

Acceptance: Present Moment Awareness

Name _____ Date _____

Concept: This exercise focuses on the transition from *thinking mode*, often called *doing mode*, to *sensing mode*, also known as *being mode*. In thinking mode, the mind tends to focus on planning, analyzing, judging, or solving problems. It is active, goal-oriented, and often pulls us away from the present moment.

Sensing mode, in contrast, is grounded in direct experience. It is receptive, open, and fully aware of the current moment. By intentionally engaging with your senses in nature, you can cultivate present-moment awareness, allowing yourself to notice sights, sounds, smells, textures, and even tastes without judgment or the need to “do” anything.

This practice helps you step out of the mental busyness of *thinking mode* and into the calm, accepting awareness of *being mode*, where you are fully present in the moment and connected with your environment through sensing mode.

Step 1: Understanding Modes

Use this chart to help you to understand the relationships among doing mode, being mode, thinking mode, and sensing mode.

MODE	DESCRIPTION	ANALOGY
Thinking Mode	Focused on on planning, analyzing, judging, or problem-solving. Often involves mental “doing.”	Doing Mode
Sensing Mode	Focused on direct sensory experience by seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching. Accepts what is without judgment.	Being Mode
Doing Mode	Preoccupied with “doing” something to solve problems or fix things.	Thinking Mode
Being Mode	Aware in the present moment by shifting from thinking to sensing.	Sensing Mode

Reflection:

When do you notice yourself primarily in thinking mode?

How does it feel when your mind is “doing” rather than “being”?

Step 2: Nature as a Gateway to Being Mode

Nature provides a rich environment for sensing. The rustle of leaves, the scent of soil, the warmth of sunlight, the sound of birdsong, all invite us to engage our senses and notice the present moment.

Observing nature through your senses naturally encourages a shift from thinking mode to sensing mode. You can only experience through your senses in the here and now, which grounds you in present-moment awareness by taking you out of the thinking cycle. By turning attention to what you can sense, rather than what you are thinking about, you leave doing mode behind and enter being mode.

Step 3: Sensory Observation Exercise

Instructions: Find a quiet outdoor space (garden, park, trail, backyard). Spend 10–15 minutes observing the environment with your senses.

- Sight: Look closely at something natural (a leaf, stone, flower). Notice its color, texture, shape, and movement.
- Hearing: Close your eyes for a moment. What natural sounds do you hear? Birds, wind, water, insects?
- Touch: Gently touch a natural object and feel the texture, temperature, and weight.
- Smell: Take a deep breath. What scents are present? Earthy, floral, fresh?
- Optional Taste: If safe (e.g., herbs, edible plants), notice taste fully.

Reflection Questions:

Which senses were easiest for you to focus on? Which were hardest?

How did your mind react? Did it try to “do” or “analyze” while you sensed?

What did you notice about your awareness of the present moment during this exercise?

Step 4: Anchoring in Present-Moment Awareness

After your sensory observation:

1. Take a few slow, deep breaths.
2. Notice where you feel sensations in your body.
3. Recognize that present-moment awareness emerges when you fully engage with your senses, rather than trying to control or change your experience.

Mini-Practice Reminder:

Whenever your mind drifts into thinking mode (worries, planning, analyzing), gently redirect attention to one sensory input in your environment. Even noticing the feeling of your feet on the ground or the sound of wind counts as returning to sensing mode.

Step 5: Personal Notes & Insights

Today I noticed:

Sensing mode felt like:

Thoughts that pulled me back to thinking mode:

My connection to nature in this exercise:

Tip for Daily Life

This practice can be done anywhere, not just outdoors. Paying full attention to the sensory experience of daily activities while doing daily activities like drinking tea, washing dishes, or walking can also bring you into being mode and enhance present-moment awareness.