

Fire Circle Nature and Forest Therapy Trail Self-Guide

The mission of the Well Being Retreat Center is to promote harmony with Nature, wellness of body, and peace of mind. One of the many ways to explore and experience Nature here is through a Nature and Forest Therapy self-guided experience along this trail.

Nature and Forest Therapy, also known as “forest bathing” or “Shinrin-Yoku”, is a research-based practice that supports wellness and healing through immersion in Nature. Slowing down and connecting to the natural world through the direct perceptions of your senses offers benefits for the body, mind, and soul.

The Fire Circle Trail offers an interactive, sensory experience between you and Nature. A wide range of experiences are possible - depending on the time of day, the season, what shows up around you, or what might serve you. You are invited to let go of any expectations, drop into your body, and give yourself the time and space to explore from your innate awareness.

This self-guide provides invitations you can use during your walk that will guide you through a forest therapy experience. The invitations open the door for you to experience Nature through your senses. Let go of labels, stories and what you might already know about the plants and animals and just experience them directly. Give yourself the time and space to meander along this trail, exploring the invitations and seeing where that experience takes you. Consider lingering with each invitation for at least 15 minutes and then consider what you are noticing before you move on. You will find signs along the way that cue you to the different invitation and you can explore them in any order along the trail. Each sign will correspond with an invitation offered in this guide that can be experienced at the sign or as you wander in the area nearby.

If you notice something with one of your senses or there is something around you that you notice that is not connected to one of the invitations offered, be open to follow it. Trees will surround you along the trail and to honor their presence throughout, you will not find a sign for a tree invitation. Be aware of these trees and be open to find one that is calling to you along your walk to sit with and explore with all your senses. I wonder what that tree might have to offer you or what you might offer it.

As you begin your walk - Awaken the Senses: In the area near the start of the trail, pause and sit or stand for a moment. Experience what it is like to tune in to what is around you through your senses.

- Breathe and notice your breath for a moment. Perhaps place your hand over your heart
- What is the rhythm and melody of this place like – what sounds do you hear?
- Can you catch any scents on the air? Things that might be near and far?
- Play with your sense of taste as you breathe the air in as if through a straw – what can you taste?
- What do you notice as you tune into your sense of touch? Can you feel your clothes on your skin or the air or sun touching you?
- What do you see? In the colors, shapes, shadows and light around you?

Rocks: Wander out and meet these rocks with your body. I wonder how many ways your body can fit amongst these rocks. How do these rocks invite you to hold them and be held by them?

What's in Motion: Walk slowly, one step at a time, or sit and notice what or who is in motion around you. What are you noticing?

Look Up: It is natural to look down towards the ground as we walk and move. Find a spot that is calling to you, get comfortable in some way and gaze up towards the sky. I wonder what might catch your eye.

River's Edge: Wander to the water's edge and explore what you find in the reflection, sound or the presence of the water as it moves. Be with it and see how it moves you.

Soundscape: Wander, find a spot to sit, and listen to this place. To further tune in you might consider closing your eyes to allow you to focus in on what you hear.

Small Things: Wander and find some of the small things that are here. See what you notice in things that you are drawn to that fit into the palm of your hand. Explore them with your senses. What is it like to close your eyes as you do?

Pause at the end of your walk: Take a moment to reflect on your experience and find a way to bring your experience to a close. Offer whatever you wish back to the land for what it may have offered you on your walk.

If there was an invitation that you connected with on the Fire Circle Nature and Forest Therapy Trail, consider trying it out elsewhere along the land during your stay. One of the beautiful things about this land is that Nature is alive and present from the river to the top of the hill and everywhere in between. **Walk, wander, slow down, tune in, breathe, be - and simply see what you notice.**

This trail, Certified and Dedicated on June 18, 2022, was made possible by:



- The commitment of the Well Being Foundation to provide visitors to this land different ways to experience the healing power of nature.
- Certified Nature and Forest Therapy Guide and Trail Consultant Christine Hoyer – who created this self-guide. For more information about her Mindful Meanders and other nature and forest therapy experiences visit www.mindful-meanders.com (mindfulmeanders@gmail.com; 865-366-5371).
- The Association of Nature and Forest Therapy: www.ANFT.earth