



To Practice

Begin your walk in the forest by finding a magical portal between two trees. Pass through the doorway. Look around you, keeping your senses alert.

- 🍃 Feel the presence of the trees around you,
- 🍃 Follow their trunks high into the sky,
- 🍃 Observe their spreading branches.
- 🍃 Listen to the voices of the birds, and of the trees.
- 🍃 See and feel the wind flowing through the forest.
- 🍃 Smell and breathe in the healing woodland fragrances.

*"I hear the wind among
the trees playing celestial
symphonies."*

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

RECIPROCAL BREATHING

Observe the surrounding trees absorbing the sun's light energy, making plant sugar, and discharging oxygen through photosynthesis.

An average-sized tree releases enough oxygen each day to sustain four people. Breathe deeply; fill your lungs with life-giving oxygen, given to you by your forest friends. As you exhale, gratefully return the favor, offering carbon dioxide to the nearby trees.

On the underside of a leaf are the largest number of tiny openings (stomata) through which air enters and exits a tree. Reach out and gently hold a leaf, bringing your nose close to the leaf's underside. Inhale the oxygen released by the tree and then exhale carbon dioxide into the leaf. As you breathe in and out, be aware of how interconnected you are with the forest, and of the reciprocal relationship all beings have with one another.

Deepen your sacred bond with trees by repeating the following words
from Melissa Krige's Tree of Light Meditation:

As the forests exhale so we inhale.

And as we exhale so the forests inhale.

In giving we receive and in receiving we give.

As you inhale and exhale, feel yourself giving and receiving breath and life from the nearby trees and the other forest inhabitants.

BECOME PART OF THE FOREST

If you could live in this forest by becoming a tree, what kind of tree would you choose?

Find a good place to stand. Close your eyes. Feel yourself rooted firmly in the earth—and living high in the sky.

Lift your face to feel the warmth of the sun. Bathe in the sunlight and open air.

For four and a half billion years the sun's gravity has held us in place—at the perfect distance—to safely send its light and warmth. Feel the sun's rays enlivening the whole forest.

Visualize your body as a leaf. Feel the sun's rays flowing into you, turning air and light into life. A large, healthy oak may have 250,000 leaves. Extend your arms and imagine you are all the leaves on a tree—each leaf receiving the light of the sun.

Gaze at the nearby trees. See how they reach into the sky. Eighty percent of a tree's mass lives in the atmosphere. A tree's substance comes not from the earth, but from the sky.¹

Observe the trunk, branches, and leaves of a larger tree. Where does the mass of the tree come from? The answer is—carbon, which comes from the carbon dioxide in the air.²

Listen to the sounds of the forest—close by—and far away.

Open your eyes. See the many varied expressions of forest life surrounding you: the trees—bushes—birds—rocks—grasses and flowers.

1 Around 95 percent of a tree's substance (carbon) comes in the air. The other five percent comes from nutrient-bearing water from the soil. Trees acquire carbon from the CO₂ in the air through the process of photosynthesis and release back in the air O₂ and a little H₂O.

2 Only one percent of a tree is alive. A tree grows outward from its trunk and skyward from the tips of its branches. The deadwood, comprising ninety-nine percent of its body, provides the foundation for the tree to climb ever higher in the sky.



Find a beautiful place in the forest and reflect on the following thought:

“All terrestrial things are essentially celestial.”

— John Muir

This insight is especially true for trees.

In what ways do trees and forests inspire you?

What noble qualities do you feel trees express?
