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What is forest therapy? Group aims to get kids off their screens and into nature

"The more you spend outside the healthier and the happier you're going to be. There's a lot of research that backs that up," said Brook MacDonald, president and CEO of The Conservation Foundation

By **Lauren Petty** • Published June 19, 2023 • Updated on June 19, 2023 at 5:12 pm

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Getting kids off their screens and onto a nature trail is the goal of The Conservation Foundation in Naperville. Lauren Petty reports.

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From bugs to rocks, children taking part in a half-day camp were excited to explore not only the gardens on MacDonald Farm, but also how nature makes their bodies feel.

They participated in forest therapy, led by a trained forest therapy guide and Vice President of Community Conservation at The Conservation Foundation Alison Paul.

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“Forest therapy is sometimes called forest bathing, where you're bathing in the atmosphere of the forest,” Paul said.

Paul says research has found mindfulness can really have a calming effect and impact your cortisol or your stress hormone levels

The benefits from being in nature don't go ; the impact stays with you and the more you



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Popular in Japan, The Conservation Foundation says forest therapy is catching on in the U.S.

“We're doing more and more forest therapy programs and we also train people on forest therapy as well,” MacDonald said.

But Paul points out, you don't need a guided forest therapy session to get the benefits.

“Some studies have shown even just 15 minutes a day can have a positive impact,” said Paul. “You can do that in your yard and you can do it at a local park. You don't have to go far to have the benefits of being outside.”

The experts recommend you aim to spend time outdoors every day to snag the health benefits that nature provides.

For more information: <https://www.theconservationfoundation.org/>

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