

Function of Emotions with Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy

Name: _____ Date: _____

This worksheet helps you understand what your emotions communicate, how they protect you, and how they guide adaptive action. Integrating Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy encourages you to explore emotions through the lens of natural processes, where every response has purpose, rhythm, and ecological logic.

Part 1: Identify the Emotion

Name the emotion you are exploring.

Emotion: _____

Intensity (0-10 – circle one): 0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

Physical sensations (where does the emotion manifest in your body?):

Nature reflection

Notice how this emotion feels in your body the way weather feels in a landscape. Is it a storm, a fog, a warm breeze, a rising tide, a snowstorm? Something else?

Part 2: What Is the Emotion Trying to Tell You

Every emotion carries information. These questions will help you to determine what your emotions might be trying to tell you.

What message might this emotion be communicating?

What need or value might it be pointing toward?

What situation or boundary is it responding to?

Nature reflection

In nature, signals always serve a purpose. A bird call warns of danger. A plant wilts when it needs water. Your emotion is a signal too. What metaphor from nature most closely resembles the emotion you're experiencing right now?

Part 3: How the Emotion Helps You Adapt

Emotions evolved to help you survive and connect.

Consider the three core functions of emotions:

1. Communication

What does this emotion communicate to others?

What does it communicate to you?

2. Motivation

What action does this emotion urge you to take?

How might that action be protective or purposeful?

3. Validation

How does this emotion confirm that something matters to you?

Nature reflection

Think of how ecosystems respond to change. A forest reacts to drought. A river shifts after a storm. Your emotional responses are part of your adaptive system. They're there to tell you something needs to change.

Part 4: Does the Emotion Fit the Facts

Evaluate whether the emotion is proportionate to the situation.

What are the objective facts in the situation that led to the emotion?

Are there assumptions, judgments, or interpretations mixed in?

Does the intensity match the reality?

What alternative explanations exist?

Nature reflection

Imagine stepping back the way you would observe a bear from a ridge versus being face-to-face with a bear. Distance brings clarity. If you could “zoom out” on the problem, would it help you to see the bigger picture? How might seeing the bigger picture change the way you experience the emotion?

Part 5: If the Emotion Fits the Facts

Plan an effective, grounded response.

What action aligns with the message of this emotion?

What skill will help you respond wisely?

What nature-based practice can support you in responding wisely to the emotion from Wise Mind?

Examples:

- Taking a mindful walk before acting
- Sitting with your back against a tree to settle your nervous system
- Using breathwork inspired by waves or wind

Part 6: If the Emotion Does Not Fit the Facts

Plan a corrective response.

What skill will help you regulate most effectively? (Opposite Action, grounding, paced breathing, etc.)

What nature-based anchor can help shift the emotional state

Examples:

- Holding a grounding object like a stone
- Observing the slow movement of clouds
- Matching your breath to a natural rhythm

Part 7: Reflection

What did you learn about the purpose of this emotion?

How did nature help clarify or soften your understanding?

What action will you take next time this emotion arises?

Nature reflection

Emotions, like natural cycles, are not mistakes. They are signals, adaptations, and invitations to respond with awareness. Like there is no such thing as a “wrong” plant or a “wrong” animal, there is no such thing as a “wrong” emotion. You feel what you feel. What may be problematic is how we choose to respond to our emotions. This exercise can help you to respond to your feelings in positive ways that lead to positive consequences.