Forest Therapy

WHAT DOES THE TERM MEAN?

Forest therapy, also known as “shinrin-yoku” or forest bathing, is an innovative yet ancient Japanese nature-based therapeutic approach gaining recognition for its positive impact on mental well-being, particularly among young individuals. Rooted in the belief that spending time in natural environments can enhance overall health, forest therapy combines mindfulness, sensory engagement, and a connection to nature to promote emotional resilience and psychological well-being.

The link between nature and mental health

Spending time in forests has been found to boost levels of important brain chemicals that help with mental well-being. In a study, researchers discovered that people who spent time in forests had higher levels of a chemical called serotonin in their blood after their forest visit compared to before.

Serotonin is a type of chemical in the brain that helps regulate mood, heart health, and some mental health conditions like depression and anxiety. People with conditions like depression or anxiety often have lower levels of serotonin.

Being in nature can also help restore our mental energy and make us feel better. Hearing natural sounds, like birds singing, can improve our focus and happiness. Many studies have shown this, using different methods like surveys or brain imaging.

Benefits for younger generations

For young individuals navigating the challenges of contemporary life, forest therapy offers a breath of fresh air — quite literally. The practice involves immersing oneself in a natural setting, engaging the senses mindfully to connect with the environment. This can include activities such as guided walks, meditation, and reflective exercises designed to heighten awareness and foster a sense of presence in the moment. Other important aspect is that youngsters spend some of-screen time.

Scientifically, forest therapy has been linked to reduced stress levels, improved mood, and enhanced cognitive function. For young individuals facing academic pressures, social anxieties, or mental health challenges, the calming and rejuvenating effects of spending time in nature can be transformative. It provides a non-judgmental environment where individuals can explore their thoughts and emotions, fostering a sense of inner peace and emotional balance.

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In conclusion, further research has reported that Forest Bathing and similar nature-connection activities can have a significant positive effect on mental health, especially in those experiencing depression.
For some people, nature therapies such as forest bathing have been shown to be more effective in relieving symptoms of depression than hospital-based psychotherapy.

Bibliography

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