

Mindful “Refreshing Walks” and Forest Bathing: Simple Tools for Focus, Performance, and Wellbeing

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Dr. Matthias Wochinz
Author

In our high-performance world, where mental clarity and resilience are essential for leadership, few habits offer as much return on time as a mindful walk in nature.

Whether you're working in Zurich, New York, London, Singapore, or Tokyo or in other busy locations, even a small urban park can offer a reset during a demanding workday. In Japan, the tradition of *Shinrin Yoku*—known as forest bathing—is not about physical exercise or hiking, but about mindfully immersing oneself in the atmosphere of the forest to restore mental balance and energy.

Even in cities with limited greenery, having plants in your office or home can bring calm and focus into your daily routine.

Why “Refreshing Walks” Work – Even in 15-20 Minutes

During a particularly demanding corporate turnaround in Germany, the author regularly took short **15-20 minute “refreshing walks”** in Munich’s Englischer Garten during his lunch break or after work. The effects were consistently profound—both personally and professionally.

Here are the key benefits:

- **Cognitive Reset:** Stepping away creates mental distance and a “zoomed-out” perspective.
- **Physiological Relief:** Light walking boosts blood circulation, releases endorphins, and reduces cortisol.
- **Sensory Balance:** Natural sounds, green visuals, and forest scents calm the nervous system.
- **Sunlight & Mood:** Natural light increases serotonin and supports emotional regulation.
- **Fresh Oxygen:** Trees and greenery literally recharge your brain.
- **Renewed Focus:** Returning to work often comes with sharper thinking and improved productivity.
- **Stronger Collaboration:** A balanced mental state improves communication and empathy.

Practical Application for Executives

These short walks—done alone for clarity or with colleagues for connection—are a powerful tool to:

- Recharge between meetings
- Break unproductive thought patterns
- Prepare mentally for high-stakes conversations or decisions
- Improve your mood and leadership presence

Even better: share the habit. Invite a team member for a walk during lunch or after work. Some organizations now incorporate team walks, cycling sessions, or nature-based offsites into leadership development and wellbeing strategies.



Conclusion

Nature doesn't just offer relaxation—it's a strategic advantage. By integrating short, mindful walks into your day, you can reduce stress, restore clarity, and return to work more focused, collaborative, and energized.

The forest photo was taken during an road bike ride in the Vienna Woods near Exelberg, Austria.

About the Author

Dr. Matthias Wochinz is a seasoned HR Executive and strategic advisor focused on people, technology, banking and business growth. He serves as a board member in the field of AI and is recognized for his work in executive and corporate development, leadership coaching, and talent strategy. He holds degrees from INSEAD, the London School of Economics (LSE) and Sciences Po Paris and did his PhD in state leadership, labor market reform and competitiveness at LMU Munich, LSE and Georgetown University.

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/dr-matthias-wochinz/>