As the weather gets cooler and the leaves start to change color, autumn is a great time to be outside in Connecticut. The benefits of being out in nature reach far beyond just its beauty. Shinrin-yoku, meaning taking in the forest atmosphere or forest bathing, became part of Japan’s national health program in 1982. Since then there have been many laboratory and field studies conducted to learn about the healing nature of nature. One study found that “the mood of the respondents were significantly improved on the day of the forest visit compared to the control day.” A study published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Science, found that people who walked for 90 minutes in a natural area, showed decreased activity in a region of the brain associated with a key factor in depression. This study showed that spending time outdoors can help boost problem-solving skills & attention span, and was a great way to stay healthy and get those creative juices flowing. Another study looked into the physiological effects of being surrounded by trees. They found that by walking through the woods, the participants inhaled phytoncides. The smelling of these phytoncides (think tree essential oils) resulted in decreased blood pressure, stimulation of the nervous system, and improved productivity & concentration. A 2009 study showed significant increases in human natural killer cell function, and improved immune function. The natural killer cells are white blood cells that “play a major role in the host-rejection of both tumor and virally infected cells”.


Forest bathing should not to be confused with hiking. The point of forest bathing is to just spend time amongst the trees. Even in many urban settings you will be able to find enough greenery to get your dose of nature. If you want to strike out on your own there are many great trails and parks in our area. Here are some resources to help you find one near you:

- Joshua’s Trust
- The Last Green Valley

Forest bathing should not be confused with hiking. The point of forest bathing is to just spend time amongst the trees. Even in many urban settings you will be able to find enough greenery to get your dose of nature.

Choose a location based on your physical ability. This route should not be too strenuous, and rest when necessary. Try to spend at least 4 hours in the woods. This can be done alone, or with groups and some people use this time to practice mindfulness. The Connecticut Forest & Park Association has teamed up with Alexandra Lowry, a member of the Association of Nature & Forest Therapy Guides, Certified CFPA Ramble Guide & Certified Integrative Life Coach to offer a series of both presentations and rambles.

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DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE TEAL PUMPKIN PROJECT?

Halloween can be very dangerous for kids with food allergies.

The Teal Pumpkin Project is trying to make sure all children can enjoy Halloween. Putting a teal pumpkin on your doorstep means you have non-food treats available for the children that visit your house this Halloween.

Click here for some ideas for non-food treats to give out.

Use the Teal Pumpkin Project Map to find participating houses in your neighborhood. If you are willing to be a part of the project you can add your house to the list as well.

APPLE DUMPLINS

- 2 Tbsp firmly packed light brown sugar
- 6 small apples, peeled and cored
- 6 square 7-inch egg roll wrappers
- Non-stick cooking spray

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Spray six muffin cups with non-stick cooking spray. In a large bowl, combine the sugar, cinnamon, cornstarch, vanilla & water.

Roll peeled apples in the mixture until coated. Place one apple in the center of each egg roll wrapper. Bring the corners up to the top of the apple, pressing & folding to seal the edges. Place each dumpling in a muffin cup and lightly spray the tops with non-stick cooking spray.

Bake until golden, about 20 minutes. Cool on a rack 15 minutes; serve warm.

Halloween Safety

As you get ready for Halloween we at Be Well want you to stay safe. Eating too much candy can be unhealthy and give you a stomach ache but there are other dangers to think about as well.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has tips to make trick-or-treating safe. You can see all the tips and learn by visiting: www.cdc.gov/family/halloween

Costume

Your child will be doing a lot of walking in this costume. Be sure it fits well. If the costume is too big the child may trip on it. Try the costume on in the store before you purchase it.

Use a flashlight and add reflective tape or items to the bag/costume to help drivers see you. It will start to get darker earlier as we move toward daylight savings time.

Swords, knives, and other toy weapons should be short, soft and flexible.

Face paint can cause irritation to your child’s skin. Test the paint before you use it by applying a small amount to the skin a few days before and check for any irritation or rash.

Cars

Children can get very excited to run from house to house and forget about basic safety. It is best to walk in groups, and cross at green lights.

Be alert for drunk drivers. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) “Halloween is one of the most dangerous nights due to combination of alcohol and increased pedestrian traffic. In 2012, almost half (48%) of all crash fatalities on Halloween involved a drunk driver compared to 31 percent on an average day that year. More than one-quarter (28%) of Halloween crash fatalities were pedestrians, compared to 14 percent on an average day.

If you find yourself driving this Halloween, be sure to slow down and be alert in residential areas. Be careful entering and exiting your driveway, and eliminate any distractions.