13 September 2018

**MEDIA RELEASE**

Take a Walk in the Woods

* The restorative powers of forest bathing

Forest bathing. It’s a growing global phenomenon, originating in Japan, spreading rapidly in the United States, and recently launched on the Coffs Coast. Forest bathing or nature and forest therapy is about restoring physical and mental wellness by reconnecting with nature and the earth.

As a social worker and Certified Nature Therapy Guide, Lucy Van Sambeek, was all too familiar with the stresses of modern life on individuals and their families and set out to explore the range of differing responses across the world. Her research led her to discover the benefits of nature and forest therapy. Inspired by the traditional Japanese art of shinrin-yoku (or forest bathing), the practice advocates spending time bathing in the atmosphere of the forest for one’s health, wellbeing and healing.

Studies are increasingly showing that forest bathing and being in nature is an [antidote to HYPERLINK "https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/EHP1663"stress, HYPERLINK "https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/EHP1663" and HYPERLINK "https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/EHP1663" has real health benefits](https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/EHP1663). These include stimulating the[**immune system**](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2793341/), [reducin HYPERLINK "http://www.anxietycentre.com/anxiety/research/reduce-anxiety-with-nature.shtml"g anxiety](http://www.anxietycentre.com/anxiety/research/reduce-anxiety-with-nature.shtml) and [depression](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3393816/), [reduc HYPERLINK "https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21996763"ing the physiological effects of stress on the body](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21996763), and [improving mental clarity and creativity](https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0051474). In Japan, walks on nationally certified forest therapy trails can be prescribed by doctors to help people manage stress and fatigue.

Lucy was one of the first Australian guides to undertake training in the practice with the [Association of Nature and Forest Therapy Guides and Programs](http://www.natureandforesttherapy.org/) based in California.

Each forest experience runs for approximately two to three hours and involves a slow guided walk which helps participants take in the sounds, smells, sensations and tastes of the forest, to enhance a reciprocal relationship with nature. “We open the doors to the forest to allow people the opportunity to slow down and unplug from the outside world,” said Lucy. “We end the walk with a fabulous Tea Ceremony which includes the tastes of the bush to fully immerse their senses. Once people have experienced forest bathing, they’re usually pretty keen to repeat the whole experience. For some people it’s like walking meditation and a way of developing a habit of mindfulness.”

Lucy not only provides walks for individuals and groups, but she is keen to work with Corporates looking to adopt team building measures that support their values, are good for the planet and build the mental and physical health of their staff.

Lucy uses a range of local locations including state forests and private properties from Orara to the Nambucca Valley. Lucy has a partnership arrangement with [**Forestry Corporation**](http://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/) **of NSW** who are keen to support initiatives which promote the health benefits of being outdoors in nature.

For more information, contact Lucy on 0417 927 657 or email lucy@metaphoricallyspeaking.com.au Or visit <http://www.metaphoricallyspeaking.com.au/nft/>

**Special Invitation to Media Personnel**

Complimentary tickets are available to media personnel wishing to experience a special nature connection walk in October, designed to provide a firsthand experience of forest bathing.

**Date: Friday October 5**

**Time: 2 - 4pm**

**Meeting Point: Swan Road Crossing Picnic Area, Orara East State Forest.**

[**Download map.**](http://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/440177/orara-east-sf-map.pdf)

**Length of Walk: 500 metres**

**About the Guide**

Lucy Van Sambeek is a Certified Nature and Forest Therapy guide with the [Association of Nature and Forest Therapy](http://www.natureandforesttherapy.org/).  A resident of the Nambucca Valley, Lucy brings more than 10 years’ experience as a social worker in remote and urban Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.  Her passion is bringing opportunities for healing to people through nature, art and storytelling. Her therapeutic work brings together the best of Western science and Eastern knowledge, whilst respecting and engaging with Indigenous perspectives and world views.