



*Mindful Ecotherapy Center*

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## **MINDFULNESS-BASED ECOTHERAPY: AN INTRODUCTION**

### **25-hour Continuing Education Course**

Course description including objectives, glossary, and references

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# **Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy: An Introduction**

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to the moment in which you find yourself by focusing on your immediate experience rather than on ruminations that may be producing stress depression, or anxiety. The benefits of mindfulness as a tool for stress reduction and self-improvement have been thoroughly researched. Mindfulness works so well in this capacity that it has been referred to as the “penicillin of mental health.”

Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy (MBE) is a blending of Mindfulness and Ecopsychology. MBE uses nature to facilitate mindful awareness.

For those of you interested in learning more about mindfulness and ecopsychology, there is an extensive list of citations and references at the end of this book.

MBE is used as a framework for helping individuals and families to find deeper connections in their own lives, and to give more meaning and enjoyment to the activities of daily living. By re-integrating ourselves with nature, we are able to tap into nature’s healing power and to heal the earth as we heal ourselves.

Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy consists of 12 skill sets. The Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy program is a 12-week program, with one session per week. At each session, one of the 12 skills of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy is discussed and practiced.

# **Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy: An Introduction**

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon successfully completing the course, the student will be able to:

- Discuss and describe the skill of Mindful Awareness
- Discuss and describe the skill of Radical Acceptance
- Discuss and describe the skill of Wise Mind and Wise Body
- Discuss and describe the skill of Letting Go
- Discuss and describe the skill of Living in the Now
- Discuss and describe the skill of Centering
- Discuss and describe the skill of Connecting
- Discuss and describe the skill of Nature as Metaphor
- Discuss and describe the skill of Nature as Teacher
- Discuss and describe the skill of Nature as Nurture
- Discuss and describe the skill of Nature as Healer
- Discuss and describe the skill of Living in True Self

## Glossary for the *Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Workbook*

*Animal-Assisted Therapy* - an experiential form of therapy in which animal assistants help to facilitate the therapeutic process.

*archetype* – an inborn symbol, image or concept common to all people and present at birth in the unconscious mind. The collection of all archetypes common to all humans is what Jung called the *collective unconscious*.

*autonomic nervous system* – the part of the central nervous system that regulates automatic functions like breathing and heartbeat. The autonomic nervous system is made up of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems.

*beginner's mind* - The ability to greet each day with a new mind, without assumptions, preconceptions, or judgments. It is about cultivating a childlike sense of wonder about the world around us, and about ourselves.

*being mode* – The antithesis of doing mode; the process of focusing on what your senses are telling you in the present moment rather than focusing on the thinking cycle.

*being non-judgmental* – the act of setting aside assumptions and preconceptions about the motives and actions of others and of self; the ability to be gentle and forgiving.

*catastrophizing* – a ruminating cycle in which a person creates negative predictions about the outcome of future events, usually through the process of *musturbating*.

*centering* - one of the skills of mindfulness; centering involves letting go of thoughts about the past or future and bringing thoughts to the present moment by focusing on one thing at a time and living in the now.

*collective unconscious* – according to Carl Jung, the collective unconscious is the repository of all archetypes, or symbols, shared by all of humankind. This repository resides in the unconscious mind and is inborn rather than learned.

*connecting* - the act of joining with others, or with the divine, or with nature and ourselves in a loving, respectful and grateful way

*crystal ball thinking* – trying to predict the future or read other people's thoughts and feelings by making assumptions and judgments about their thoughts, feelings, or intentions.

*describing* – one of the skills of mindfulness; the process of taking energy out of the thinking cycle and placing energy into the sensing cycle by describing the details of a thing to oneself.

*doing mode* – the opposite of *being mode*; the state of engaging the thinking cycle in an effort to find solutions to a problem or to ruminate over problems or feelings.

*downstairs brain* – the feeling part of the brain, consisting of the limbic system and related structures. The downstairs brain only has three ways it can respond to stimuli: fight, flight, or freeze.

*ecopsychology* – the study of the effects of nature on the psychology of humans and other animals.

*ecotherapy* – the use of the tools and techniques of ecopsychology in a therapeutic way and/or in a therapeutic setting.

*emotional mind* – the state of mind when one is being ruled by one's emotions.

*experiential avoidance* – the act of trying to stop stressful thoughts or emotions, thereby making the stressful thoughts and feelings cycle worse.

*fascination* - a natural interest in the environment, requiring no effort of concentration

*fight, flee or freeze* – the only three options for response that the downstairs brain of the limbic system has.

*focused attention* - a concentrated cognitive effort to avoid distractions in the environment.

*focusing on one thing at a time* - one of the skills of mindfulness; the ability to direct one's attention to one task at a time or one experience at a time in order to avoid getting overwhelmed with a multitude of tasks.

fully participating – one of the skills of mindfulness; the act of engaging all the senses to focus on the here and now, thereby enriching the moment-to-moment experience of life.

*grounding* - one of the skills of mindfulness; the process, during meditation, of connecting yourself to the earth by imagining roots of energy extending from your trunk and into the ground.

*Hebb's Postulate* - "What fires together, wires together;" i.e., as neurons are activated in new pathways, they tend to connect to each other, strengthening the connection. The more those pathways are used, the stronger the connection becomes. This is how habits of thinking and feeling are formed.

*Ideal Self* – In Rogerian therapy, the Ideal Self is the person an individual would like to be; who we would be if we could "get out of our own way."

*individuation* - The process of striking a balance between the Shadow and the Persona. The Shadow represents the forces of chaos and darkness within an individual, and the Persona represents the forces of order and light.

*insanity* - doing the same thing in the same ways and expecting different results this time

*intention, the power of* - one of the skills of mindfulness; the process of creating solutions instead of focusing on the problem.

*Internal Observer* – the self that is not part of the thought or feeling cycle; the True Self.

*letting go* - one of the skills of mindfulness; the ability to change the things one can while accepting the things one cannot change.

*limbic system* – the "downstairs brain" responsible for emotions; the limbic system can only respond to a situation in one of three ways: fight, flee or freeze.

*living in the now* – living in the present moment

*living in True Self* - see "True Self, living in"

*meme* - an idea or a belief that gets passed on from one person to another; an imitated thing

*mind trap* - to be trapped by the mind into dwelling on memories of the past, or projections of memory onto the future.

*mindful acceptance* – the art of being able to let go of the things in your life you cannot change.

*mindful awareness* – the process of shifting from doing mode to being mode.

*mindful openness* - the quality of learning to "zoom out" and see things in the bigger picture. The ability to focus on our values instead of on the day-to-day details.

*Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy (MBE)* - a blending of mindfulness and ecopsychology. MBE uses nature to facilitate mindful awareness. MBE is used as a framework for helping individuals and families to find deeper connections in their own lives, and to give more meaning and enjoyment to the activities of daily living.

*musturbating* - a type of mind trap in which we become caught in ruminating cycles that lead to catastrophizing. Musturbating often takes the form of phrases like, "I must do this," or "I must not do this."

*naming ceremony* – a rite of passage in which a person takes a new spiritual name, or is given one.

*natural experiences* – experiences in nature.

*nature as healer* – one of the skills of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy; the skill of using nature to facilitate healing.

*nature as metaphor* - one of the skills of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy; the skill of using nature as a metaphor for one's life journey to living in True Self.

*nature as nurture* - one of the skills of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy; the skill of creating a reciprocal nurturing cycle with nature.

*nature as teacher* - one of the skills of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy; the skill of using nature as a teacher.

*numinous* - an experience that gives one a spiritual sense of connection to the divine, to others, or to self

*observing* – one of the skills of mindfulness; the ability to shift from thinking mode to sensing mode by paying attention to and observing the present moment.

*ogham* - The Celtic alphabet known as ogham consists of three sets of five consonants and one set of five vowels. The traditional variant of this alphabet contains a total of twenty-five letters. Each letter in the ogham alphabet also stands for a tree. The letter 'A' stands for the elm tree, the letter 'B' stands for the birch, the letter 'C' stands for the hazel, and so on.

*parasympathetic nervous system* – the part of the autonomic nervous system responsible for calming and soothing.

*Perceived Self* – the way we see ourselves.

*Persona* – the face, or personality, or *mask*, which we present to others.

*power of intention* - see intention, power of

*radical acceptance* – the concept that we must accept the things we cannot change; the realization that we cannot change others, we can only change ourselves.

*rational mind* – the reasoning, logical mind, devoid of emotion.

*reconnecting* – the process of connecting again to nature in order to restore spiritual balance.

*root meme* – the meme that is the source of all other memes in a complex idea or belief.

*ruminating cycle* – sometimes referred to as 'snowballing,' a ruminating cycle is the process by which one stressful thought or feeling leads to another and to another until we are overwhelmed.

*sacred space* – a natural space (preferably outdoors) that is set aside for quiet contemplation, meditation, and connecting with nature.

*sensing mode* – the opposite of thinking mode; moving energy and attention out of the thinking cycle and into the sensing cycle by focusing on what your senses are telling you.

*sensory integration meditation* - a type of mindful meditation that allows us to bring our minds more in tune with our bodies by focusing only on the information we get from our senses

*Serenity Prayer* - “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.”

*Shadow* – in Jungian psychoanalysis, the Shadow is the counterpart to the Persona; the Shadow consists of all the behaviors and impulses we would prefer to hide from others.

*situation-specific learning* – a type of learning in which two stimuli become linked together so that being stimulated by one causes the recall of the other as well; e.g., if a bell is rung every time a dog is fed, the dog will eventually begin to salivate whenever a bell is rung because he is expecting to be fed.

*sympathetic nervous system* – the part of the autonomic nervous system responsible for activating the fight, flight, or freeze response.

*thinking mode* – the counterpart of sensing mode; the process of engaging in the ruminating cycles of doing mode.

*totem* – an animal guide or assistant selected by an individual as an archetype and a metaphor for oneself.

*True Self* – the Ideal Self; who you would be if you could live without limits.

*True Self, living in* – the process of individuation; a skill of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy; becoming the person you were born to be.

*upstairs brain* – the cerebral cortex; the part of the brain that regulates thinking.

*wise body* – a body informed by the skills of mindfulness.

*wise mind* – a balance of rational mind and emotional mind; emotion tempered by reason and reason informed by emotion.

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