

# Mindful Awareness Worksheet: Doing Mode vs. Being Mode

*Doing Mode* is your brain's problem-solving system. It lives in *thinking mode*. It compares, judges, plans, replays the past, and tries to control the future. Great for solving problems. Not great for experiencing your life.

*Being Mode* is about direct experience in the present moment. It lives in *sensing mode*. Instead of thinking about life, you feel, notice, and experience what's actually here. When you can do that, you've achieved *mindful awareness*.

These two modes aren't enemies. They're partners. The problem arises when doing mode runs nonstop and crowds out being mode. That's when you get stuck in your head, disconnected from your body, and reacting instead of experiencing. That's where anxious or depressing thoughts and feelings are born.

Nature is always in being mode. It doesn't overthink a breeze. It just moves. Paying attention to nature can help you to leave thinking mode and enter sensing mode. When you can do this, you have left doing mode and entered being mode. This is because when you start paying attention to your senses, you automatically focus on the present moment. You can't see, hear, touch, taste, or smell anything in the past or the future. You can only experience the world through your senses in the present moment.

## Reflection Questions

When are you most stuck in thinking mode?

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What kinds of thoughts dominate (planning, worrying, replaying)?

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When do you naturally drop into sensing mode?

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How does your body feel when you're in doing mode vs. being mode?

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What might change if you spent more time in sensing mode?

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# Ecotherapy Exercise: “Shift Into Sensing”

## Instructions

1. Go outside (yes, physically outside, not staring out a window like a houseplant)
2. Stand or sit comfortably
3. Take one slow breath and let your body settle

Begin with hearing:

- Notice 3 distinct sounds

Move to sight:

- Notice 3 things you can see in detail (color, shape, movement)

Move to touch:

- Notice physical sensations (air on skin, ground under feet, temperature)
- If your mind starts narrating or analyzing, gently note:
  - “Thinking”
  - Then return to sensing

Continue cycling through senses for 5–10 minutes

## Prompted Reflection

You may wish to write the answers to the following questions in your journal:

Did your mind try to pull you back into thinking? If so, how quickly?

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What changed when you focused on your senses?

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Did time feel different while you were sensing?

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How did your body feel compared to before the exercise?

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# Integration: Using Both Modes Wisely

## Journaling Prompts

What situations actually require doing mode?

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Where do you overuse thinking mode unnecessarily?

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What are signs you've been stuck in your head too long?

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How can sensing mode help interrupt stress or overthinking?

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## Micro-Practice

Pause and notice:

1. One thing you see
2. One thing you hear
3. One thing you feel

That's it. Congratulations, you've re-entered reality.

## Optional Challenge

Spend 5–10 minutes outside each day this week practicing sensing mode.

When you catch yourself overthinking, shift to your senses before reacting.

Thinking mode builds your plans. Sensing mode lets you actually live them. Ignoring one for the other is how people end up either stressed out or weirdly disconnected from their own life. Balancing both is the whole key to mindful awareness.