

## HEART SENSE

The aim here is to encourage the Accessible Forest Practitioners to explore and deepen their experience with the heart sense so as to be able to confidently guide their participants in invitations that include the heart as a guide.

The human heart is more than a pump. It is a sensitive organ of perception, attuned to rhythm, emotion, and connection. Research shows the heart has its own neurological network, capable of sensing, remembering, and guiding the body's response to the world.

In nature connection practices, attuning to the Heart Sense can help to restore feelings of belonging and compassion, cultivate coherence between body, mind, and emotions, support trauma healing through nonverbal, relational presence and reconnect us with our inner rhythms.



### IMPORTANT CRITERIA TO REFLECT ON:

**Trauma Awareness:** Some participants may carry grief, isolation, or emotional numbness. The heart sense can open gently but must never be forced. For some participants like for example, migrants or displaced people, heart-based practices may touch homesickness, loss, or love. It is important to move slowly, with permission and to trust your own heart.

**Emotional & Cultural Safety:** Cultural norms about emotion vary. Create a space where stillness, openness, and emotion are welcome, but not required.

**Physical Considerations:** Conditions like heart disease or high anxiety may influence how participants experience the heart sense. You can soften and support their experience of the heart sense using grounding and breath-based anchoring. Overuse of screens can disconnect people from their emotional body. Forest-based heart practices can restore emotional depth and slowness.



## TIPS

**Use gentle language:** “You might notice what your heart feels like today...”

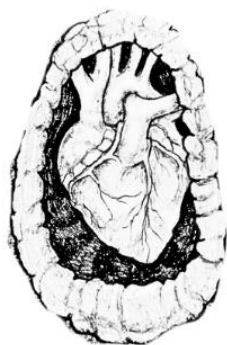
**No pressure to share:** Heart awareness is private and internal. Make sure to offer these invitations in an open way so that people do not feel forced to share.

**Use somatic anchors:** Invite placing a hand on the chest, or tuning into the rhythm of breath or pulse. These will support a softer approach and one that is rooted in a sensory experience through the body. Avoid abstract language by keeping invitations grounded in physical experience.

**Offer metaphors:** “Is there a tree your heart wants to lean toward?”

**Create space for spaciousness:** Allow long pauses; don’t rush to fill emotion with explanation.

## EXPLORE



Explore different ways and with different language Take some time to deepen your own experience of the heart sense.

**“Heart Listening”:** Listen to the forest with your heart—not your ears. What shifts?

**“Heart Tree Connection”:** Place a hand or your back on a tree and notice what happens in the heart. Does it soften, steady or stir?

**“What Does the Forest Feel About Me?”:** A gentle, open-ended prompt that can spark emotional awareness in a safe way.

**Walking With the Heart:** Allow your pace whilst walking in the forest be guided by what feels right to your heart. Is it slower? More attuned? More relational?

## REFLECT

- How attuned am I to my own heart?
- Do I make space for emotional presence?
- Am I offering heart-centered facilitation or simply calmness?
- What does it feel like when the forest touches my heart?
- Am I listening to participants with my heart as well as my ears?
- How do I help others feel emotionally safe without asking them to open?