

Living Your Values

Purpose:

This exercise is designed to help you to clarify your core values through mindful awareness and connection with the natural world. By slowing down, grounding in nature, and reflecting intentionally, you can identify what truly matters to you and you can learn to recognize where your behaviors align or conflict with those values. The purpose of this exercise is to cultivate greater integrity, ecological and personal awareness, and intentional action while supporting sustainable personal change rooted in mindfulness rather than impulse.

Finding Your Values

Here's the uncomfortable truth: you are already living your values. The question is whether you're doing it on purpose or by accident. If you don't like the consequences of living your current values, this worksheet can be the first step in helping you to change.

Mindfulness-based ecotherapy asks you to slow down long enough to notice what actually matters to you, not what life, stress, or habit has trained you to chase. Your values are the living currents beneath your choices. Most people never stop to look at them directly. Engaging in this exercise can help you to slow down, step out of automatic processes that lead to addictive behaviors, and begin to change those behaviors based on the values established by your True Self.

Step 1: Pause and Notice

Take this exercise outside if you can. Sit under a tree, lean against a rock, stand barefoot on grass. If nothing else, find a quiet room and look out the window. Let your breathing settle. Feel the air move in and out of your nose, mouth, and lungs. Notice the sounds around you. You are part of a larger system, not separate from it. Allow yourself to feel this experience of oneness.

From that grounded place, begin writing.

List as many of your core values as come to mind. Don't edit. Don't try to impress anyone. Just write what matters to you as those values come to mind.

Examples might include:

- Financial stability
- Family
- Creativity
- Spiritual growth
- Health
- Freedom
- Adventure
- Solitude
- Community
- Courage

There are no correct or incorrect answers. If it feels alive to you, it belongs on the page.

Step 2: Look for the Roots

When you're done, read your list slowly.

Circle the values that feel strongest in your body. Which ones create a sense of steadiness? Which ones make your chest expand a little? Which ones feel like roots going into the soil?

Group similar words together. For example:

- Health, vitality, strength
- Nature, conservation, sustainability
- Family, belonging, loyalty

Now narrow your list to your top five core values. This part is hard. Good. It's supposed to be. If it were easy, you'd already be doing it. Grant yourself the patience and the effort needed to complete this goal, and take as much time as you need.

My Core Values

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Step 3: Bring in Awareness

Now the real work begins.

In mindfulness-based ecotherapy, we practice non-judgmental awareness. That means noticing patterns without blaming, shaming, or guilt-tripping yourself. You are not prosecuting your life. You are not judging your life. You are observing it.

While observing how you live out your values on a daily basis, ask yourself:

- How do my daily behaviors support these values?
- Where do my habits (automatic behaviors) pull me away from them?
- When I'm in nature, do I feel closer to these values or farther from them?
- What emotions arise when I imagine fully living in alignment with them?
- What emotions arise when I see a conflict between my values and my behaviors?
- Do any of these emotions act as triggers for substance use?

For most people, the behavior they want to change is not a value. It's a coping strategy. Substance use is a type of coping strategy, and a learned behavior. It may have quietly taken priority over what truly matters. The good news is that since it's a learned behavior, it can be un-learned.

If one of your values is your health, but your behavior undermines your body, that's a conflict between a value and a behavior. If you value family, but your actions isolate you from your loved ones, that's tension between your values and your behaviors. As you list your values, notice any behaviors that might be conflicting with living out those values. How many of them might be triggers to substance use?

List some of these behaviors and values below.

VALUE	CONFLICTING BEHAVIOR	SUD TRIGGER?
		Y / N
		Y / N
		Y / N
		Y / N
		Y / N
		Y / N
		Y / N
		Y / N
		Y / N

