



Visualization for Mind-Body Safety: Forest & Sunlight Meditation

By Mary Ellen Mann, LCSW

Music recommendation: Alpha Brain Wave music, find your favorite on Itunes

The Forest Meditation

I want you to imagine that you are walking along a path deep in the forest with a backpack filled with sticks. All around you there are tall trees: pines, firs, maples, elms, redwoods and oaks. The trees represent a protective and stabilizing force, with their roots growing deep into the ground and their branches extending far and wide to comfort you. Water falls surround you here on this oasis so that you are guarded as you connect fully to this moment. The water falls stand guard, like Roman Centurions, so that you are shielded from anything that tries to disturb or disrupt your restoration.

You hear the sound of a mountain stream and the rushing sound of the wind blowing through the treetops. These sounds sooth you and allow you to let go. You can smell the rich dampness of the forest floor, the refreshment of pine lingers in the air.

You look up through the treetops until you can see a periwinkle sky. You notice how high the sun is in the sky. As the sun enters the canopy of the treetops, it breaks into rays that create intricate patterns of light and shadow. The forest begins to feel like a sacred space that fills you with a sense of protection, comfort and reassurance.

As you walk within this oasis, you can hear the sound of rushing water echoing through the trees. It gets louder as you approach, and before long, you are at the edge of a mountain stream. You're looking at the stream and noticing how clear and sparkling the water is. As you stand beside the stream you also notice beside you the pile of sticks that have been dumped out of your backpack. Notice how you feel less burdened already.

Each stick beside you represents an element of pressure, distress or confusion in your life—whether it is a person who has hurt you, a situation where a decision needs to be made or you might feel ambivalent or burdened by these and other events.

Each of these sticks is taken one at a time. You pick one up and inhale. You cast the stick into the stream and exhale. You release through pursed lips the toxic and burdensome stress that belongs to that problem. Pick up the next stick and inhale through your nose. Throw the stick and exhale out of your mouth.

When you release your sticks allow them to float away with the current of the stream. See them float off into the distance, around the bend and out of sight. Take your time.

When you have released all of your sticks, see yourself sitting or lying down on a grassy slope beside the stream. Notice the sound of the stream reminding you that your sticks are floating away to a place where they will be sorted through. You have released these thoughts and concerns so that you may now relax and be restored to your senses.

Imagine again a world of waterfalls all around you. Each waterfall creates a fortified shield that guards you against anything that would seek to harm you. Disruption may come at you, but it's caught in the water where it's blurred, obscured and washed downstream.

This is your time to let go and like a sponge, absorb the moment. You take in a deep breath of fresh air, finding the subtle smells of the forest very refreshing. Exhale and allow yourself sink into the soft bed of grass. Continue to release any tension in your eyes, your jaw and shoulders.

See all of the tension melting out of your body away and down through the grass and into the soil. Allow the sights, sounds and smells of this beautiful wooded area to fill you with a deep sense of comfort, reassurance and protection, while you notice your sensations and breathe.

The Sunlight Meditation

Note again, the world of waterfalls all around you. Stress may come at you, but it's caught in the water where it's blurred, obscured and washed down the stream. These waterfalls stand guard so you are safe to absorb the moment.

Now imagine that you can feel the warmth and light from the sun directly above you. The source of this sun is the Trinity: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The design of the Trinity is to offer each part of itself to meet your various needs. Let it be present to you so you can feel its safety and its respect of the individual you are. Designate a color for this warm light so that your body can absorb this color as comforting and reassuring.

The more you use of this sunlight, the more there is. You can feel it shining down in and through your entire body. You can feel it beginning to relax and sooth every part of your body. The sunlight generated by the Trinity, the three person God, will work together to gently heat the tough and tight areas of tension. Like heat to butter, it will melt away any and all areas of tension stored throughout your body.

In a moment, you might allow this sunlight to move over to your arms. Focus it there. Experience the warmth and light from the sun massaging your fingertips, then your hands, lower arms, upper arms, and then your shoulders. Feel the sunlight loosening and widening the muscle fibers in both of your arms. You can feel it healing every muscle, tendon, and nerve in your arms as it melts the tight tension into liquid that drains away from your body from spouts in the back of your arms. The melted tension pours out of you with the consistency of maple syrup. It flows into the grass and then into the soil beneath it. And you feel your arms—from the tips of your fingers to your shoulders—resting heavily into the grass beneath you.

Gently now, take the light from the sun and move it over to your legs. Allow it to move from the tips of your toes all the way up your legs to the hip joint. Feel the warmth as the sunlight moves up through your legs, from your feet to your calves; then to your knees; and

then to your outer thighs and finally to your hip bone. Feel the sunlight soothing every muscle in your legs and hips. Let the sunlight continue to melt away the tight blocks of tension in your feet, legs and hips. The melted tension pours out of spouts in the back of your legs with the consistency of maple syrup. It flows into the grass and then into the soil beneath it. And you feel your legs—from the tips of your toes to your hips—resting heavily into the grass beneath you.

When you are ready, gently move the light from the sun into your stomach area. Feel it warming and soothing every organ in the lower part of your body. Feel the tension—of all that burdens, of all that has not looked out for you, or wanted your best—draining away from you, as your stomach and lower abdomen relax and your belly button falls towards the base of your spine. Take a deep breath and exhale through pursed lips. The melted tension pours out of spouts in your lower back with the consistency of maple syrup. And you feel your abdomen and hips and lower back rest more heavily into the grass beneath you.

When you are ready, gently take the light from the sun and move it into your chest area. Let it soothe and comfort that area. Feel it streaming into your chest. See the muscles unwind and loosen in the space between each rib. With each deep breath and cleansing exhale, your chest becomes light, unburdened and wide. The melted tension pours out of spouts in your upper back with the consistency of maple syrup. And you feel that breathing is easy.

When you are ready, gently bring the light from the sun down through the top of your head. Imagine it massaging its way down from the top of your head to the area around your eyes and then your jaws. In a moment, feel the warmth of the sunlight moving down into your neck. The waterfalls still stand guard, the trees deeply rooted extend their branches above you so that are safe to release the defenses in your neck.

And now let the sunlight move down your spine, down through your spine all the way to your tailbone. Imagine the light moving out from your spine into every nerve of your body. Feel the sunlight soothing and smoothing every frayed nerve ending. Each nerve ending has settled into a still place. This helps you enter into an even deeper state of peace.

In your mind's eye, open your hands with your palms turned up toward the sun. Receive the work of this gentle and warming sun. Let it nurture your hands that work at the process of life as it lies ahead. See your hands holding the depth of the comfort of this moment. Do this while releasing any remaining tension. See that remaining tension flow away from your body into the grass and soil beneath you through the open spouts along the backside of your resting body.

Imagine now that all of your cells are coated in a honey-type substance that comes from the sun. Like honey, it is an anti-biotic and a moisturizer that cleans and coats every cell— healing and calming every cell.

Inhale deeply into your lungs and continue to exhale any remaining tension into the bubble in front of you. As you exhale through pursed lips, see the dark cloud of toxic pain leave your body. This pain was not pain you chose, so reject it with every breath. When you have

completed this, see this balloon ascend and float far away from you. With every heartbeat, it floats further away. Perhaps now it may be at enough distance to be but a speck.

Once it is out of sight, make room in your lungs for the healing color that represents a reclaimed and restored sense of self. This color binds up the comfort and seals it into your body. Notice the branches of the trees continuing to extend themselves. Notice the water falls that shield you. Notice that your body is creating memories of what it feels like to be at rest and liberated from distress that was never your fault.

See now that you are growing your brain to accept the truth of who you are without the distress that often distracts and burdens you. See now that you are growing your wisdom to let go of the choices others made.

You are achieving separateness from the burdens and relearning freedom from fear. Your brain is absorbing this now. Your nervous system is learning. It will educate you in times of tension to access this truth and comfort. See this healing color pour into your rested and comforted body.

Now see this color emanate from you, creating an opaque or translucent shield that provides a zone of comfort outside of you. See yourself in the rest of your day with this color moving within, comforting without.

Inhale a final time. Take in the object at the furthest distance in the room. Slowly bring your eyes to your hands. And now look directly in front of you. Well done.