

# Nature Therapy Educational Program

A proposal for schools for the  
Deaf/HOH and educational  
programs





## *Dear School Administrators,*

How would you like to take a moment to go outside, breathe the fresh air, and improve the learning environment for your students and staff?

Being a student, a teacher, or an administrator can be stressful. Sometimes an escape outside is needed every now and then, to just allow everyone to be at one with nature. A change of environment in a safe place that soothes is so very crucial to youth and adults' overall well-being.

Experiencing the therapeutic benefits of nature through "forest bathing" is one way to allow us to experience that. Studies show that Forest bathing can boost memory and focus, promote empathy, reduce stress, and improve attention and behavior in school settings\*.

More schools and learning programs are incorporating this forest bathing practice in their curriculum, even at schools for the Deaf and summer camp/retreats.

Forest bathing essentially combines the benefits of meditation with the benefits of being outside in nature. For example, forest bathing and meditation are both mindfulness practices that help us become fully engaged in the present moment.

However traditional meditation can be difficult, especially for students who have trouble sitting still. Forest bathing pulls us into the present moment without needing to be still. This helps children become more aware of their bodies. As they learn to be aware of how their body feels, they start to identify how their bodies react to emotions as well. It's a valuable strategy to self-soothe and manage stress.





# Benefits of Nature Therapy

## **What are the benefits of Nature Therapy for school-age children?**

- Outdoor fun + mindfulness = mental health boosts for young
- Lessens frustrations and other symptoms in kids with ADHD and other learning disabilities\*
- Teaches us ecology, biology, and nature related STEM focus
- Promotes more resilience and focus on academic subjects

## **Why be guided by The Giving Cypress?**

Surely, we can benefit from simply being outdoors and walking in the woods by ourselves- but to be guided by a trained and certified Nature Therapy guide can help us deepen our connection with ourselves, each other, and the environment. Guides show us various techniques such as connecting with our bodies through breath-work, teaching us about local wild edible plants, and helping us explore our connection with the environment in a safe setting.

Summer is currently the only culturally Deaf certified Nature & Forest Therapy guide. She is also a former k-12 teacher for Deaf and hard of hearing students. Being Deaf, Summer understands the various obstacles that Deaf and hard of hearing children face in schools... whether it's being alone in the mainstream, struggling to catch up with language milestones as a result of language deprivation, and all the emotional and mental health challenges of being Deaf navigating in a hearing world.

In 2022, Summer did a year-long cross-country tour in their school bus conversion- with the hopes to help Deaf and hard of hearing individuals reconnect with Nature and spread awareness to Deaf/HOH communities about the benefits of Nature Therapy. In 2023, she is continuing the tour but focusing on recruiting and training more Deaf and hard-of-hearing people to become guides, so they can help their local communities.





# Improving Academic Culture & Progress

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## **Participants will benefit from:**

- Techniques of calming the body/mind
- Sit Spots & befriending the Trees and nature settings
- Integrating Nature Therapy into daily life/work balance
- Silent Walks & Sharing Circle for stress reduction and conflict resolution
- Expressive Therapy through art, dance, body movement, and other forms of expression
- Learning about the land and local edible plants and wilderness survival skills

## **Links to further reading on research related to benefits:**

**How to incorporate ecotherapy activities into children's everyday lives—and improve their well-being**

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/family/article/outdoor-fun-mindfulness-mental-health-boosts-for-kids>

## **Other schools/programs for the Deaf that are doing Nature Therapy:**

<https://naturalstart.org/feature-stories/happy-hands-happy-hearts-forest-day-learning-new-mexico-school-deaf>

[https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/adventure/school-for-deaf-takes-kids-into-woods-for-nature-based-learning/article\\_f4abb924-1d32-11ea-aedb-4fd4cc00397b.html](https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/adventure/school-for-deaf-takes-kids-into-woods-for-nature-based-learning/article_f4abb924-1d32-11ea-aedb-4fd4cc00397b.html)





# Program Costs and Logistics

## **What does a Nature Therapy Session Look Like?**

With the help of a certified guide, students/ teachers are led through a series of nature invitations during a leisurely walk on a gentle trail or pathway. The focus will be on mindfulness practices and opportunities to slow down, unplug, and soak up the magic of our wild places. The experience typically lasts 3 hours which culminates in a tea ceremony with snacks provided. All educational training and workshops include a large amount of time spent outdoors.

## **What are the pricing options?**

The price of a workshop is dependent on the number of participants, the topic of the workshop/presentation, and any additional activities.

- Starting at \$300 (for 3 hour activities for up to 10 students)
- \$500 (per school-wide presentation for students and staff)
- \$500 workshop for up to 10-15 staff/administrators)

Ideal number of participants in a training/ presentation/ workshop: Up to 10 teachers.

Ideal number of students for a guided walk & nature therapy activities: Up to 10 students

Cost will cover: Travel in the Turtle Shuttle, prep time for workshop/activities, tea & snacks, and some merchandise. If a consultation is requested, a pdf summary of resources, suggestions, and photos will be included after the visit.

What we will need:

- Email for the financial person to send an invoice
- 50% deposit to secure the date/s.
- Contract in place with clear objectives.
- Permission form for liability and media release.

Summer has taught and worked with teachers and school administrators, so a specific package can be customized to meet the needs of the school culture.

More details are available on: [www.thegivingcypress.com](http://www.thegivingcypress.com)

Please contact us if you have any questions: [thegivingcypress@gmail.com](mailto:thegivingcypress@gmail.com)



# Testimonials and Past Programs



## **Florida School for the Deaf**

*"The students of the Outdoor Club were enthralled by Summer's Forest Bathing experience from the first moment of introduction, which allowed them to unplug from daily school studies and learn how to get in touch with Nature. For many, this was a brand new experience & an eye opener for them, as they learned to see & feel what's around them in Nature, to give release and feel more alive as they absorbed the environment. They students were also impressed to meet a Deaf Forest therapy guide."*

**--Tracy Acuff, Coordinator of Outdoor Club**

## **Rochester School for the Deaf**

*"We hosted a staff training and 2 different group walks with students of Rochester School for the Deaf. Summer also offered an information booth at our Parent Night event. We were impressed with how Summer guided, adapting the sessions to the needs and personalities of our students and staff. We definitely learned from this experience and hope to create an outdoor-based programs for our young students.*

*Staff and students shared how beneficial their experience was and want Summer to come back!*

**--Sarah Gordon, Dean of Students**

## **Other Schools/ Educational Programs we have worked with:**

- Forest Family Camp @ Aspen Camp For the Deaf
- California School for the Deaf, Fremont
- California School for the Deaf, Riverside
- New Mexico School for the Deaf

More details are available on: [www.thegivingcypress.com](http://www.thegivingcypress.com)

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# Example of Programs Offered

## **Departments we have worked with:**

- Academic (Career Prep/ Vocational/Trade programs)
- Residential Life (After school / Outdoor Club)
- Mental Health Department (School counselors & support services)
- SocioEmotional Learning (SEL)
- Reading/Literacy Programs (Storytelling time)
- Special Education Programs

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## **Examples of programs we offer:**

### **Campus-Wide Presentations:**

Touring The US on a Shuttle Bus Conversion  
Think Big, Live Simple- Alternative Living as a Deaf Business Owner  
How to use Nature Therapy to help manage stress

### **Storytelling Time:**

Indi Meets Washington- video  
The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein

### **Staff and Administration Workshop/ Trainings:**

How To Integrate Nature Therapy in Classroom: Mental Health Counselors  
On-site Campus "Green Spaces" Design Plan & Consulting  
Staff Retreats

