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INTERNATIONAL GRIEF INSTITUTE

# RESILIENCE RX™

## FOREST THERAPY

### Self care techniques for the bereaved

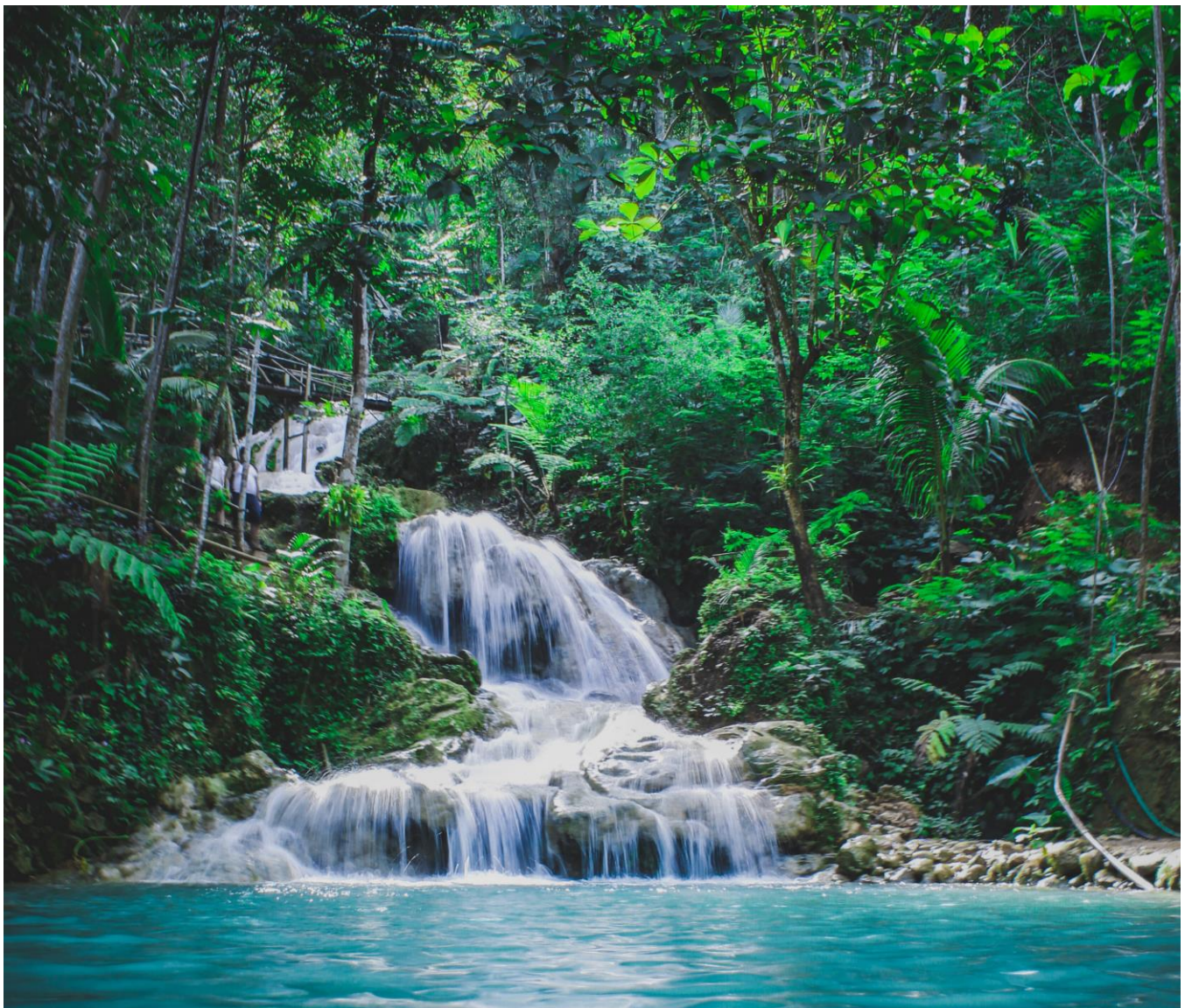
The science behind why they work and how to implement them after loss



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## BENEFITS

Forest therapy is rooted in the Japanese practice of Shinrin-yoku, which is often translated as “forest bathing.” According to a 10-year study by Dr. Margaret Stroebe and Dr. Henk Schut, the Dual Process Model of Coping recommends a change of scenery as part of a healthy grief process. Nature offers one of the most reliable boosts to your mental and physical well-being.

There are moments when all anxiety and stated toil are becalmed in the infinite leisure and repose of nature.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

## WHY IT WORKS

Forest bathing appears to increase your body's parasympathetic activity which slows down the heart rate, conserves energy and prompts rest. Exposing your brain to restorative environments by immersing yourself in the atmosphere of the forest elicits feelings of awe which helps improve mental fatigue. Research shows that people's mental energy can bounce back even when they just look at pictures of nature.

One study found that students sent into the forest for two nights had lower levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, and decreased heart rate than those who spent that time in the city.

Among office workers, the view of nature out a door or window is associated with lower stress and higher job satisfaction (Biomedical and Environmental Sciences, 2012).

## Emotional connection

Stress, anxiety, and depression may all be eased by time outdoors, especially when combined with brisk movement or exercise. The effects of nearby water such as a stream, waterfall or fountain improves it even more.

## Nature's benefits

The natural environment is restorative, and studies demonstrate a wide array of health benefits, especially in the cardiovascular and immune systems, and for stabilizing and improving mood and cognition.

Doses of nature from a walk outside can restore waning attention, improve concentration, decrease anxiety levels and improve your mood. Even looking at a natural scene through a window can help.

Forest bathing not only lowers production of stress hormones, it also influences our immune system. Natural chemicals secreted by evergreen trees known as phytoncides have been shown to improve our body's immune functions, which can be critical when we're emotionally under duress after losing a loved one.



## HOW IT WORKS

- ✓ Restores waning attention
- ✓ Improves focus
- ✓ Rejuvenates mental fatigue
- ✓ Improves concentration
- ✓ Decreases anxiety
- ✓ Improves bad mood

## Ways to enjoy the outdoors

- ✓ Walking
- ✓ Gardening
- ✓ Bike ride
- ✓ Hiking
- ✓ Kayaking
- ✓ Sailing
- ✓ Golfing
- ✓ Kite flying
- ✓ Mining for gems
- ✓ Outdoor photography
- ✓ Metal detecting
- ✓ Team sports such as soccer