

# Take a bath...in the forest

The competition between screen time and green time is intense. Research shows that students in grades 4 to 12 spend just over 7 hours a day on screens. And a growing body of evidence links excessive screen time to health issues such as obesity, anxiety and depression.

Getting kids off their screens is no easy feat. A relatively new phenomenon, "forest bathing", taken from a tradition in Japan known as

*shinrin-yoku*, can help kids connect with nature.

Forest bathing is a form of nature therapy that incorporates gentle meditative practices, so it can be done by virtually anyone.



It's really just as simple as going into the forest (or other natural area) and taking it all in... walking slowly, inhaling the scent of trees, lying on the ground, touching a tree trunk, watching the sunlight shining through the leaves, listening to the sounds of the forest or tasting the freshness of the air as you take deep breaths.

It is immersing yourself - completely, wholly and simply - in the natural environment. Try forest bathing for a simple yet effective way to "unplug" from it all.

*Many years ago, Benjamin Franklin sat in front of an open window each morning, taking in the fresh air for 30 minutes. He believed his daily "air bath" was important to his overall well-being.*

## 5 easy steps to forest bathing

1

Go into the forest (leave your phone behind). You can also go into your backyard or any natural area.

2

Walk gently and slowly, with no destination in mind. Allow your body to guide you... listen to where it wants to go (for example, follow a leaf in the wind).

3

Open your senses. See. Hear. Taste. Smell. Touch. Take in all that nature has to offer.

4

Take your time. It doesn't matter if you don't get far... that's not the goal. You are simply savoring all of nature around you and reconnecting with your senses to help turn down the volume of your inner thoughts.

5

Relax, unwind and release.

For more information about the practice of forest bathing, read M. Amos Clifford's simple yet inspiring book on the subject, "Your Guide to Forest Bathing".



Practice forest bathing around Lake Simcoe regularly #stepintonature. Tag us on Twitter @LSRCA or Instagram @lakesimcoeconservation.

[www.LSRCA.on.ca](http://www.LSRCA.on.ca)



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