

3 intense wellness trends for 2020

 By [Kelly McGillivray](#)

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For those seekers always on the lookout for new wellness and events trends, here are three that we'll hear more about in the coming year.

Shinrin-yoku (forest bathing)

Shinrin-yoku or forest bathing is a practice begun by the Japanese and over the centuries groves of Sugi and Hinoki cypress trees, known for their sense-aroma, have been nurtured in Japan specifically for therapeutic reasons. Forest therapy is also part of the national healthcare in some parts of Asia, treating chronic illness through reducing stress, and it is becoming increasingly recognised in other parts of the world for its health benefits.



Research on forest bathing in [Global Advances in Health and Medicine](#) states that by 2050, 68% of the population is expected to live in an urban environment and “urbanicity” has been linked to a higher risk of mental health disorders. To combat this, events such as forest bathing are being utilised as further [studies in Japan and Italy](#) have shown forest bathing specifically lowers blood pressure, heart rate and concentrations of the stress hormone cortisol. It increases sleep duration and boosts the number of natural killer cells, a type of white blood cell that fights infected or tumour cells.

So, how do you do it? *Shinrin-yoku* is more than hiking; it is the mindful soaking up nature with all senses, including ESP, often with guided help. A recent [National Geographic](#) article explains the process through the eyes of a sceptic, explaining that guided forest-bathing sessions include “deep breathing exercises, suggestions for aspects of nature to focus on and invitations to share what you’ve noticed” but pointing out that it is actually a form of [attention restoration theory](#). For more info, read [Dr. Qing Li’s book](#), *Forest Bathing: How Trees Can Help You Find Health and Happiness*.

Cold therapy or ice baths

If you have an aversion to plunging yourself into a bath of ice, blame extreme athlete The Iceman, [Wim Hof](#) for making cold therapy trendy again, as his official ‘[Wim Hof Method](#)’ uses a combination of meditation, regular cold exposure and breathing techniques.

The theory behind the madness (to some) is basically rebooting the immune system through extreme cold, but it can also be a deep bonding experience when done along with a friend or a group of people – intense team-building of the highest (coldest) order.

Some of the science behind immersing oneself in a bath of ice is rooted in [cryotherapy](#), using extreme cold (between -110 and -150°C), to help to destroy abnormal tissues. We see this in less radical ways with athletes using ice packs to relieve muscle pain and stress.

Those wanting to try out an ice-bath need to do it under supervision as Mina Kerr-Lazenby writes: “Cold immersion is a practice that should be built up over time, performed gradually, consistently and never with force.” About the process itself, physiotherapist [Craig Smith advises](#): “When you get into an ice bath for five to 10 minutes, the icy cold water causes your blood vessels to tighten and drains the blood out of your legs. After 10 minutes your legs feel cold and numb.” This encourages the legs to fill up with “new blood” giving them more oxygen and taking away the lactic acid. If you are brave enough to partake in an ice bath ritual, think of these words from the Iceman: “We have become alienated from nature. But the cold is capable of bringing us back to what we once had lost.”



Microdosing

The definition of microdosing according to [Medical News Today](#) is: “Taking small doses of psychedelic drugs, such as psilocybin or N,N-dimethyltryptamine (DMT), to improve mental health, well-being or productivity”, and it is on the rise. In particular, we’re seeing more people taking part in guided magic mushroom trips; [legal in places such](#) as the Netherlands and decriminalised in Denver, Colorado and Chicago, Illinois in the US and taken “underground” in other parts of the world, including South Africa.

An [article in Newsweek](#) talks about how psilocybin works by becoming psilocin in the human body, this “binds with serotonin receptors in the brain, particularly receptor 5-HT_{2C} – which regulates the release of neurotransmitter chemicals related to appetite, cognition, anxiety, imagination, learning, memory, mood and perception”. For a local first-hand description of a guided psilocin experience, read Rebecca Davis’s book, [Self-Helpless](#), where she goes to a sweat lodge and stays in this “pseudo-furnace for up to several hours and sweat it all out in order to purify the mind, body and soul”.



This trend, however, is not as underground as you'd think, as *Forbes* headlines in a [recent article](#), "Silicon Valley Is Micro-Dosing 'Magic Mushrooms' To Boost Their Careers". They say taking mushrooms is a "Siren's song luring fast-track professionals to boost their creativity and greatly enhance their work performance" and the BBC reports that \$2,000 per month will get you your own [psychedelic-trip coach guru](#).

But if you're looking for other, less controversial, intense wellness events you can always try [sound therapy](#) or [intermittent fasting](#) to enhance well-being in 2020.

ABOUT KELLY MCGILLIVRAY

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