



Linda T'ai Chi Ch'uan Community Weekly Handout March 30, 2025

Turning to Nature



*Summer, fall, winter, spring,
The seasons rotate as each brings
Its special beauty to this Earth of ours.
Winter's snow and summer's flowers;
Frozen rivers will flow come spring,
There is a renewal of everything.*
—Edna Frohock, American poet (1906 - 97)

As we leave the predominant energy of the winter, Yin, and embrace the predominant energy of the spring and summer, Yang, we turn to nature for rejuvenation, restoration and peace. We need to keep in mind however, that Yin and Yang are one in the same so we never are totally yin or totally yang. They are complimentary energy forces that constantly transform from one to the other. There is always yin in yang, and yang in yin.

The Yang energy is the outgoing active energy of the sun. As the weather warms and the sun peeps out a little each day, we are called to the outdoors. For thousands of years before civilization we lived in harmony and seamlessly with nature. Nature was our guide. We followed the flow of the seasons, the weather and the phases of the moon. We ate the foods that grew in each season. We lived with the flow of nature. Modern society often fights with nature in hopes of controlling it. This affects our health and wellbeing,

“ Of the more formalized approaches to leveraging the special qualities of nature, forest bathing, or as it was first coined in Japanese, *shinrin yoku*, has started to grow momentum in the American cultural zeitgeist. Only popularized as a term in 1982 by Tomohide Akiyama, then Director of the Japanese Forestry Agency, it can be thought of as the intentional practice of surrounding oneself in nature and being mindful of each sense³—something more conscious and unplugged than staring at a smartphone underneath a tree. The term may be relatively young, but the concept is something that dates back throughout the Holocene Epoch in Earth’s geological history. Scholarly work suggests that Cyrus the Great, founder of the Persian Achaemenid Empire in 550 BCE, built gardens with the intention of improving his peoples’ health.”

“As its format is still being shaped by its practitioners, the results of forest bathing are coming into clearer view. Research has indicated that a variety of forest bathing activities are associated with positive health outcomes and reveals that even different logistical approaches, such as the length of time spent or specific

actions (e.g., walking, sitting) can correlate to beneficial outcomes. The practice is connected with reductions in heart rate, stimulation of the parasympathetic nervous system (i.e., a person's "rest and digest" processes), lowered blood pressure, and increases in natural killer cells."

This past week, I talked about how Tai Chi and Qigong engages the parasympathetic nervous system. Our society is throwing so many things at us currently affecting our flight fright freeze (fawn) sympathetic system. Without rest, we make ourselves sick by staying in this alert system on a regular basis.

"Dr. Yoshifumi Miyazaki of Chiba University, whose expertise gained international recognition upon the publication of his book, *Shinrin Yoku: The Japanese Art of Forest Bathing*, writes: 'Pay attention to any areas of stiffness or pain in the body and consciously relax them. Become aware of your present mental and emotional states. Pay attention to the experience of walking and keep your awareness engaged in this experience. Be aware of the beginning, the middle, and the end of your stepping. Walk as silently as possible.' ""

The quoted material above is from *Written by Will Lerner, Communications Manager for Portland Japanese Garden and Japan Institute.*

To continue the evidence of engaging the parasympathetic system, from the Journal of Exercise Science and Fitness let me add and I quote " that Traditional Chinese exercises like Tai Chi and Qigong integrate breathing, intentional movement, and mental focus. This trifecta seems to activate the body's parasympathetic nervous system (the "rest and restore" mode), while subtly challenging balance, coordination, and attention. The result is a kind of moving mindfulness that appears to shift brain chemistry in your

favor. What makes this study especially compelling is the population: healthy adults over 45. So, we're not just talking about people recovering from illness or already in cognitive decline—this is about prevention and optimization in the prime of life.”

From the article found in SuperAge.com



Seek the sun and nature for healing, peace and calm

Peace, Linda