

1.6 Observing and Describing Nature

Name: _____ Date: _____

Weather permitting, find an outdoor space where you may practice this exercise relatively undisturbed. It can be a park, a woodland area, or your own back yard. If the weather is unpleasant outside, you may practice this activity indoors with a houseplant.

Before you begin, rate your current stress level using the scale below. Make a slash mark in the appropriate place on the line below:

CURRENT STRESS LEVEL

NOT STRESSED AT ALL --1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10--EXTREMELY STRESSED OUT

ACTIVITY

1. If you can do this activity outdoors, select a tree, bush, or other flora in the environment to observe and describe. This should be in a place where you may sit comfortably next to it while you perform the exercise. If you are doing this indoors with a houseplant, place the plant in front of you while you sit comfortably in a chair or on the floor. If you are wearing any tight clothing, you may wish to loosen it.
2. Once you are comfortably seated near the plant, begin by taking a few deep breaths. Bring your thoughts to the activity at hand, letting other thoughts gently float away, like a fallen leaf drifting downstream.
3. When you are feeling grounded and centered, begin the activity by observing and describing the plant you have chosen. Imagine yourself as an artist about to paint a picture of this plant. How many leaves do you see? How many branches? In how many directions do the branches twist and turn? How many different colors do you see? How do the light and the shadow fall on your plant?
4. Observe and describe the plant to yourself in this manner for at least 20 minutes. If you have a watch or a cell phone with a timer you may wish to set it to let you know when your time is done. If you prefer, you can just do the exercise until you think 20 minutes have passed. The observing and describing are more important than the amount of time you spend doing it. The answer to the question, *“How long should I do this?”* is, *“As long as necessary.”*
5. When you have finished the exercise, rate yourself again on anxiety and stress using the scale below.

CURRENT STRESS LEVEL

NOT STRESSED AT ALL --1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10--EXTREMELY STRESSED OUT