

Costs and Benefits in the Ecosystem

A Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy SUD Worksheet

Stage of Change: Contemplation

Purpose:

To explore the short- and long-term costs and benefits of substance use or compulsive behaviors, helping you to notice how current actions align (or conflict) with your life values and resources.

Part 1: Grounding in the Environment

If possible, take 3–5 minutes outdoors near a plant, tree, or garden. Observe without judgment.

Notice a plant competing for light, space, or nutrients.

What seems to thrive about this plant?

What seems crowded out or overshadowed for this plant?

Reflect on the parallels in your own life: what behaviors, habits, or resources might be thriving, and what might be depleted? How are you like this plant? How are you different?

Write your answers below.

Part 2: Benefits of Current Behavior

Short-Term Benefits:

List immediate gains from substance use or the behavior. (e.g., relief from stress, pleasure, social connection)

Long-Term Benefits:

List potential longer-term gains you perceive, even if subtle. (e.g., coping with past trauma, temporary escape)

Part 3: Costs of Current Behavior

Short-Term Costs:

Notice immediate consequences. (e.g., fatigue, conflict, expense, guilt)

Long-Term Costs:

Consider potential consequences over months or years. (e.g., health, relationships, financial stability, emotional resilience)

Part 4: Reflection on Personal Resources

What personal resources are being nourished or supported by current behavior?

What personal resources are being depleted or crowded out?

How does this comparison highlight the discrepancy between current behavior and the life you want to live?

Part 5: Insight & Action

What small observation or insight stands out most to you from this exercise?

What is one step you might take to align your behaviors with your values or strengthen your resources?

Closing Reflection

Like plants in an ecosystem, your choices affect what thrives and what is crowded out. Awareness of this balance is the first step toward intentional, values-aligned action.