

Roots and Branches: A Self-as-Context Reflection

A Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy ACT Worksheet

Purpose:

This exercise explores the ACT process of *self-as-context*, which is the *observing self* that remains stable even as thoughts, emotions, and roles change. Using a tree as metaphor, you will reflect on your roots (core self), trunk (steady awareness), and branches (roles and experiences).

If possible, complete this exercise outdoors near a tree. If not, visualize one clearly in your mind's eye as you complete the exercise.

Part 1: Grounding With the Tree

Stand or sit near a tree.

Take 3 slow breaths.

Notice:

The feel of the ground beneath you: _____

The temperature of the air: _____

Sounds around you: _____

The presence of the tree itself: _____

Observe without analyzing.

Part 2: The Roots – Your Core Self

Roots are unseen but essential. They anchor and nourish the tree.

When you strip away job titles, achievements, successes, and failures...

Who are you at your core?

What qualities feel deeply “you,” even when circumstances change?

(Examples: compassionate, curious, steady, creative, loyal)

What values feel foundational in your life?

How do these “roots” nourish your choices and behavior?

Part 3: The Trunk – Stable Awareness

The trunk supports everything above it. It does not disappear when seasons change.

Notice that you can observe your thoughts right now.

What thoughts are present?

Notice that you can observe your emotions.

What emotions are present?

Who is noticing these thoughts and emotions?

(Describe the perspective of awareness itself.)

In what ways is this observing part of you steady, even when your experiences shift?

Part 4: The Branches – Roles and Experiences

Branches grow outward and change with the seasons.

List the roles you currently hold:

(Parent, therapist, partner, friend, leader, student, etc.)

What thoughts commonly occupy your mind in these roles?

What emotions frequently arise in these roles?

How have these roles changed over time?

Notice: branches grow, break, regrow. The roots and trunk remain.

Part 5: Weathering the Seasons

Trees endure storms, drought, and wind.

What “storms” are you currently facing?

How might remembering your roots and trunk help you respond differently?

What would it look like to let difficult thoughts and emotions move through your branches without uprooting you?

Part 6: Committed Action

Based on this reflection, one value-aligned action I will take this week is:

When difficult thoughts or emotions arise, I will remind myself:

“I am the tree, not the weather.”

Or write your own reminder:

Closing Reflection

Place your hand over your chest or gently touch the tree beside you.

Notice that growth does not require eliminating storms.

It requires roots, steady awareness, and willingness to keep growing.