

NATURE THERAPY GUIDE CERTIFICATION SYLLABUS



Nature Therapy Guide

THE
Nature Therapy
CENTER
at the Natural Wellness Academy

Introduction:

A robust and growing body of research links spending time in nature—even in small amounts—to improved health and happiness. Yet, due to the demands and realities of modern life, many families lack the time, money, or fitness needed for traditional nature-bonding activities, such as lengthy multi-day camping or hiking trips. Fortunately, nature therapy sessions can provide an intensive and uplifting experiential and spiritual interaction with nature in as little as half an hour at minimal cost and exertion. As a bonus, studies find that when people connect with nature, they're more likely to protect it.

Nature Therapy Guides facilitate connection to nature by aiding access to local nature, interpreting and providing contextual information about nature, leading nature-based mindfulness activities, and supporting participants in contextualizing relationships to nature through the lenses of participants' own spiritual beliefs. Guides specialize in designing and leading nature-focused walks, meditations, or activities, although nature-based approaches can be integrated into many wellness-related professions. The Guide's central role is to cultivate safe, enjoyable, and mutually respectful nature experiences for participants.

Program Overview:

Nature therapy is becoming an increasingly popular (and scientifically-backed) modality for people seeking to improve overall well-being. Our program develops Guides who can craft and lead nature experiences that facilitate positive connections between nature and people.

We equip Guides with tools to build their own customized nature therapy programs, on a foundation of key theoretical and practical knowledge, through the lenses of their own expertise and backgrounds. Guides gain competencies in the types and science of nature therapy, the nature and natural history of their local environment, spirituality in nature, mindfulness in nature, outreach and communication skills, and trail safety and leadership. They learn to implement a structured-yet-flexible template for leading successful nature walks, meditations, and activities for diverse participants.

This 24-hour all-inclusive certification program can be completed fully online at your own pace, with feedback and mentoring from a qualified instructor. Hours are asynchronous and consist of videos and recordings (in addition to required readings and written assignments), although synchronous hours are possible via attendance of live webinars and scheduling one-on-one meetings with your mentor. Detailed descriptions of the course curriculum, materials, assignments, and expectations are below. Successful

graduation will result in certification as a Certified Nature Therapy Guide through the Natural Wellness Academy, including a printed certificate.

Learning Outcomes:

The overall learning outcomes for the course are listed here. For more detailed, module-specific learning objectives, see the “Curriculum” section of this syllabus. By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Design and lead safe, uplifting nature experiences for diverse participants in various settings.
2. Describe empirical and theoretical research linking nature with improved wellbeing.
3. List methods to improve nature access and reduce common barriers.
4. Identify your ecoregion and summarize its natural history.
5. Apply concepts of spirituality and mindfulness in the context of nature.
6. Implement trail leadership skills including interpretation, etiquette, and safety.
7. Develop indoor and outdoor nature therapy activities using key pathways to nature connectedness.

Benefits:

What differentiates our program from other nature therapy certifications?

- Flexible distance program can be completed on your own schedule, with no overnight travel
- Among the lowest tuition in the industry, with flexible payment options available
- All required materials included with tuition
- Practical curriculum laser-focused on developing key skills needed to be a successful guide
- Multidimensional curriculum balances naturalism, spirituality, and practical skills
- Training individualized to your region, local nature, needs, and interests
- Certification expands business offerings and therapeutic toolkit
- The Academy has launched wellness careers for professionals all over the globe

Curriculum:

Module I: Nature Therapy (4 hours)

1. Define *nature therapy* and provide examples.
2. Summarize evidence-based, research-supported benefits of nature therapy.
3. Discuss hypotheses on why nature therapy exerts positive effects.
4. List barriers to nature access and propose methods to overcome them.
5. Distinguish between the roles of the Guide and the licensed clinician.
6. Identify the Guide’s most important role.

Module materials: Module 1 Workbook, Nature Therapy Infographic, Types of Nature Therapy Infographic, Using Science to Evaluate Claims Handout, Licensing Considerations Handout, 10 Peer Reviewed Scientific Articles on Nature Therapy, Social Justice and Nature Therapy Handout, *Nature as a Guide* e-book, *Nature Therapy Walks: 22 Sensory Activities to Enjoy in Nature for Wellbeing* e-book, Various Video Resources

Module 1A: Nature Therapy for Children (optional)

- i. Compare and contrast nature therapy approaches for children versus adults.
- ii. List the essential elements of nature play.
- iii. Describe components of effective nature play spaces.
- iv. Discuss how to work with parents to facilitate nature access.
- v. Identify techniques to help children overcome fears of nature.

Module materials: Module 1A Workbook, Addressing Fears of Nature Chapter, Children's Nature Play Ideas Handbook, Children & Nature Report, Various Reports, Various Video Resources

Module 2: Natural History (4 hours)

7. Identify your region's biome and eco-region.
8. List your region's prominent natural features and discuss their natural and cultural histories.
9. Identify the region's most common, characteristic, or iconic flora and fauna.
10. Explain how the region's natural history influences its culture and economy.
11. List techniques for effective and respectful wildlife viewing.

Module materials: Module 2 Workbook, Wildlife Viewing Tips Infographic, Nature Yearbook Template, Ecological Regions of North America Article, Resources on Your Ecoregion*, Various Video Resources
(*student accesses these using provided links and, as needed, instructor assistance)


Module 3: Spiritual Nature (4 hours)

12. Develop an individual definition of "spiritual" and discuss how nature can be incorporated therein.
13. Describe mindfulness and its relationship to nature therapy.
14. Describe how to navigate multicultural beliefs regarding nature and spirituality.
15. Define "archetypes" and list nature-specific examples for application in nature therapy.
16. Discuss spiritual or cultural principles or beliefs associated with your region's nature and environment.
17. List key pathways to nature connectedness.
18. Identify options for conducting nature therapy sessions indoors.
19. Discuss reasons and processes for building nature shrines.

Module materials: Module 3 Workbook, Spiritual Nature Infographic, Mindfulness in Nature Infographic, Meditation Music, *Animal Speak* Excerpt, Archetypes Handouts, Indoor Nature Therapy Handout, 2 Guided Meditations, Building a Nature Shrine Handout, 31 Nature Poems, 3 Peer Reviewed Scientific Articles on Mindfulness, Peer Reviewed Scientific Article on Nature Connection, Example of Interpretation of Geologic Features, Various Video Resources

Module 4: Practical Aspects (4 hours)

20. Describe interpretation and list interpretative techniques that can be used in nature therapy.
21. Differentiate between *ecophilia* and *ecophobia*.
22. Identify common natural hazards in your region and discuss risk management techniques.
23. Discuss group dynamics and illustrate basic techniques to manage groups.

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24. Explain how to utilize “Leave No Trace” principles during Nature Therapy Walks.
 25. Locate and select appropriate settings to hold nature therapy sessions.
 26. Describe the “sales funnel” and how you can utilize it to attract participants and companies.
 27. List options for integrating nature therapy into a career.
 28. Describe approaches for working with clinicians to help clients achieve goals using nature.

Module materials: Module 4 Workbook, Practical Aspects Infographic (Selecting a Trail; Trail Safety; Marketing), Trail Etiquette Infographic, Working with Clients and Clinicians to Achieve Goals Using Nature Handout, Nature Therapy for Workplace Wellness Handout, Interpretive Techniques Handouts, Sample Waiver, *Making a Difference* Excerpt, Business Worksheet, Sample Walk Announcement and Follow-up Email Templates, Managing Groups Handout, Environmental Education in Urban Areas Handout, Various Video Resources

Module 5: Template (4 hours)

29. List key features of the Nature Therapy Walk Template.
30. Explain how template components can translate into a positive experience for participants.
31. Develop specific nature therapy activities.

Module materials: Module 5 Workbook, Nature Therapy Walks Template Worksheet, Survey and Debriefing Worksheet, Custom Guided Activity Worksheet, Nature and Tea Ceremonies Infographic, Nature Arts and Crafts Infographic, Various Video Resources

Module 6: Practicum (4 hours)

32. Demonstrate core competencies by designing, conducting, and analyzing a nature therapy session.

Module materials: Module 6 Workbook, Nature Therapy Walks Guide Business Cards, Graduation Certificate (upon graduation)

Assessments (Assignments and Quizzes):

Each module includes an assignment (“Learning Experience”) featuring some combination of essay response questions and small projects. Students may utilize outside resources and research to support completion of their assignments. However, assignments must be the original work of the student, written in the student’s own words, with quoted materials and images properly cited.

All assignments are assessed by an instructor, who will mark the assignment as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory and provide appropriate feedback. Students may reattempt unsatisfactory assignments. The practicum final report should provide compelling evidence of the student’s competence in designing and facilitating safe and positive nature encounters with participants.

Additionally, the first module includes a quiz, and the final module includes a final exam. Students may consult their notes and other written or recorded resources when completing an assessment; however, students may not utilize the assistance of another individual. The assessments are automatically graded upon submission and may be repeated (without penalty) to achieve a passing score of 80 percent.

Students must satisfactorily pass all assignments and assessments to graduate from the program.

Timeline:

The recommended timeframe for program completion is 1 to 6 months. Students are initially allotted 6 months to complete the program. After this, students will continue to have access to the online portal, but to maintain active standing within the certification program, will need to petition the Academy for a free 3-month extension. Additional extensions are available upon petition but could involve an additional tuition fee. Within the enrollment period, students can proceed at a pace that works with their own schedules and study needs. Students are encouraged to communicate with their instructor regarding submittal timelines.

Advanced Track:

An optional advanced track is included with the course at no additional cost.* The advanced track forces the student to grapple with concepts more in-depth and therefore requires a higher time investment of the student. Advanced track learning experiences are listed at the end of Modules 1 through 4; students wishing to complete the advanced track should include responses to the standard AND advanced questions in their learning experience submissions for those modules. (Students who do not wish to complete the advanced track do not need to respond to the advanced questions.) Additionally, advanced students are expected to review most or all of the optional resources, such as journal articles. Finally, the practicum report will be assessed more stringently to ensure the student meets the higher standards required of the advanced track. Advanced track learners will receive a special designation on their graduation certificate. However, the advanced track does not result in additional continuing education credits.


**Students can complete the advanced track during their first run-through of the course for no additional cost. After graduation, a student who did not initially complete the advanced track may incur an additional tuition charge if they wish to complete the advanced track after they already graduated from the standard track.*

Required Materials:

The tuition fee includes all required materials as digital copies. The curriculum outline above has a listing of materials for each module. Additionally, students receive access to the Natural Wellness Academy student Facebook Group and the Nature Therapy Walks class forum, where instructors share and analyze recent news and research articles. As a bonus, you will be automatically enrolled, at no additional cost, into the Academy's Webinars Library and Essential Effective Coaching courses.

For the Natural History module, you will access one or more books or free online resources that cover specific knowledge areas about your region; we provide a list of websites and ideas to start your search. Knowledge areas include geography, climate, geology, ecology, hydrology, flora, fauna, and relevant cultural history. The resources do not need to be geared towards technical specialists but should provide you with a good overview of the knowledge areas for your region. If you need assistance, your instructor will be happy to work with you to identify appropriate resources.

Required Travel:




Our philosophy is that your local nature is the greatest teacher of nature therapy, so no extended or overnight travel is required as part of the program. However, students will need to access local nature settings in their area appropriate for hosting nature therapy sessions.

Continuing Education Credits:

Upon request, the Academy will award 24 continuing education hours for successful completion of this course, if the following conditions are met. First, the student must satisfactorily graduate from the program to receive credit; partial credit is not awarded. Second, you must warrant that all you viewed all listed module videos and recordings. Your warrant is implicit when you submit a module assignment and relies on the honor system. Third, if you are seeking continuing education credits for completing this course, each module includes a mandatory one-hour one-on-one virtual meeting with your mentor; an optional onboarding call may also count toward this requirement. We recommended scheduling these meetings to occur after each module so that you can discuss module concepts and prepare for the next module or graduation. With your mentor's preapproval, this requirement may be substituted on an hour-by-hour by a) attending one or more of the Academy's regularly scheduled live calls or webinars and providing documentation of attendance, b) viewing or listening to one or more of the Academy's existing webinar videos or audio recordings and providing your mentor with your written responses to its "Q&A" prompts, or c) reviewing one or more external videos or recordings and providing your mentor with a written reflection of at least two paragraphs on the material; in all cases, the material must be on a topic relevant to course. This requirement is above and beyond the required standard module videos, readings, learning experiences, and exam; all students must successfully complete all assignments and assessments to graduate. These additional requirements allow us to adhere to the standards of credit-approving bodies. Students seeking continuing education credit should proactively plan to meet these requirements, as credit cannot be retroactively awarded. Contact your mentor if you have any questions about the process for continuing education credits.

About the Lead Instructors:

Cortney Cameron, an earth scientist and nature therapy practitioner, holds a B.A. in earth and ocean sciences from Duke University, an M.S. in earth science from North Carolina Central University (where she was an NSF Graduate Research Fellow), an M.B.A. from the Quantic School of Business and Technology, and a certificate in wetlands and water resources from the University of Florida. The co-author of *Nature Therapy Walks*, popular with many professional therapists, she developed her practical approach to nature therapy after using nature immersion to heal from an eating disorder and the early deaths of her parents, leading numerous nature walks for others, and using her scientific background to digest and synthesize the research in the field. A lifelong nature lover who grew up in the wilds of the Appalachian Foothills, she is currently a hydrogeologist working in water resources and environmental protection in the state of Florida, has served as Secretary and Treasurer for the Southeastern Geological Society, and is a member of the Religious Naturalist Association. She has published several creative and scientific presentations and publications, including the *Catians* comic book, *Atlas and the Lucky Flower* children's book, and the *Geologist in Love* poetry collection.



LindaJoy Rose, PhD is a therapist, author, professional speaker, international trainer, and Academy founder with over 25 years of experience. The author of eight books, Dr. Rose has been featured in *The Huffington Post*, eHow.com, Tampa NBC affiliate *Daytime TV*, Yahoo! Lifestyle, Instyle, and more. As a former director for the American Board of Hypnotherapy, she is a pioneer in subconscious dynamics and clinical hypnotherapy. She also spearheaded a healthy lifestyle retraining program with an Astra-Zeneca Foundation grant at one of the nation's largest clinics. The daughter of two Holocaust survivors, Dr. Rose serves as a volunteer docent at the Florida Holocaust Museum. Dr. Rose developed her practical and delicious eating philosophy to overcome a debilitating auto-immune disorder, which she combined with her background in psychology to launch the Academy's coaching program.

Additionally, the Academy maintains a network of select, qualified, and vetted instructors/mentors who, under the supervision of one of the lead mentors, may also work with you during your studies.

Note on Licensing:

All U.S. states require individuals to obtain licensure before providing diagnosis or treatment of mental, emotional, behavioral, or medical disorders. The Nature Therapy Walks Guide program does not provide any training in such clinical skills, nor does it meet the licensing requirements thereof for any jurisdiction. To protect themselves and their participants, unless otherwise appropriately licensed, Guides should never offer to diagnose, prescribe, or treat any medical or mental health concern.

While many jurisdictions do not regulate nature guides, several jurisdictions do regulate "outdoor guides" to include those who lead others on hiking excursions. States that regulate outdoor guides include New York, Oregon, Idaho, and Maine and may include others. This Nature Therapy Walks Guide program is not designed to provide training in the more intensive and hazardous outdoor recreational activities (such as backpacking) traditionally associated with outdoor guides, nor is it designed to meet the licensing requirements thereof for any jurisdiction. Guides should refer individuals interested in potentially hazardous outdoor recreational activities to qualified and licensed professionals.