

Urge Surfing in Nature

A Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy SUD Worksheet

Purpose

To observe cravings without acting on them, using nature as a model for impermanence and flow.

Goal: Strengthen distress tolerance and psychological flexibility.

Step 1: Ground in the Environment

If possible, step outside. If not, visualize a natural setting (stream, shoreline, wind through trees, whatever your favorite outdoor environment might be).

Pause and notice:

- 5 things you can see
- 3 things you can hear
- 1 physical sensation in your body

Write what you notice:

Step 2: Identify the Urge

What is the urge right now?

What triggered it?

Rate intensity of the urge (0–10): _____

Remember: An urge is a sensation and a thought. It is not a command.

Step 3: Surf the Wave

Imagine the urge as a wave in the ocean, a gust of wind, or a current in a stream.

Answer the following:

Where do I feel this urge in my body?

Is it tight, warm, restless, heavy, sharp?

If this sensation had a shape or movement, what would it be?

Now sit with it for 60–90 seconds.

Notice:

- Does it rise?
- Plateau?
- Shift location?
- Decrease slightly?

What changed?

Step 4: Outdoor Metaphor Reflection

Observe something in nature that moves or changes:

- Waves rolling in and receding
- Clouds passing
- Leaves floating downstream
- Wind moving branches

Reflection:

What do you notice about how nature handles intensity?

Does the wave stay at its peak forever?

What happens when nothing fights the wave/urge?

Step 5: Choose a Values-Aligned Action

Even with the urge present, what small action aligns with your recovery?

Examples:

- Take a 5-minute walk
- Text a support person
- Drink water and breathe
- Delay decision by 20 minutes

My action:

Re-rate urge intensity after 5–10 minutes (scale of 0-10): _____

What did you learn from riding it instead of reacting?

Closing Reminder

- Urges crest.
- They break.
- They pass.

You do not have to eliminate an urge to outlast it.
Like weather, it changes whether you cooperate with it or not.

And every time you surf instead of surrender, you build strength.