

Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy and the ACT Hexaflex Page 1 of 11

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) uses the Hexaflex to describe six interconnected psychological processes that promote psychological flexibility: Acceptance, Cognitive Defusion, Present-Moment Awareness, Self-as-Context, Values, and Committed Action.

Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy (MBE) complements these processes by using mindfulness and the natural environment as resources for developing awareness, acceptance, connection, and purposeful action. In MBE, nature can serve not only as a setting for mindfulness practice but also as a metaphor, teacher, nurturer, and healer.

Use this worksheet to explore how each ACT Hexaflex process can be strengthened through mindful engagement with nature.

The ACT Hexaflex and Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy

ACT Process	What It Means	MBE Connection	Nature-Based Practice
Acceptance	Making room for thoughts, feelings, sensations, and experiences without unnecessarily fighting them	Nature demonstrates that change, decay, discomfort, and uncertainty are natural parts of life	Observe something in nature that is changing, imperfect, or uncomfortable. Practice allowing it to exist without trying to change it.
Cognitive Defusion	Learning to experience thoughts as thoughts rather than automatically treating them as facts	Nature can provide distance and perspective from repetitive thinking	Notice a troubling thought while observing something in nature. Silently add, "I am noticing the thought that..."
Present-Moment Awareness	Directing attention intentionally to what is happening right now	Nature provides continual sensory information that can anchor attention in the present	Use the five senses to observe your surroundings for several minutes. Notice what is happening without labeling it as good or bad.
Self-as-Context	Experiencing yourself as the awareness in which thoughts, emotions, and experiences occur rather than being defined by them	The natural world can provide perspective on the changing nature of human experience	Sit quietly in nature and observe thoughts, emotions, sounds, and sensations as passing events. Ask, "What is noticing all of this?"

ACT Process	What It Means	MBE Connection	Nature-Based Practice
Values	Identifying what matters most and what kind of person you want to be	Nature can clarify what people value by revealing experiences of connection, stewardship, beauty, belonging, and reciprocity	Spend time in a meaningful natural place. Reflect on what your relationship with this place reveals about what matters to you.
Committed Action	Taking purposeful steps that are consistent with your values, even when difficult thoughts or feelings arise	MBE translates connection with nature into intentional, values-based behavior	Identify one small action that expresses a value and can be taken in relationship with yourself, others, or the natural world.

Part 1: Acceptance — Making Room for Experience

Nature does not resist change. Seasons change, plants grow and die, storms come and go, and ecosystems continually adapt. Acceptance does not mean liking everything that happens. It means making room for reality as it is while choosing how to respond.

Reflect

What experience are you currently fighting, avoiding, or wishing were different?

What happens when you try to push this experience away?

Imagine placing this experience alongside you rather than carrying it or fighting it. What would it be like to allow it to exist without immediately trying to change it?

Part 2: Cognitive Defusion — Thoughts Are Not Facts

The mind continually generates interpretations, predictions, judgments, memories, and stories. Defusion allows you to notice these mental events without automatically obeying them.

Nature Practice

Choose something in nature to observe. Notice your thoughts while looking at it.

Complete the following:

“I am noticing the thought that...”

“I am noticing the story that...”

“If I don’t automatically believe this thought, what else might be possible?”

MBE Connection

What did you notice when you observed your thoughts rather than trying to argue with them?

Part 3: Present-Moment Awareness — Coming Back to Now

Nature is continually happening in the present moment. The wind moves through the trees. Birds call. Clouds change. Water flows. Present-moment awareness involves intentionally returning attention to what is happening now.

Five-Senses Nature Scan

Spend several minutes outdoors or looking through a window.

What do you see?

What do you hear?

What do you feel physically?

What do you smell?

What do you taste, if anything?

Reflection

How did focusing on your senses affect your attention?

What did you notice that you might normally overlook?

Part 4: Self-as-Context — The Observer

Thoughts and emotions change. The body changes. Circumstances change. Yet there is an ongoing capacity to notice these experiences.

Imagine sitting quietly beneath a tree or beside a body of water. Thoughts come and go. Feelings come and go. Sounds come and go.

You are the person noticing them.

Reflect

Complete these statements:

“I am noticing that my mind is...”

“I am noticing that my emotions are...”

“I am noticing sensations in my body such as...”

“If I am the one noticing these experiences, rather than being defined by them, I can see myself as...”

MBE Connection

What does observing nature teach you about the difference between an experience and the person experiencing it?

Part 5: Values — What Matters?

Values are ongoing qualities of action that give direction to life. They are different from goals because a goal can be completed, while values continue to guide behavior.

Nature can help people reconnect with values that may become obscured by stress, routine, technology, or social expectations.

Values Exploration

When you feel most connected to nature, what qualities of life seem most important?

- Connection
- Compassion
- Creativity
- Curiosity
- Freedom
- Growth
- Peace
- Responsibility
- Stewardship
- Community
- Courage
- Simplicity
- Gratitude
- Beauty
- Learning
- Other: _____

Choose your three most important values:

Nature as Teacher

What does nature teach you about one of these values?

How would your daily life look different if you lived more consistently according to this value?

Part 6: Committed Action — Turning Values Into Behavior

Values become meaningful through action. Committed action means taking purposeful steps toward what matters, even when discomfort, fear, doubt, or difficult thoughts are present.

My Values-Based Action

The value I want to express is:

One small action I can take within the next 24 hours is:

One action I can take within the next week is:

What thoughts or emotions might get in the way?

How can I make room for those experiences without allowing them to determine my behavior?

The Hexaflex in Nature

The six ACT processes are not isolated skills. They influence one another.

For example:

Present-Moment Awareness helps you notice difficult thoughts and emotions.

↓

Acceptance allows those experiences to be present.

↓

Cognitive Defusion helps you avoid becoming controlled by unhelpful thoughts.

↓

Self-as-Context helps you recognize that you are more than any single thought, feeling, or circumstance.

↓

Values provide direction.

↓

Committed Action turns those values into behavior.

Reflection

Think of a current challenge in your life.

What are you experiencing right now?

What thoughts are showing up?

What feelings or sensations are present?

What would acceptance look like?

What would cognitive defusion look like?

What perspective might Self-as-Context provide?

What value do you want to move toward?

What committed action could you take?

Nature as Metaphor

Choose one natural object, organism, or process that represents something you are currently experiencing.

Examples:

- A tree enduring a storm
- A river changing course
- A seed waiting beneath the soil
- A spider rebuilding its web
- A fallen leaf returning to the earth
- A mountain remaining while weather changes around it
- A migrating bird responding to changing conditions

My nature metaphor is:

What does it represent?

What does it teach you?

How does this metaphor relate to one or more of the ACT Hexaflex processes?

Bringing the Hexaflex Into Daily Life

Choose one practice from each category.

Acceptance

When something difficult happens, I will practice:

Cognitive Defusion

When I notice an unhelpful thought, I will remind myself:

Present-Moment Awareness

I will intentionally practice mindful awareness while:

Self-as-Context

When I become caught up in an experience, I will remember:

Values

A value I want to embody more consistently is:

Committed Action

One concrete action I will take is:

My Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Commitment

For the next week, I will spend _____ minutes in mindful contact with nature at least _____ times.

During this time, I will practice:

The value I want this practice to support is:

One obstacle I anticipate is:

When that obstacle appears, I will practice acceptance and defusion by:

My commitment is:

"I cannot control every thought, feeling, or circumstance. I can choose how I respond to what I encounter. I will use mindfulness, connection with nature, and awareness of my values to take purposeful action."

Signature: _____ Date: _____