



Health Forest

What is Health Forest?

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Health Forest

Let forest heal



Background

Health crisis

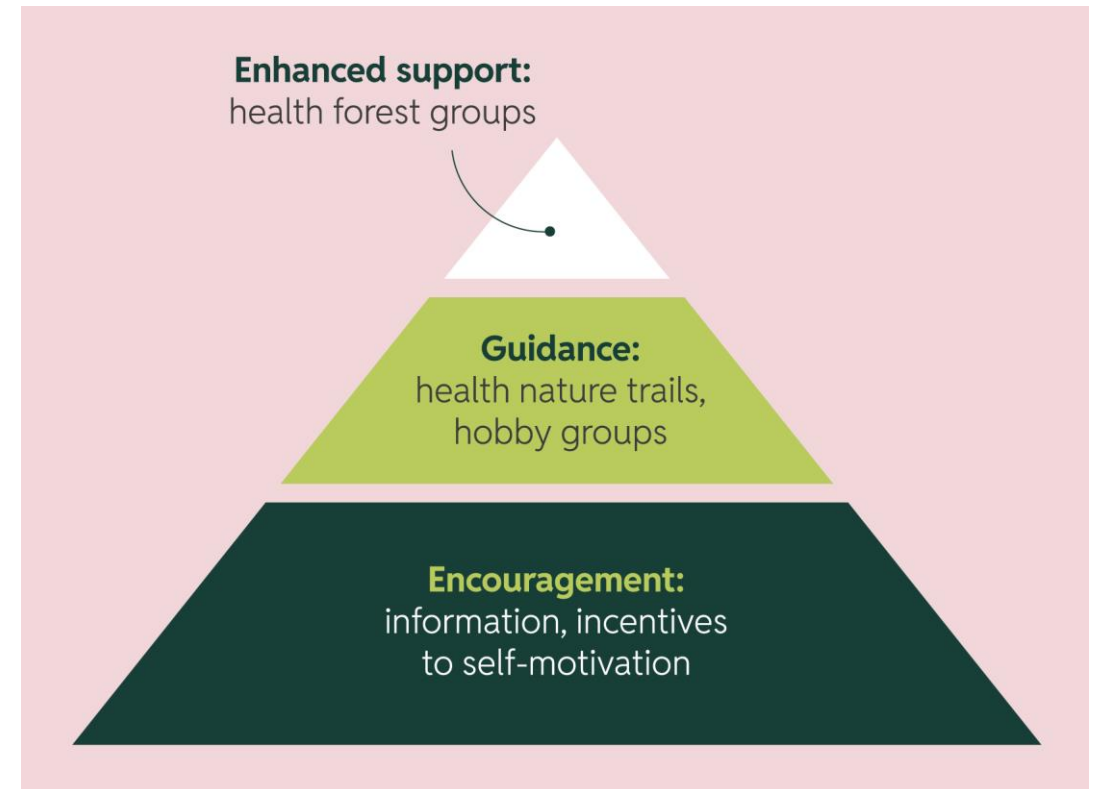
- deteriorating mental health
- inactivity, loneliness
- stress-related diseases
- urbanization, environmental problems

Wellbeing effects of nature

- improvement in mental health
- attention recovery
- stress-reduction
- increase in social cohesion

Health Forest project

- started as a ministry funded project in 2014
- "forest prescription" from a healthcare professional
- encompasses potentially the whole population
- the evaluation of evidence-based practices in health and well-being promotion (HYTE): 4/5



There are many paths to Health Forest

- **attitude:** valuing the importance of nature contact: social or healthcare professional recommends nature visits to a client
- **place:** establishing particular forest area for the public to gain health benefits
- **method:** trained personnel guiding clients in nature immersion



Health Forest method

- groups of approximately 15 people
- no specific diagnosis: health care professional evaluates the need
- each session has its own theme, e.g. relaxation, activating senses, experiencing beauty
- observing and learning about nature, just being and enjoying



Does it work?

Quantative reseach (N=79)

- clinically significant improvement in mental health
- increased closeness with other people
 - Kolster, A., ym. (2023). Frontiers in Public Health.

Qualitative research (N=23)

- participants valued that the activity was coordinated by social and health care services
- deepening the bond with natural world
- ability to regulate wellbeing in nature
 - Heikkinen, M. (2022). YAMK Theseus, Arcada.



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Health forest as a place

Health Forest is a sum of positive characteristics

- forest area with more than an average amount of characteristics that support wellbeing
- ultimately, any natural location or area that is perceived as a source of wellbeing can be regarded as a health forest



A forest near hospital, near-by nature and your secret place

- health forests near hospitals of Lahti, Kajaani and Kouvola
- aim to inspire municipalities, communities and private landowners
- place where wellbeing of humans and biodiversity of nature go hand in hand





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*Health forest themed fundraising of the Finnish
Natural Heritage Foundation
(Luonnonperintösäätiö) starts today 27.8.24!*



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Thank you!

www.healthforest.fi

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