

# Nature as Healer: The True Self and the Mask

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Understanding The True Self and the Mask

Throughout life, we develop “masks.” These are roles, behaviors, and identities shaped by society’s expectations, culture, and past experiences. While these masks can help us adapt and function, they can also distance us from our True Self. The True Self is our true thoughts, feelings, and values. Nature offers a powerful contrast to the masks we wear because it exists without pretense, fully expressing its essence.

By observing nature and reflecting inward, we can begin to recognize where we are performing (wearing a mask) versus where we are being genuine (living in True Self). This awareness allows us to gently release what is not truly ours and reconnect with who we are at our core.

### Reflection Questions

What roles or “masks” do you notice yourself wearing in different areas of your life?

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When do you feel most authentic and true to yourself?

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How do your masks protect you, and how might they limit you?

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What fears arise when you consider letting go of certain roles or expectations?

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How does nature demonstrate authenticity without effort or performance?

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## Ecotherapy Exercise: Shedding the Mask

### Instructions

1. Spend time in a natural setting (forest, park, garden, or outdoor space).
2. Observe elements of nature (trees, water, animals, or plants) and notice how they exist naturally, without striving or pretending.
3. Reflect on how each element expresses its true nature effortlessly.
4. Sit quietly and bring awareness to yourself, noticing any roles, expectations, or “masks” you may be holding.
5. Imagine gently setting aside one mask, allowing yourself to simply be present, as nature is.

### Prompted Reflection

What did you observe about authenticity in the natural world?

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Which “mask” felt most present or noticeable during this exercise?

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How did it feel to imagine setting aside that mask?

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What emotions arose as you connected with your True Self?

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How can nature help to remind you live in your True Self?

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## Integration: The True Self and the Mask

Practice noticing when you are acting from expectation versus authenticity. Take small, safe steps toward expressing your true thoughts, feelings, and values.

### Journaling Prompts

Which masks feel most limiting or disconnected from your True Self?

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What does your True Self value, feel, think, and need?

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How can you express more authenticity in one area of your life today?

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What support do you need from nature to feel safe being your True Self?

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### Micro-Practice

1. Pause and take three slow breaths.
2. Ask yourself: "Am I acting from my true self or from a mask?"
3. Gently shift one small behavior, thought, or posture to align more closely with authenticity.

### Optional Challenge

Imagine you could create a mask that represents your True Self. What would it look like? If you have creative skills, you may wish to make such a mask using natural materials like gourds, wood, twigs and leaves, or other items you can find in nature.

Exploring the True Self and the mask helps us recognize conditioned roles and reconnect with our true identity. By learning from nature's effortless authenticity, we cultivate self-awareness and courage. This supports Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy's ultimate goal of living in True Self with honesty, presence, and alignment.