



Hi graduate friends,

Now that our days are beginning to lengthen and the temperature is starting to rise, I thought it would be a good time to talk about the value of being out in nature. This builds a bit upon our last issue of GRADUpdATE, as being in nature might be a great way to spend some of those breaks that I'm sure you've all now scheduled into your workdays.

There are countless benefits to being out in nature, including increased immune function, reduced blood pressure, improved sleep, and reduced mental stress (Li, 2022). Shinrin-yoku, a term coined by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries in 1982 and commonly translated into English as 'forest bathing,' can be defined as "making contact with and taking in the atmosphere of the forest" (Park et al., 2010).



Photo taken by author.

This practice of forest bathing is a great way to connect with nature and deepen your relationship with the land.

London is nicknamed 'The Forest City' for a reason; we have a variety of trees, urban forests, and walking trails and paths winding throughout the city. With access to nature minutes from campus, it's an honor to be able to take a mindful moment and breathe in the fresh air surrounded by trees.

Before writing this GRADUpdATE, I thought that it would be a nice idea to try it out for myself, so I invited a friend with me on a rejuvenating walk through campus, exploring the trails that wind along the river. The view is beautiful, and it's hard to believe that we were surrounded by buildings. The water makes itself

known in so many ways, whether through sight, sound, or in the mud that I may have stepped in a little too excitedly.

Even though the goal of being out in nature isn't just to receive its benefits, it's sometimes good to mention them to grad students that find it difficult rationalizing and normalizing being outside of their office or not working every waking moment. Studies show that spending two hours a week in nature is good for overall health and well-being (White et al., 2019). The best part? It doesn't need to be all at once. Feel free to break it up into 5-minute chunks, or maybe spend a long lunch break out on the water; either way, this exposure to nature will be helping you regardless!

See you in the next GRADUpdATE! And maybe out on the trails too...

Maddie Hertz (she/her/hers), PhD Student, from your [Learning Development & Success](#) team!

References:

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