come alive with nature's aliveness when I guide you as you walk the trails.

Forest bathing with me is a wonder each time. Come as you are; with or without the baggage of your world. But once the forest therapy begins, I'll take you to the depths of the natural world you never knew existed. And you'll soon discover another world in nature that is untapped by human consciousness. And this natural world acts like an unlimited holding space for those seeking answers to questions in your life; it also heals you from deep within and never asks for anything in return except for your respect and kindness.

Take a walk in the forest with me and discover the healing and therapeutic benefits of Shinrin Yoku.

For more info about Shinrin Yoku or if you prefer to experience a private or group Shinrin Yoku session with me, you can reach me at **012-3760630** or sueyin.ong83@gmail.com.

