

Lapse Reflection Without Catastrophe

A Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy SUD Worksheet

Stage of Change: Maintenance

Purpose: Reflect on a lapse without shame, strengthen learning, and prevent escalation into relapse.

Grounding First!

Before completing this worksheet, pause.

1. Take 3 slow breaths.
2. Notice your feet on the ground.
3. If possible, step outside or visualize a tree in nature.
4. Remember: A lapse is an event. It is not your identity.

Part 1: What Happened? (Observing Without Judgment)

Describe the lapse factually, like a neutral observer. What occurred?

When and where did it happen?

Who was present?

Reflection: What stands out to you as you describe this situation calmly?

Part 2: What Belief Was Active?

Identify the thought or belief that influenced your behavior.

Examples:

- “I can’t handle this without using.”
- “One time won’t matter.”
- “I’ve already messed up.”

What belief was operating for you?

Reflection:

On a scale of 1–10, how strongly did you believe this thought at the time? _____

What evidence supports the thought?

What evidence challenges it?

Part 3: What Skill Could Be Strengthened?

Instead of asking, “What’s wrong with me?” ask: “What skill needs more practice?”

Possible skill areas:

- Urge surfing
- Boundary setting
- Emotional regulation
- Asking for support
- Cognitive restructuring

Which skill(s) could use strengthening?

One small way to practice this skill this week:

Part 4: Outdoor Reflection – The Fallen Branch

If possible, observe a tree with a broken or fallen branch. Or imagine one.

Notice:

- The trunk still stands.
- Roots remain intact.
- Growth continues around damage.

Reflection prompts:

What is still intact in my recovery?

What strengths did I use even in this lapse?

What needs pruning, not punishment?

Part 5: Preventing Escalation

Complete the following:

One protective step I will take in the next 24 hours:

One person I can reach out to (if appropriate):

A realistic, compassionate statement to myself:

Closing Perspective

- A lapse is feedback, not failure.
- Damage assessed early prevents structural collapse.
- Recovery, like a tree, adapts through seasons.

You are strengthening maintenance by reflecting instead of catastrophizing.