

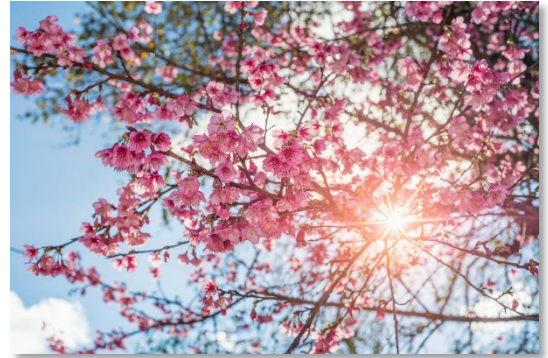
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Step Into the Wild: How Nature Can Heal Your Body and Mind

Need a rest? Nature has the answer

Ever feel like you're running on empty? Between work, responsibilities, and endless screen time, modern life can feel like being trapped in a never-ending hamster wheel. But what if the key to feeling better, thinking clearer, and living healthier isn't another cup of coffee or a vacation that never fits into your budget or schedule? What if it's as easy as stepping outside?

Imagine your mind as a smartphone. Too many apps running in the background drains the battery, and without regular updates, everything slows down. Now, think of nature as your reset button—clearing the clutter, boosting energy, and bringing you back to life. That's what forest bathing does.



Nature is your superpower (and free!)

Japan has a name for this organic magic: **Shinrin-yoku**, or forest bathing. But don't let the fancy name fool you because this isn't hiking, exercise, or an excuse for skinny dipping. It's simply being in nature, unplugged and present. And science backs up why it works.

- **It lowers stress** – Studies show that just 20 minutes in a green space can lower cortisol, the hormone that fuels feelings of stress and anxiety.
- **It boosts your immune system** – Trees release phytoncides, natural chemicals that help your body fight disease.
- **It makes you happier** – Nature exposure triggers serotonin and dopamine, the same "feel-good" hormones released when we laugh with friends.
- **It strengthens your heart** – Regular time in nature lowers blood pressure and reduces the risk of heart disease.
- **It clears mental fog** – Struggling to focus? Nature restores attention and sparks creativity.

Think about the last time you took a deep, refreshing breath outside. Felt good, didn't it? That's your body remembering something powerful—it *needs* nature to function at its best.

The invitation: Step outside

You don't need to book a trip to the mountains or go off the grid to experience these benefits. The key is intention, making conscious choices. Instead of scrolling social media during lunch, step outside. Swap one streaming or TV episode for a short stroll. Open a window and breathe in fresh air. Small choices create big changes. Here's how to bring a little nature back into your life:



1. Find green near you

- Visit a park, a botanical garden, a quiet tree-lined street, etc.
- Walk a different route home that takes you past green spaces.
- Try having morning coffee outside on the porch, deck, or patio instead of the kitchen.

2. Let your senses lead: Try this 5-4-3-2-1 nature reset as a powerful way to find a moment of bliss.

- **5 things you can see** – Notice the trees, the sky, the movement of leaves, the way sunlight dances at sunrise or sunset, roaming animals, or even a tiny insect at work.
- **4 things you can feel** – Sense the breeze on your skin, the ground beneath your bare feet, the warmth of the sun, or the texture of bark or leaf.
- **3 things you can hear** – Listen for birds chirping, the wind leaves rustling, or the distant sound of running water.
- **2 things you can smell** – Breathe in the freshness of pine, damp earth, or blooming flowers.
- **1 thing you can taste** – Inhale deeply and notice the crispness of the air or take a sip of water and feel it's refreshing coolness. With thousands of taste buds, even subtle flavors connect you to nature—see if you can detect them.

3. Ditch the distractions

- Put your phone on silent and take a slow, tech-free walk.
- Leave behind music or podcasts and just listen to nature.
- Move slowly. No need to track steps because this isn't about exercise, it's about being present in the moment.

4. Make it routine

- Start with 10 minutes a day and build up from there.
- Try "Green Breaks" at work by walking outside instead of checking emails.
- Make it social by inviting a friend for a nature walk instead of happy hour.

The more time you spend outside, the more you'll crave it. And soon, you won't just *want* nature, you'll realize you *need* it.



What if you can't get outside? Bring nature to you.

Maybe your schedule (or the weather) keeps you indoors. Or perhaps allergies make spending time outside a challenge. The good news is you can still tap into nature's benefits without leaving your home or office.

1. Green up your space

- Add houseplants (bonus: they clean the air, too!).
- Swap digital backgrounds on all devices to scenic landscapes.
- Hang nature-inspired art or posters of forests and mountains.

2. Tune into nature

- Play nature sounds—ocean waves, birds, or rain help reduce stress.
- Use essential oils like pine, lavender, or eucalyptus for a fresh, earthy feel.
- Open a window whenever possible because fresh air makes a difference.

3. Choose natural materials

- Surround yourself with wood, stone, and organic textures.
- Wear clothes made from natural fibers like cotton and wool.
- Swap synthetic candles for beeswax or soy.

Mother Nature is calling—will you answer?

Remember the smartphone metaphor? You wouldn't go weeks without charging your phone, so why let yourself run on empty? Nature is the recharge button you didn't know you needed. Let nature do what it does best—heal, restore, and inspire. You'll be amazed at what a little fresh air can do.

Allow yourself to pause what you're doing right now. Step outside for 60 seconds. Feel the air on your skin, notice the details of a nearby plant, and hear the birds calling. Take a deep, conscious breath through your nose—inhale, exhale. Let nature remind you that you're part of something bigger, something vibrant and alive.



Go on, she's waiting. And don't worry—the internet will still be here when you get back.