

FOREST THERAPY

By: Linda Findlay



Forest Therapy is a practice of spending quality time in a forest surrounded by nature. Many people find it therapeutic to connect with nature. Forest Therapy has become more well known than ever before. Because some of us do not live near an actual forest, I can assure you that there are many places in any community where you can surround yourself with nature. Take some time to search out what parks are available around you and make a visit. I also suggest that all you go outdoors, place a chair in the grass, take your shoes off (depending on what time of year and your location), and put your feet on the ground. Grounding can be done in most places. Getting outside and grounding yourself can have similar effects to going into a forest!

Going for a walk and being surrounded by nature has always been known to have a soothing effect. Many research studies have been conducted that definitively prove the benefits from surrounding yourself with nature.

When we are grieving, we are stressed. When we are stressed, we feel threatened. Our bodies automatically prepare for fight or flight. Our heart rate and breathing increase, digestion slows down, and our bodies release hormones that are meant to help us survive the threat. In grief, the stress and resulting interpretation of threat is prolonged for an extended period of time. It only makes sense that when we are grieving, we are releasing higher levels of stress hormones that can and do affect our wellbeing. We live in a high alert state. Couple that with everyday demands and stress, it could be a recipe for a lot of physical and emotional consequences.

Forest Therapy has been shown, through science-based research, to reduce the level of stress hormones and bring them back to a normal level. A normal level is extremely important to maintain good health. There is also a connection between chronic stress and exacerbated symptoms of many diseases and ailments.

Benefits of Forest Therapy:

Increase your ability to focus.

Improve overall mood.

Promote better sleep.

Increase level of energy

Enhance feeling of happiness

Overall, learning to incorporate different science-based modalities in your care plan will help you to cope with grief. Forest Therapy is one of many science-based modalities that have been shown to benefit those who are grieving. If you can't find a forest or park, or have a private area to ground yourself, create a green space in your home. Buying a couple of plants and enjoying them are not a replacement, but it is worth a try. Remember, it is what you do with your time that matters most when you are grieving!