Running a Successful Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Group

PART B OF THE ONLINE COURSE

RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

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INTRODUCTION

This text is Part B for Running a Successful Group, an online continuing education course in Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy. This course is part of the educational requirements to become a certified Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Group Facilitator. For more information on the entire program, visit the Mindful Ecotherapy Center’s website at www.mindfulecotherapy.com

Most of the educational material in this course is reproduced in the Facilitator Manual for the Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Program. The Facilitator Manual contains the complete text from the Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Workbook, plus tips, suggestions and instructions for facilitating the 12-Week Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Program.

FORMAT OF THE MINDFULNESS-BASED ECOTHERAPY PROGRAM

The Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Program is a 12-week program that meets once per week for one hour, with an optional 30-minute discussion period at the end of the class. The question-and-answer discussion period at the end of each class is optional for two reasons: 1. Making it optional empowers attendees to decide for themselves whether or not to stay for the discussion; 2. Making it optional allows Facilitators to determine who is engaged and who is not engaged, so that they may focus more attention on those who choose not to stay for discussions. Note that not staying for the discussion isn’t necessarily a bad thing. Doing some of the deep inner work in Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy will require a lot of inner processing, and some people may not feel like talking much after completing the exercises.

The Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Workbook is the manual for students. It is available at most major media outlets. If you are planning to implement the Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Program at your clinic, institute, or organization, volume discounts are available for the Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Workbook through the Mindful Ecotherapy Organization. For information on training and volume discounts on the workbook, contact the author at chuck@mindfulecotherapy.org or visit www.mindfulecotherapy.org.

The Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Workbook is divided into 13 chapters. The first chapter offers an overview of the program, and the remaining chapters each cover one of the 12 sessions in the program. The workbook contains more material than could possibly be covered in each one-hour session, so Facilitators may wish to assign the reading materials as homework for each session.

There is a homework assignment for each session. These homework assignments should be reviewed at the beginning of the session so that Facilitators may check to see if students are integrating the materials properly.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

The materials for each session in the workbook also include at least one optional activity. This optional activity may be completed by students on their own, or it may be done at the facilitator’s discretion if time permits. Some of the optional activities require an outdoor setting and should of course only be used in such a setting if the locale used for workshops is available. For example, “The River” activity from Session 5 requires that there is a river or another body of water nearby during the session. If you don’t have access to a river, you would not be able to do that activity, and would need to plan accordingly.

Note also that each session contains more material than could be practically completed in a one-hour session with a group of more than five people or so. If you have a larger group, you may wish to extend the time frame as needed to accommodate the activities, or you may use your discretion to eliminate some activities so that you will have enough time to complete all the exercises in your chosen time frame.
If you have taken the Ecotherapy: An Introduction course through the Mindful Ecotherapy Center’s website, you may have already done some of the optional activities in the workbook.

ABOUT THE LOCATIONS USED FOR THE MINDFULNESS-BASED ECOTHERAPY PROGRAM

Since this program is about utilizing the healing power of nature to make personal change, it is best conducted in an outdoor setting. While some of the sessions can be conducted indoors (especially the earlier sessions dealing with the skills of mindfulness), I prefer to do them all outdoors if possible. Outdoor environments have been demonstrated to produce changes in consciousness not readily available in indoor settings (Van den Berg & Ter Heijne, 2005), so to my way of thinking holding them indoors defeats the purpose. Of course, there will be times when the weather doesn’t cooperate, and during those times it’s a good idea to have a backup plan or to schedule a rain date if you have to cancel. I’ve found that many parks have some sort of shelter that may be used for such purposes. There’s something soothing and meditative about holding a session outdoors under the cover of a shelter as the rain gently patters on the roof.

Because of the outdoor nature of this program, a little finesse is required in planning and scheduling. Since it is a twelve-week program, if you hold sessions once a week you will have covered an approximate three-month span of time. This means that you will have to be aware of local weather patterns when planning your program. The home of the Mindful Ecotherapy Center is in the southern Appalachians of upstate South Carolina. While starting a program in October might be great for taking advantage of the cooler temperatures and the colorful falling leaves, starting such a three-month program at that time would mean that we would be finishing in late December or early January when the weather is freezing outside. Alternately, starting a program at mid-day in the spring might be great, but if we continue to meet at noon for three months, we’ll be experiencing the midsummer heat of the Deep South.

If you’re new to your local area and aren’t sure about the weather patterns, you may wish to consult with the locals in order to determine the best times for your program.

In the past I’ve also done this as a week-long intensive program, doing one session in the morning and one in the afternoon. This allows the entire program to be completed as a one-week retreat; however, I wouldn’t recommend trying to do more than two sessions per day in an intensive format. This is because some of the sessions, if done properly, can be quite intense. People need time to process what they’ve experienced, and doing more than two sessions per day doesn’t allow for such time.

A final word of caution on choosing a location: Safety first! Be aware of any dangerous wild animals that might inhabit the area you’ve chosen. Also note any dangers from the terrain, such as high waterfalls, slippery trails, etc. and have proper liability insurance should accidents happen. You may wish to consult with an attorney to have a waiver drawn up limiting your liability in case of accidents. Also be on the lookout for dangerous plants like poison ivy, poison oak, stinging nettles and poison sumac. If you don’t know what these look like, consult with someone who does and have them check out the area ahead of time.

If you plan to have any children at your events, caution them about eating the plants. You might also have to warn some adults in this regard. Sometimes participants expect you to be an expert on the local flora and fauna. If you are such an expert, that’s fine. But if you aren’t, it’d be advisable not to allow your participants to eat anything they might find on the trail.

Be aware of potential allergies that your participants might have. Keep a first aid kit with an epi pen and allergy medicines, but be aware of local liability laws regarding distribution of medicines. It may be helpful to ask your participants to be aware of allergens and to plan accordingly.

Finally, I would highly recommend taking a basic first aid course before facilitating any of these programs, or have someone with first aid training available, and have a plan for emergencies when they arise.
Above all else, a good facilitator is one who has experienced the program. If you can attend one of our annual trainings, it is recommended that you do so. If you don’t have the ability to travel to our locations, the facilitator training is also available online at www.mindfulecotherapy.org. If nothing else, at least work through the program yourself using the workbook or the facilitator manual so that you have a good understanding of what your participants will experience as they attend.

Running a Successful Group

GROUP DYNAMICS
Each group you conduct will have a different dynamic, due to the fact that different groups are made up of different individuals in different times and different places. The Facilitator’s challenge in assessing group dynamics is to determine the level of functioning and engagement for each individual in the group. The discussions and interaction should be simple enough to integrate those who are less engaged while simultaneously being challenging enough to keep the attention of those who are higher-functioning. For inexperienced group facilitators, this can be a difficult balance to strike. It’s often a challenging task even for facilitators with years of experience! One simple way to achieve this balance is to honestly and openly ask the group for feedback and suggestions. Another challenge for facilitators is to continually monitor for engagement and interaction. A good facilitator will notice those who seem to have withdrawn from the discussion, and will work to actively draw them back in by asking questions or otherwise interacting with them. At the other end of the spectrum, there will be those who attempt to dominate the discussion. Facilitators will also have to watch for these sometimes forceful attempts to take control of the group. This sort of dynamic can be forestalled by gently reminding the instigators that others should also be allowed to speak. A simple and effective way to insure engagement and participation of all group members is to go around the room and ask each person to respond in turn to a question or exercise. A good way to do this is to plan an ‘icebreaker’ exercise at the beginning of each session. Such an exercise allows the group to transition from the everyday world to the purpose of the gathering by putting aside any other agenda prior to beginning a session. A good icebreaker that allows this transition to happen naturally is to open with a brief grounding and centering meditation. This can be as simple as asking everyone to take three deep breaths before the session begins.

If you have a location that requires a hike from the parking area to the gathering area, you may also use this time by having participants engage in a walking meditation from the parking lot to the site. During this time ask them to ground and center themselves on the way to the gathering.

GROUP MEMBERSHIP
The Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Program is run as a ‘co-ed’ program; meaning that groups are not usually segregated by gender or sex. This is done so that facilitators may observe interactional dynamics among group members in order to challenge difficulties related to rigid gender roles. There may be cases in which groups will have to be segregated (such as a sex offenders group, or a domestic violence offenders group, or a group that meets in a male-only or female-only institution), but unless safety is an issue, it is recommended that groups be co-educational so that students may integrate the lessons more successfully in a group with real-world dynamics. Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy is about setting aside preconceptions and being open to new possibilities, and one of these possibilities is re-thinking gender roles in society and what they mean to the individual.

The ideal group size is from 8 to 12 members. Research has shown that groups larger than 12 members tend to split off into sub-groups, forming coalitions that may challenge the facilitator’s authority. For groups larger than 12 members, a co-facilitator is recommended. Such a co-facilitator can assist in
keeping people engaged so that sub-group coalitions do not form as easily. The ideal ratio to maintain, if possible, is one facilitator per 12 group members.

GROUP RULES
In order to run a successful group, the rules should be clear and concise. Facilitators should decide on the group rules before the first session, and review them with the group members. Group rules are up to the facilitator, the institution, and the group participants. It is a good idea to empower students at the first session by including them in the rule-making process. The facilitator should review the rules, and then ask the group if there are any modifications they’d like to make, or any further rules they’d like to suggest.

These rules are then written down, typed up, and distributed at the next session or by email prior to the next session. Facilitators may ask one of the students to keep track of the rules and modifications as the group comes up with them.

SAMPLE GROUP RULES
Here are some rules that you may find useful in planning your groups:
1. Confidentiality – Group members should agree to abide by the rule, “What happens in group, stays in group.” Group members agree not to discuss each other’s personal information outside of a group context, and to respect each other’s privacy.
2. Safety – Group members should agree not to attack each other verbally or physically while in group, or outside of group.
3. Participation – Group members should agree to actively participate in the group, do all the homework assignments, and show up on time.
4. Punctuality – Facilitators should honor those who show up on time by starting the group promptly at the advertised time. The ‘Fifteen Minute Rule’ is a good rule of thumb: If a group member is more than fifteen minutes late, it counts as an absence. Remind participants that tardiness causes disruptions to the flow of the group, and is disrespectful to other members of the group.
5. Absences – Due to the intensive nature of the program, it is recommended that you establish a firm policy regarding absences. Since each session builds on previous sessions, it is not recommended that participants be allowed more than two consecutive absences.
6. Courtesy – Group members should respect each other and the facilitator(s). This includes not interrupting others who are speaking. Facilitators may wish to use a “talking stick” if constant interruption becomes an issue. A talking stick is just a stick or other object that is passed among group members. The rule for using a talking stick is that only the person holding the stick may speak.

These are just some sample rules that will help your program to run more smoothly. Remember that you may revise the rules at any time during the course of the program, and you should solicit suggestions and input from group members prior to making any changes in the rules.

STAGES OF CHANGE
The Trans-Theoretical Model (TTM) of Stages of Change identifies five stages in the change process. As a facilitator you are instilling change in the students in your group. Each student will fall along a spectrum in the Stages of Change. You will need to identify where each group member is on the spectrum. Each stage has different dynamics and different tools for engagement. The ultimate task of the facilitator regarding Stages of Change is to motivate group students towards change. Successful completion of the Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy program requires motivation to change. The TTM Stages of Change, along with a brief discussion of each, follows below. As a facilitator, you will need to know how to move your students through each stage towards the ultimate stage of Maintenance.
1. Pre-Contemplational – “I don’t have a problem.” This stage is sometimes referred to as ‘denial.’ A person at this stage is blaming others or their circumstances for the difficulties in their life rather than accepting personal responsibility. This often manifests as ‘blame-shifting’ or ‘blamestorming,’ in which the individual avoids personal responsibility for making any needed changes. As a facilitator you would move such a person towards the Contemplational stage by developing discrepancies. This is done by gently challenging the statements that lead to denial. An example of developing discrepancies might be, “I don’t understand. You say you don’t have a problem with the way your life is going, yet you enrolled in this Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy program. Could you please explain what you hope to learn here?” Of course, many people may enroll in the program just because they are interested in self-improvement through nature. For such individuals, developing discrepancies might include statements like, “How have you been living your life to this point, and what has it gotten you? How would you like your life to be different after completing this program?”

2. Contemplational – “Okay, maybe I do have a problem.” At this stage, the person is willing to consider that there may be a problem. As Facilitator, you have challenge the denial of the Pre-Contemplational stage by developing discrepancies, and the individual is now willing to consider that there may be a problem. At this stage, you would move individuals towards Preparation by asking two questions:
   a. If you did have a problem, what would be some signs that would tell you that there was a problem? What would it look like?
   b. If you did not have a problem, what would that look like?
You may then use the answers to these two questions to help the student determine which category applies to their current situation.

3. Preparation – “I definitely have a problem, and this is what I need to do about it.” At this stage, the student has admitted that there is a problem, and that something needs to be done. Your job as a facilitator at this stage is to help the student to assess strengths and weaknesses, and to formulate a change plan that addresses each student’s particular needs. Once this has been done, you will help the student to execute the change plan by moving to the Action phase.

4. Action – “I’m now doing something to address the problem.” At the Action stage, the Facilitator and the student work together to create change, guided by the student’s change plan. The exercises in the Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Program are designed to facilitate motivation for change. This motivation for change is analogous to the Performing stage of group dynamics (see section below on Group Stages).

5. Maintenance – “I’ve implemented my change plan, fine-tuned it by troubleshooting, and now I’m going to stay with the program.” At this stage the plan for change has been formulated, and the facilitator has helped the students to troubleshoot the plan by asking what might go wrong with the plan as written. Now the student goes out into the world and implements it. If the plan is sound, then the Maintenance stage has been achieved. Maintenance means that the student has created a change plan that works in the real world. A paradigm shift has occurred that allows the student to successfully make changes at all times and in all situations. If an unforeseen circumstance occurs that causes the student to relapse (i.e., to return to previous problem behaviors and modes of thinking), then he/she returns to the change plan, incorporates the new situation, and comes up with a potential solution to the unforeseen crisis.

This new solution is then implemented. The process is repeated until the new situation has been successfully resolved. A word of caution here: As a facilitator, your goal is not to solve problems for your students. Your goal is to help them figure out how to solve their own problems. If you solve their problems for them, you will have created a situation of dependency. Such a situation is especially hazardous with people who have difficulties with emotional regulation, since they are usually accustomed to making their problems someone else’s responsibility. A good rule of thumb here is “Don’t work harder than your students.”
GROUP STAGES
As a general rule, there are five stages of group dynamics. These stages play out over the duration of the group, and each stage has its own characteristics. These stages are:
1. Forming – In the Forming stage, the group is getting to know each other. They are also learning the rules. This applies to the unspoken rules as well as the stated group rules. The group dynamics are arranging, and trust is being developed between group members and the facilitator(s). At this stage, the facilitator’s goal is to develop an atmosphere of trust and safety for all group members. During this stage be aware that many participants may be leery of sharing their thoughts and feelings with a group of strangers. Be patient and gentle with them as you prepare them for the next stage.
2. Storming – In the Storming stage, group members have settled into the culture of the group, and jockeying for position has begun. Each group will try to establish a pecking order. At this stage, the facilitator’s task is to work to actively engage the withdrawn members of the group while preventing the stronger personalities from dominating each session. One way to do this is to allow each person a turn to speak. In more extreme cases, a talking stick may be needed in order to keep any one person from dominating the discussion.
3. Norming – In the Norming stage, trust bonds have been established, the pecking order has been decided, and group members have settled into their roles. Each member knows what the group’s norms are, what’s expected of them, what’s expected of the facilitator, and how the group’s culture works. At this stage, the facilitator’s goal is to work towards continuing to enforce the group’s established norms in a solution-focused way so that all activities of the group are leading towards problem-solving rather than blaming, shaming, or guilt-tripping. At this stage be aware of the dangers of “groupthink.” Groupthink occurs when a person or persons with good ideas keep those ideas to themselves because they perceive that such a recommendation might go against the group culture. Try to maintain an open and accepting culture so that all opinions are heard and evaluated, without letting one or two individuals dominate the conversation.
4. Performing – Now that all of the group dynamics have been successfully navigated and the group is functioning as a cohesive whole, the real work can begin. At the Performing stage, group members are actively engaged in discussion. They support each other, turn in their homework, and demonstrate that they are motivated for change (the Action phase of the Stages of Change above). At this stage, the facilitator’s goal is to keep all group members performing by continuing to work towards a solution-focused approach to problem-solving. During the Performing stage, the facilitator should avoid the temptation to solve problems for group members. Instead, the facilitator helps group members to learn to solve their own problems so that a state of dependence upon the facilitator is not created. This is done by soliciting suggestions for possible solutions from the group.
5. Adjourning – At the Adjourning stage, the group is preparing to dissolve. It is a time for celebrating successes and learning to use the skills on their own without having to rely on the group for support. At this stage it is the facilitator’s goal to work towards successful transition planning. This includes linking group members to needed community supports, discussing how to continue to successfully implement their change plans, and rewarding group members for their progress.

FACILITATOR SKILLS
As a Group Facilitator, you will need several skills:
1. Active Listening – A facilitator needs to be able to pay attention not only to the words being spoken, but also to the tone and the body language. A good facilitator knows that it is possible to validate a person’s feelings without necessarily having to agree with or condone those feelings or the behaviors they generate.
2. Connecting – A facilitator needs to be able to help members overcome obstacles to connecting with each other so that the group can become a functioning, cohesive unit.

3. Blocking – This is one of the more difficult facilitating skills to learn. Blocking involves keeping more aggressive members from taking over the group. A good facilitator will redirect less focused group members or otherwise move to prevent them from dominating the discussion or disrupting the group. Skill in blocking requires being firm without becoming confrontational or aggressive.

4. Summarizing – A good facilitator can review what has happened in a session and summarize it succinctly for all members of the group so that they are better able to integrate the events of a particular session.

5. Positive Regard – Possibly the most important facilitating skill, positive regard means keeping a person-focused attitude by allowing group members to set their own goals and outcomes. Positive regard also means validating the thoughts and feelings of all group members without necessarily having to agree with or condone those thoughts or feelings.

6. Confronting – On occasion a good facilitator will be required to confront patterns of thought and behavior that lead to detrimental outcomes or disrupt the group. This is best accomplished by developing discrepancies between the group member’s stated goals and their behavior. For example, if a group member’s goal is to become responsible for his/her own personal journey, yet that individual continues to act in ways that demand that others be responsible for that individual’s journey, then there is a discrepancy. A good facilitator can gently point out this discrepancy in a patient and kind manner so that change and growth may occur.

7. Inspiring – A good facilitator is an inspiration to group members. Such a facilitator is able to see the good in everyone, and to help them see the good in themselves as well so that they may recognize their own strengths and live by them.

The next page contains a sample Group Participation Contract. It is recommended that you create your own with information specific to your own group, using the sample on the next page as a template. Have all group members sign it at the beginning of the first session, and retain a copy for your records.

REFERENCES


FEEDBACK

I’m always looking for tips and suggestions to help improve future versions of the workbook and the program. I’d love to hear your feedback at chuck@mindfulecotherapy.org
MINDFULNESS-BASED ECOTHERAPY PROGRAM

Sample Group Participation Contract

Name: ___________________________________________ Date: ________________

By signing below, I signify that I understand and agree to abide by the following:

Confidentiality
Participants must be able to speak freely and openly. I would not like others in the group to share my personal information; therefore I agree not to share anything that happens or that is discussed in this group with people who are not participating in this group.

By signing below, I understand that violation of this confidentiality agreement is deemed sufficient grounds to be removed from the group.

Attendance and Participation
I understand that if my attendance in the group is mandatory (for example, court-ordered) that the facilitator(s) may be required to report information about my attendance. I further understand that in order to successfully complete the program, I must attend all twelve sessions. I will be allowed no more than two consecutive absences. I understand that if I am absent more than twice, I may be dropped from the program and will have to begin again at the next scheduled group. I also understand that if I am more than fifteen minutes late, I may be counted as ‘absent.’ By signing below, I agree not to disrupt the group by arriving late or leaving early except in cases of extreme emergency.

I further agree not to engage in activities that may disrupt the group. I will not take phone calls during group or leave the group during sessions except in case of emergency.

The group meets once per week on (Day of week): _______________ at: (time of group) ___________

Group Informed Consent
By signing below, I agree to participate in the Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Program.

My identity and the identity of any other member of the group or others involved directly or indirectly will remain confidential. The facilitators will not use my name or personal identifying information in anything that is written about this group. If data is collected for purposes of research, no identifying information will be collected or retained.

Although participation is encouraged, I understand that my participation is voluntary; I do not have to answer questions or speak unless I choose to.

I agree to respect the privacy of the people who participate in this group. I will not share any identifying information or details about the discussion outside of this group.

If I have any questions about the group, I can call:

Facilitator Name: ____________________________________________

Facilitator Contact Information: _________________________________

I have read and understood the information above, and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. By signing below, I voluntarily agree to participate in this group.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ________________

Facilitator: ___________________________________________ Date: ________________
0.0 Introduction to Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy

FACILITATOR NOTES
Your group participants should read the first chapter of the Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Workbook prior to the beginning of your first session together. This chapter is an overview of the entire program for those who wish to know more. Since the material in this section is not part of a session, it won't actually be reviewed during any session of the program.

If you are requiring your participants to purchase the workbook that goes with the program, you may ask them to read over this section prior to attending the first session of your program; however, since this is an overview most of what is discussed in this chapter will be reviewed in greater detail in later portions of the workbook.

It is highly recommended that as a facilitator you read over this material prior to conducting your first session, as it contains information that will be valuable in leading sessions. It also contains critical foundational theoretical information about the concepts used throughout the program.

If you would like to download a trifold brochure that covers the information in this overview, there is one available in pdf format at the Mindful Ecotherapy Organization’s website at www.mindfulecotherapy.org.

Visit the site and enter “Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Program Brochure” in the search box or visit this link:

The brochure contains a brief explanation of all 12 sessions of the program. It also contains a blank space that you can use to list your own organization’s contact information and location.

The section that follows contains a brief description of each session of the Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Program followed by Facilitator Notes on how to successfully conduct each session of the program.
Session 1: Mindful Awareness

Mindful Awareness is a way of tuning in to what is happening right now, at this moment. It is a shift from Doing Mode into Being Mode. Mindful Awareness involves the skills of Observing, Describing, Fully Participating, Being Non-Judgmental, and Focusing on One Thing at a Time.

Session 1: Mindful Awareness Suggested Format

PREPARATION
Read the Session 1 Course Materials, review the exercises listed in the chapter and try them at least once yourself prior to facilitating the group. Listen to at least one meditation recording (you may download several at www.mindfulecotherapy.org in the Resources section).
Practice presenting the materials in this session alone before facilitating the session so you will have a good idea of how long it will take you, given your own speaking and presentation style, to go over critical materials. Adjust by adding or leaving out materials as needed, but do not cut key concepts or Priority 1 exercises and activities if at all possible.

KEY CONCEPTS
(Key concepts are those concepts that are foundational principles of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy, and must be covered in the session): Mindfulness; upstairs brain vs. downstairs brain; tale of two wolves (from Overview Section 0.2); Doing Mode vs. Being Mode; Skills of Mindfulness; observing, describing, fully participating, focusing on one thing at a time, being non-judgmental, and the power of intention

SECONDARY CONCEPTS
(Secondary concepts are those concepts that are not foundational, but that are important if the facilitator can work them into the session – otherwise students will read about them on their own in the reading assignments): Snowballing; the Cloudy Day analogy; present moment awareness; emotional content vs. sensory content; assumptions, perceptions, and reality; the two questions of intention (1. What am I trying to accomplish here? 2. Are my thoughts, feelings, and behaviors going to help me to achieve this goal?)

INTRODUCTIONS
As an icebreaker exercise, facilitators first introduce themselves, then ask each group participant to do the same. The facilitator may also ask participants to answer a question or to tell the class a little about themselves by way of introduction. A favorite I like to use is to ask students what they hope to learn in the classes.

DISCUSS GROUP RULES
Once introductions are made, go over established group rules and discuss the rationale for each rule. Solicit suggestions and modifications for additional group rules from class participants. Select a student from the class to be the secretary who writes down all the suggested rules and modifications. Have the rules and modifications typed up for the class for the next session and distribute accordingly.

A NOTE ABOUT EXERCISES AND ACTIVITIES
For most groups, each session contains more exercises than can be comfortably accommodated in a one-hour format. Because of this, exercises and activities throughout the book are ranked by priority. If
you choose to use a longer format, you may have time to engage in all of the activities in each session; however, be aware that sessions longer than 90 minutes tend to diminish in effectiveness because at that point people begin to lose attention and focus.

A guide to priority rankings is as follows:

- **PRIORITY = 1** Do this exercise if at all possible during the allotted time
- **PRIORITY = 2** Do this exercise if time permits
- **PRIORITY = 3** Only do this exercise if you can comfortably fit it into your time frame; otherwise have students complete it on their own before the next session.
SESSION 1 OUTLINE

1.0 What is Mindfulness?
Discuss the concept of mindfulness.
Definition of mindfulness: Mindfulness simply means paying attention to the present moment, without ruminating on thoughts about the past or the future.
You may wish to illustrate the concept of mindfulness in this manner: Begin to speak a sentence, and tell the group that by the time you finish the sentence you are now speaking, the beginning of the sentence will be in the past. That’s how quickly the present becomes the past. The past, like the future, only exists in the memory. If it’s in the memory, it’s a product of the mind, and the tools and techniques of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy (MBE) can teach us, in the present moment, to choose which thoughts and feelings about the past and the future to pay attention to.
Review the concept of upstairs brain (the neocortex) vs. downstairs brain (the limbic system)
You may illustrate upstairs brain vs. downstairs brain by placing your hands together, palm to palm with thumbs side-by-side. Now fold your fingers over the thumbs so that the thumbs are tucked inside. The thumbs represent the limbic system (downstairs brain), and the fingers represent the neocortex (upstairs brain). Illustrate “fight or flight” mode by extending your fingers away from your thumbs and stating, “When the downstairs brain is activated, the upstairs brain disconnects, making it difficult, if not impossible, to think your way through a problem. When this happens, finding a solution isn’t going to be an easy task.”

1.1 Doing Mode vs. Being Mode
Explain the difference between Doing Mode and Being Mode.

Exercise: Ways I Engage in Doing Mode - PRIORITY = 2
Have the students list ways they engage in Doing Mode. If doing this activity outdoors where writing might be problematic, you can have them verbally list a few Doing Mode activities. You may wish to have the group sit or stand in a circle, and take turns going around the circle having each student list at least one way they engage in Doing Mode. Doing Mode involves solving problems, figuring things out, and participating in day-to-day activities. Doing Mode often manifests when anxiety or depression appears by feeling that you have to “do” something to make the anxiety or depression go away. This can be a problem if there is nothing you can do to resolve the anxiety or depression.

1.2 Engaging in Being Mode
Being Mode is focusing only on the present moment, without thoughts about the future or the past.
Illustrate Being Mode by having students focus all of their attention on the sensations of their breathing while taking three or four deep breaths.
Discuss Being Mode by relating it to thinking cycles vs. sensing cycles.
Illustrate the concept using the analogy of the Cloudy Day.

Exercise: Ways to Engage in Being Mode - PRIORITY = 2
Have the students list possible ways to engage in Being Mode per instructions on the worksheet. If doing this activity outdoors where writing might be problematic, you can have them verbally list a few Being Mode activities. You may wish to have the group sit or stand in a circle, and take turns going around the circle having each student list at least one way they could engage in Being Mode. Being Mode involves being aware of our sensory experiences in the present moment.

1.3 Skills of Mindfulness
List the six skills of mindfulness for students. Explain how these skills are used to facilitate a shift from Doing Mode to Being Mode by focusing attention to sensations rather than thoughts (sensing cycles rather than thinking cycles).

1.4 Observing
Illustrate observing by having students focus on a tree or other natural object in the landscape, and by having them describe how their consciousness changes before and after such observations. Emphasize that observing is generally an activity that does not have emotional content, and can therefore be used to shift focus away from disturbing emotions if needed.

1.5 Describing
To illustrate describing, have students close their eyes and describe the landscape as observed by the rest of their senses. Ask students if they think they could distinguish one landscape from another with their eyes closed, based on the description of the landscape the rest of their senses are giving them.

Exercise: Observing and Describing Nature - PRIORITY = 1
This exercise calls for a period of observation of 20 minutes or more, but since that would take up a third of the allotted time for this session, you may do it in the manner described below, and then ask the students to try it for the full 20 minutes on their own time in the coming week:
1. Have them rate their current stress level on a scale of 1 to 10
2. Have them engage in a period of observing and describing as discussed on the Observing and Describing Nature worksheet while you time them
3. Time the students for a period of 3 to 5 minutes
4. Have them rate their stress level again on a scale of 1 to 10
5. Discuss the results
Some students may have increased stress after the exercise, and that’s okay too. If this is the case, process their thoughts and feelings during the exercise – the point being that if they were having stressful thoughts and feelings, they were not engaged in observing and describing; they were engaged in thinking and feeling!

1.6 Reflections on Observing and Describing
Link the results of the observing and describing exercise to the Two Wolves analogy by asking students which wolf they were feeding.

1.7 Fully Participating
Link Fully Participating to “getting out of your own head” and paying more attention to what is going on around you and less attention to thoughts and feelings. Discuss and describe the Last Kiss exercise; if time permits, facilitate this optional activity based on the guidelines given.

Optional Activity: The Last Kiss - PRIORITY = 3
If you don’t have enough time to actually engage in this exercise, explain it to the group and ask them to try it at home.
If you do have enough time to do it, ask students to describe how this might be different from how they would ordinarily eat a piece of chocolate.
If you don’t have enough time to do it, and the students do it at home on their own, process their experiences at the next session.
1.8 Focusing on One Thing at a Time
It’s been said that the way to eat an elephant is “one bite at a time.” If we focus on the entire elephant we might become so overwhelmed that we never take the first bite, but if we focus only on the next bite, and then the next, and then the next, then eventually we will have eaten the whole elephant.
Ask students to brainstorm other examples of focusing on one thing at a time from their own personal experiences. You may wish to do this by going around the circle and having each person volunteer to contribute something.

1.9 Being Non-Judgmental
Illustrate the concept of being non-judgmental by asking students to list and discuss times when their own negative judgments may have led to negative consequences.
Ask students to speculate on how their lives might be different if they could live in completely non-judgmental ways.
Someone may point out that sometimes judgment keeps us from making bad decisions or from getting into dangerous situations. You may agree with them and point out the three questions for determining if a judgment is sound or not:
1. Is it true?
2. Is it just?
3. Is it fair?
If the answer to all three of these questions is “yes,” and the person isn’t engaging in self-deception, then it’s probably a situation where the judgment won’t lead to negative consequences.

1.10 The Power of Intention
Emphasize the Power of Intention as a solution-focused approach rather than a problem-focused approach. Remember the two questions of intention:
1. What am I trying to accomplish here?
2. Are my thoughts, feelings, actions and behaviors going to help me to achieve this goal?

Exercise: The Power of Intention - PRIORITY = 1
Have students participate in this exercise by going around the circle and giving at least one answer to each of the questions on the worksheet.

1.11 Achieving Mindful Awareness
Discuss the definition of “insanity:” “Insanity is doing the same thing in the same ways and expecting different results.”
Discuss mindful awareness as a way to do things differently.
Point out that doing things differently might feel weird at first. If it didn’t, you’d probably already be doing it. Ask students to be open to experiencing things in a different way, and to trying new things.

HOMEWORK
Have students read the Session 2 materials prior to the next session; have them complete any exercises from Session 1 that weren’t covered in the session itself; ask them to bring any questions about the materials or the exercises to the next session.

DISCUSSION PERIOD
At the one-hour mark, invite group participants to stay for the discussion period. Point out that the thirty-minute post-session discussion period is optional. Note who stays for the discussion, and who leaves. Work at the next session to more actively engage those who leave.
Session 2: Radical Acceptance

Mindful Awareness teaches us the art of acceptance. Emotional reactions to our circumstances are natural, but that doesn't mean that we have to respond to these emotions. The mindful skill of acceptance teaches us that we can experience these emotions without engaging in cycles of behavior that lead us to negative consequences. Acceptance teaches us that we are not our thoughts, and that we are not our emotions. At any time we can choose which thoughts and emotions we wish to respond to.

Facilitator Notes for Session 2: Radical Acceptance

PREPARATION
Read the Session 2 Course Materials, try the exercises listed in the chapter and try them at least once yourself prior to facilitating the group. Practice facilitating at least one mindful meditation with a friend or co-facilitator prior to doing it with your group (you may download several recordings of mindful meditations at www.mindfulecotherapy.org in the Resources section). For your own guided meditation, you may create your own script or use the one included in the materials in Session 2. If creating your own script, try not to deviate too far from the central idea of being in the present moment. Practice presenting the materials in this session alone before facilitating the session so you will have a good idea of how long it will take you, given your own speaking and presentation style, to go over critical materials. Adjust by adding or leaving out materials as needed, but do not cut key concepts or Priority 1 exercises and activities if at all possible.

KEY CONCEPTS
(Key concepts are those concepts that are foundational principles of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy, and must be covered in the session): Acceptance; True Self; Radical Acceptance; Crystal Ball Thinking; Basic Mindful Meditation; acceptance vs. change; radical acceptance of True Self

SECONDARY CONCEPTS
(Secondary concepts are those concepts that are not foundational, but that are important if the facilitator can work them into the session – otherwise students will read about them on their own in the reading assignments): “If we are victims of our circumstances, we will always be victims. But if we are victims of our beliefs about our circumstances, then we are always free to change our beliefs;” observing and describing thought cycles; mindful acceptance; Naming Ceremony

INTRODUCTIONS
As an icebreaker exercise, ask participants to discuss their experiences with the first session. If homework was assigned (e.g. exercises from the workbook that there wasn’t time for at the previous session), ask if there were any questions about the materials and have students share their experiences in completing the activities. Try not to spend more than ten minutes or so on this portion of the session.

DISTRIBUTE GROUP RULES
Distribute the group rules that were decided upon at Session 1. If you prefer not to distribute them in paper format, you may also email them to participants prior to Session 2.
SESSION 2 OUTLINE

2.0 Acceptance
Discuss the concept of acceptance.
Definition of acceptance: The mindful skill of acceptance teaches us that we can experience thoughts and emotions without engaging in cycles of behavior that lead us to negative consequences. Acceptance teaches us that we are not our thoughts, and that we are not our emotions. At any time we can choose which thoughts and emotions we wish to respond to.

2.1 Things That Cause Me Stress
Discuss the concept of stress. You may wish to use the Cloudy Day analogy to discuss stress: “If I never expected to have a cloudy day, this would be an unrealistic expectation because cloudy days are a natural part of the weather. Likewise, if I expect never to have stress in my life, that’s an unrealistic expectation because stress is a natural part of life.” At this point in the session I usually ask the group for a show of hands: “How many people here today have never had a stressful day in their entire lives?” This is usually good for a chuckle from the group, and illustrates the Cloudy Day analogy that stress is like a cloudy day. Both are natural occurrences.
Definition of stress: When things we care about don’t go the way we expected.
If we didn’t care about anything, we’d never have stress about anything. The positive side of stress is that it lets us know there are things we care about.
This discussion on stress is a prelude to completing the next exercise: Things That Cause Me Stress.

Exercise: Things That Cause Me Stress – PRIORITY = 1
If using the workbook with your group, encourage students not to read ahead prior to completing this exercise. Students are asked to list some everyday things that cause them stress. After they have done this portion of the exercise, have them go back and write a “P” beside anything that has to do with events that happened in the past, and an “F” beside anything that has to do with events that may or may not happen in the future.
If your students are like most people, there won’t be many items on the list that don’t have an F or a P beside them. The point to this exercise is that very few things that cause us stress are happening in the present moment. This means that we can use the present moment to choose what to believe about the past or the future.
Sometimes you will get students who say that they’re being bothered in the present moment by thoughts and feelings about past or future events. That’s perfectly okay, as it wonderfully illustrates the point of this exercise. If they’re bothered in the present moment by stressful thoughts and feelings, they haven’t yet learned how to select what to believe about those thoughts and feelings, which are just thoughts and feelings, and not any real danger. The next section will begin to teach them how to deal with stressful thoughts and feelings in the present moment.

2.2 Escaping Stress in the Present
One way to achieve radical acceptance of the things that stress us out is to realize that if we are victims of our circumstances, then we cannot control our lives. This is because we cannot control what goes on outside of ourselves. We cannot control what other people do, and we can rarely control what life throws at us. So if we are victims of our circumstances, we will always be victims. But if we are victims of our beliefs about our circumstances, then we are always free to change our beliefs. Doing so frees us from the tyranny of the past and the anxiety of the future.
Note also that the goal here is not to try to stop or suppress stressful thoughts. If I am having stressful thoughts, and my goal is to stop having stressful thoughts, then telling myself, “Stop having stressful
thoughts!” is itself a stressful thought! Experiential avoidance is the tendency we all have at times to try to avoid stressful or depressing thoughts by telling ourselves not to think about it. It’s the psychological equivalent of trying to hold a beach ball underwater. The harder we try to push those thoughts beneath the surface, the more they push back and try to re-surface.

The goal here is not to try to stop stressful thoughts and feelings. The goal here is to allow ourselves to experience those stressful thoughts and feelings without having to believe they are true.

For example, suppose I have a thought, “I’m going to fail.” If I choose to believe that this thought is true, that I’m going to fail, then it is highly likely that this thought will become a self-fulfilling prophecy and I will act in ways that will lead me to fail. But what if I had the thought, “I’m going to fail,” and I just recognized it as a product of my mind? Since I am not my thoughts, I can choose to identify with that thought, or I can choose not to believe that thought. Sure, I might fail, but it’s also possible that I might not fail. Even if I do fail, at least it means that I made the effort instead of doing nothing.

If I allow myself to experience such thoughts and feelings without choosing to make them a part of my identity, I am escaping stress in the present by acknowledging those thoughts and feelings without identifying with them.

2.3 Crystal Ball Thinking

Props often come in handy when illustrating concepts from this program. If you can purchase a small crystal ball it may help to have one handy when discussing this concept. You may even use humor to illustrate the concept by handing your crystal ball to a group participant and asking them to gaze in it and tell you what another person in the group is thinking.

There are two types of crystal ball thinking: One is trying to predict the future and the other is trying to predict what others are thinking or feeling. Be sure to cover both types when illustrating the concept.

2.4 Mindful Acceptance

Mindful acceptance is the ability to set aside our expectations and assumptions about self and about others so that we may be more accepting of our own true selves and of the other people in our lives. The concept may be illustrated by explaining the difference between “validating” and “condoning.” I can validate another person’s right to feel the way they feel without having to agree with their feelings or condone their behavior. For example, if someone is being verbally aggressive with me I can validate their right to feel upset without condoning abusive behaviors.

Mindful Acceptance is a key concept for most of the lessons to follow, so make sure all students have a good grasp of the concept before moving on.

2.5 A Basic Mindful Meditation

At this point conduct a basic mindful meditation with the group. You may create your own script for such a meditation if you are comfortable doing so, or you may just have participants close their eyes and focus on their breathing while you read the bullet points in this section of the book.

As you do the meditation, be mindful of the time. Try not to do the meditation for more than ten minutes so you will have time to cover the rest of the points in this session, but at the same time don’t try to rush through the exercise. It may help to practice facilitating such a meditation several times with friends or family members before trying it in a group for the first time.

2.6 Radical Acceptance

Radical acceptance is the idea of mindful acceptance taken to the next level. Ask your students to think about the last time they were stressed or depressed, and to ask themselves, “Was my stress or
depression the result of the circumstances in which I found myself, or was it the result of what I believed about those circumstances?"
Radical acceptance means realizing that if our distressing thoughts and feelings are the result of our circumstances, then we will always be victims of our circumstances. But if our distressing thoughts and feelings are the result of what we believe about those circumstances, then we have the power to change our world. Use the graphic in this section of the book to illustrate that wisdom comes from knowing what we can change and what we have to accept. You might also wish to stress that “acceptance” doesn’t mean we should accept situations that are abusive or unhealthy. In this case acceptance means that we may have to accept that it is time to end unhealthy or abusive relationships.

2.7 Radical Acceptance of True Self
I illustrate the concept of “True Self” by stating to students, “Everybody has a picture of how they would like to be, and a picture of how they actually see themselves. The closer these two pictures are, the less problems people have. The farther apart those two images are, the more problems a person is likely to have, because they’re constantly asking themselves, ‘Why can’t I be like this?’”
The image you have in your head of how you would like to be is the image you have of your True Self. People learn to accept their True Selves in one of two ways: 1. By moving their perception of themselves closer to their True Self image; or 2. By moving their True Self image closer to their perception of themselves.

Exercise: Radical Acceptance of True Self – PRIORITY = 1
Have students complete the Radical Acceptance of True Self exercise, and facilitate a discussion by going over each item on the list and have students volunteer responses. Since this material is deeply personal, don’t force students to participate if they don’t want to, but have everyone list some generic examples of how they might learn to accept their True Selves.

HOMEWORK
Have students read the Session 3 materials prior to the next session; have them complete any exercises from Session 2 that weren’t covered in the session itself; ask them to bring any questions about the materials or the exercises to the next session.

DISCUSSION PERIOD
At the one-hour mark, invite group participants to stay for the discussion period. Point out that the thirty-minute post-session discussion period is optional. Note who stays for the discussion, and who leaves. Work at the next session to more actively engage those who leave.
Session 3: Wise Mind and Wise Body

When you are being logical, rational, and devoid of emotion, you are said to be in Rational Mind. When you are allowing your thoughts to be driven by your emotions, you are said to be in Emotional Mind. The idea of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy is to achieve Wise Mind. Wise Mind is the joining of Rational Mind and Emotional Mind in perfect balance and harmony. It is a moving beyond opposites to a mindful state of acceptance. Likewise, when we come to realize that there is no line between mind and body, and that they are one and the same, we are able to move beyond the duality that implies that mind and body are separate entities. From there we see that the body can change the mind, and the mind can change the body. Wise Mind and Wise Body is the first step to living in True Self.

Facilitator Notes for Session 3: Wise Mind and Wise Body

PREPARATION
Read the Session 3 Course Materials, review the exercises listed in the chapter and try them at least once yourself prior to facilitating the group. Practice facilitating at least one sensory integration meditation with a friend or co-facilitator prior to doing it with your group (you may download several recordings of mindful meditations at www.mindfulecotherapy.org in the Resources section). For your own guided meditation during Session 3, you may create your own script or use the one in the book. If creating your own script, try not to deviate too far from the central idea of being in the present moment while focusing on the senses.

Practice presenting the materials in this session alone before facilitating the session so you will have a good idea of how long it will take you, given your own speaking and presentation style, to go over critical materials. Adjust by adding or leaving out materials as needed, but do not cut key concepts or Priority 1 exercises and activities if at all possible.

KEY CONCEPTS
(Key concepts are those concepts that are foundational principles of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy, and must be covered in the session): Wise Mind, Emotional Mind, Rational Mind, Sensory Integration, Wise Body, mindful acceptance of discomfort; True Self, Wise Mind and Wise Body as one

SECONDARY CONCEPTS
(Secondary concepts are those concepts that are not foundational, but that are important if the facilitator can work them into the session – otherwise students will read about them on their own in the reading assignments): Reflections on the Sensory Integration Meditation; Hebb’s Postulate (“What fires together, wires together”); mindful eating; going inside the discomfort, and The Mindful Body of the True Self

INTRODUCTIONS
As an icebreaker exercise, ask participants to discuss their experiences with Wise Mind, after defining the concept for the class. If they have had any experiences where being too emotional or too rational has caused them problems, facilitate a discussion about how Wise Mind could have helped them out of that situation. If homework was assigned (e.g. exercises from the workbook that there wasn’t time for at the previous session), ask if there were any questions about the materials and have students share their experiences in completing the activities. Try not to spend more than ten minutes or so on this portion of the session.
SESSION 3 OUTLINE

3.0 What is Wise Mind?
When we are being logical, rational, and devoid of emotion, we are in Rational Mind. When we are allowing our thoughts to be driven by our feelings, we are in Emotional Mind. A goal of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy (MBE) is to achieve Wise Mind. Wise Mind is the joining of Rational Mind and Emotional Mind in perfect balance and harmony. It is a moving beyond opposites to a mindful state of acceptance.
You may wish to begin Session 3 by reading this definition of Wise Mind, then asking each member of the group what Wise Mind means to them, and how it might help them to overcome a recent problem in which they were too emotional or too rational.

3.1 Wise Mind and Wise Body
This section of Session 3 affords a great opportunity to facilitate a discussion about the duality of mind/body thinking. In reality, our minds are a part of our bodies. By looking at things in this way, and considering Hebb’s Postulate, we can actually re-wire our brains through the conscious and deliberate effort of meditation! Since the act of meditation causes our the neurons in our brains to “fire together” in a new way, the neurons will “wire together” into circuits that promote greater relaxation, better concentration, better judgment, and better emotional regulation and distress tolerance.

3.2 Sensory Integration Meditation
For this section of the session you will conduct a Sensory Integration meditation. You may do so by writing your own script or by reading the one out of the book. In either case, practice the sensory integration meditation at least once on your own before conducting it in session. Ideally you should practice it several times before attempting to facilitate it with your class so that you will be intimately familiar with the sensations and reflections of the meditation. You may also wish to complete the exercise, Reflections on the Sensory Integration Meditation yourself before facilitating the class so that you will have a good understanding of the goals of the exercise.

3.3 Reflections on the Sensory Integration Meditation
EXERCISE: Reflections on the Sensory Integration Meditation - PRIORITY 1
Have students complete the Reflections on the Sensory Integration Meditation exercise, and facilitate a discussion by going over each item on the list and having your students volunteer their responses. Since this material is deeply personal, don’t force students to participate if they don’t want to, but have everyone list some generic examples of what people might learn about themselves and their bodies by engaging in this meditation.

3.4 The Mindful Body and the Wise Mind
This section of the workbook discusses the connection between the mind and the body, and how powerful it can be. I often use a simple guided visualization to help illustrate the power the mind has over the body: I have the group close their eyes and visualize a lemon in great detail, asking them to imagine with all of their senses. What does the lemon look like? If they had to draw it, could they? What does its skin feel like in their hands? What is its scent as they hold it up to their noses, etc.? I then ask them to imagine slicing that lemon and taking a bite out of it. After the visualization is over I ask them to raise their hands if their mouths began to water during the exercise. Usually at least half the class raises their hands at this point. My question for the class: “There was no actual lemon here, so why did your mouth water?”
The answer, of course, is obvious. Their minds tricked their bodies into experiencing the sensation of eating a lemon. This anecdotal exercise provides a great segue’ to the next section on mindful eating.

3.5 Mindful Eating
If your groups are scheduled around a meal time, you might be able to share a meal together while discussing the process of mindful eating. If not, you might bring a bag of chocolate kisses or some sort of fruit with which to engage in the Last Kiss exercise in order to illustrate the principle of mindful eating. If neither of these options are available, you can just discuss the process of mindful eating with the group and ask them to experiment with it the next time they eat a meal.

3.6 Mindful Acceptance of Discomfort
DISCLAIMER: The Mindful Acceptance of Discomfort exercise is not to be used as a substitute for treatment for chronic pain by a licensed medical health practitioner. If you have any students with chronic pain issues, advise them to consult with their doctors and other health care providers before attempting this exercise. Since this is an exercise only for people with pain issues, and not everyone in your group may have a pain issue, the actual exercise is an optional one. Review the information in your session if possible, but it is not necessary to engage in the actual exercise itself. If you choose to actually do the activity, have another activity on stand-by for those who don’t have chronic pain issues.

EXERCISE: Mindful Acceptance of Discomfort
If you choose to do this activity during session, do so, have students complete the worksheets. If you choose not to do this activity during the session, you may assign it as homework for those who have issues with chronic pain. If you do this, remember to discuss the results at the icebreaker portion of Session 4 next week.

3.7 Wise Mind, Wise Body, and True Self
The Serenity Prayer states, “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.”
This prayer may be graphed out as done in Section 3.7. Where acceptance and change overlap, there is wisdom. In general, we can only change ourselves. We cannot change others. What we can do, is ask others to change, but if we ask and they are unwilling to change, then all we can do is to accept that this is the way things are. Note that this doesn’t mean we should have to accept abuse from others. In such a case the “acceptance” might be that we just have to accept the fact that since this person is unwilling to change, we have to end the relationship.
The next concept in this section is the idea of True Self vs. Perceived Self. I often illustrate this by holding up two hands. One hand represents the way I would like to be (the Ideal Self or the True Self) and the other hand represents how I see myself (the Perceived Self). The closer together these two hands are, the less problems people are likely to have, but the farther apart these two hands are, the more problems are likely to occur because the Perceived Self hand is always asking itself, “Why can't I be more like that other hand?” In this case the “other hand” represents the True Self or Ideal Self.
There are two ways to resolve the gap between the hands. We can move the True Self hand closer to the Perceived Self hand or we can move the Perceived Self hand closer to the True Self hand. What usually happens over the course of the Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy program is that both hands meet in the middle somewhere.

EXERCISE: The Mindful Body of the True Self - PRIORITY 2
Time permitting, do this exercise in class. If you don’t have time, you may assign it as homework. If you do it in class, you may facilitate a discussion about the exercise by asking people to share some of their responses, but don’t force people to respond unless they volunteer first. The personal nature of the questions might lead some students to be hesitant about answering them in front of a group of people.

3.8 Mind and Body as One
I like to facilitate a discussion at this point by asking two or three members of the class to define their “perfect day” or perhaps their “perfect meal.” Inevitably the answers are different. When two or more people give different answers to any question about “perfection,” my next question is, “You both gave different responses to your definition of the perfect day (or perfect meal, etc.). So which one of you is correct and which one of you is wrong?”

The answer, of course, is that each of them is correct in their own way, because they are defining what’s “perfect” to them. So what this means is that the idea of “perfection” is subjective; we get to define what “perfect” means. Since we’re the ones defining what “perfect” means, if the world is consistently falling short of our expectations for “perfection,” we can always change our own personal definitions to more closely match what we get from the world around us.

HOMEWORK
Have students read the Session 4 materials prior to the next session; have them complete any exercises from Session 3 that weren’t covered in the session itself; ask them to bring any questions about the materials or the exercises to the next session.

DISCUSSION PERIOD
At the one-hour mark, invite group participants to stay for the discussion period. Point out that the thirty-minute post-session discussion period is optional. Note who stays for the discussion, and who leaves. Work at the next session to more actively engage those who leave.
Session 4: Letting Go

The art of Mindful Acceptance can best be described as the Art of Letting Go. Once you have done everything in your power to solve a problem, you have done all you can, so at that point worry and stress is counterproductive. Note that letting go of the stress and anxiety doesn’t necessarily mean letting go of the problem itself. For example, suppose you have a car payment coming up, and you don’t have the money to pay it. This would naturally cause you anxiety. If, after brainstorming for solutions, you find that you still don’t have the money to pay the car payment, then at that point you’ve done all you can do. So at that point, you let go of the anxiety associated with the problem. That doesn’t mean that you let go of car payments altogether. You’ll make the payment when you can. In this instance, letting go just means that you won’t worry about not being able to make the payment. The energy you might have used worrying about the situation could be put to better use in trying to come up with solutions.

Facilitator Notes for Session 4: Letting Go

**PREPARATION**

Read the Session 4 Course Materials, review the exercises listed in the chapter and try them at least once yourself prior to facilitating the group.

Practice presenting the materials in this session alone before facilitating the session so you will have a good idea of how long it will take you, given your own speaking and presentation style, to go over critical materials. Adjust by adding or leaving out materials as needed, but do not cut key concepts or Priority 1 exercises and activities if at all possible.

**KEY CONCEPTS**

(Key concepts are those concepts that are foundational principles of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy, and must be covered in the session): Letting Go; Needs vs. Wants; The questions of Intention: 1. What am I trying to accomplish in this situation? 2. Does what I’m about to do or say reflect that intention?; hiding in material possessions, riding the wave

**SECONDARY CONCEPTS**

(Secondary concepts are those concepts that are not foundational, but that are important if the facilitator can work them into the session – otherwise students will read about them on their own in the reading assignments): The Seesaw; valuing people instead of possessions; the Cloudy Day analogy

**INTRODUCTION**

As an icebreaker exercise, ask participants to discuss their experiences with Letting Go, after defining the concept for the class. If they have had any experiences where they have had difficulty letting go of something that has been bothering them, ask fellow students to offer suggestions on how to help them let go of the anxiety. Keep the focus on Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy and try to link the discussion to various “letting go” skills from the Session 4 materials if possible.

If homework was assigned (e.g. exercises from the workbook that there wasn’t time for at the previous session), ask if there were any questions about the materials and have students share their experiences in completing the activities. Try not to spend more than ten minutes or so on this portion of the session.
SESSION 4 OUTLINE

4.0 The Bare Necessities

For this discussion on the bare necessities, have students return to Section 2.1 Things That Stress Me Out, and look at the list they wrote. Now ask them how many of those things had to do with something other than an immediate need of food, clothing, shelter or love. The idea of the bare necessities is that a great deal of our stress and anxiety comes from trying to keep up with and accumulate more and more possessions and material goods. If we learn to let go of the need for more “stuff” we can eliminate a lot of anxiety from our lives.

EXERCISE: Wants vs. Needs PRIORITY 1

Do this exercise in class if at all possible. If not possible due to time constraints, make sure to assign it as homework.

The basic necessities for any human being are food, clothing, shelter, and love. Explain this, then have students list their needs and their wants. A “need” for purposes of this exercise is something the person could not survive without. A “want” is something it would be nice to have, but that is not absolutely essential for survival.

Inevitably when I do this exercise, there are students who list “wants” as “needs.” For example, I’ve had people say that they “need” their cell phone in order to survive because it helps them stay in touch with family, etc. I generally let them go ahead and list it as a need, then during the conversation after the exercise, ask them to explain how their lives and/or their survival might be threatened if they didn’t have the cell phone. Gently guide them, but don’t force the issue. If they truly believe they would die without their cell phones, then let them continue to believe that. The idea of letting go of what they can is more important than the idea that they can’t let go of their cell phones.

Once they’ve determined just how much they can survive without, link it to the idea of letting go as described in this section.

4.1 Alone in the Woods

A key concept from this section is the idea that happiness isn’t about our relationship to possessions. It’s about our relationship to ourselves and to others. Point out that “others” in this sense also included all wildlife, flora and fauna, on the planet.

This section states, “The key (to letting go) is to ask ourselves openly and honestly how much of what we do in our lives is based on fulfilling our basic needs, and how much of what occupies our time has to do with chasing our wants and desires.”

At this point I usually ask the class how much of their time during the week is spent on meeting the tasks of fulfilling their basic needs, and how much of their time during the week is spent on chasing their wants and desires. I do so by asking them to put a percentage on each.

4.2 Letting Go: The Seesaw

If you happen to be fortunate enough to be able to conduct your workshops in a setting that has a playground with a seesaw, you can take this opportunity to give an actual demonstration or the principle of letting go by getting off the seesaw. Otherwise, you may just discuss it with your students.

The idea behind the seesaw is that relationships are reciprocal; what one person does influences and affects what the other person does. But if one person “gets off the seesaw” as described in the section, they’ve let go of a problem interaction by refusing to participate in it. Instead, they may choose to redirect the energy of the situation by asking the Questions of Intention: 1. What am I trying to accomplish in this situation? 2. Does what I’m about to do or say reflect that intention?
In other words, if your intention is to have a productive and loving relationship with another person, are your words and actions supporting that intention, or doing just the opposite? What would it take to get off the seesaw by letting go of unproductive interactions?

4.3 Simplify
If someone can’t get enough alcohol or drugs, we consider that person to be an addict. If someone can’t get enough food and eats until they’re morbidly obese, we think that person has an eating disorder. If someone hoards household items or pets, we say that person has a hoarding disorder. However; if a person hoards more money than they could ever need, we just consider that person to be a wise investor or a wealthy business person. Could it be that people who need to accumulate excessive amounts of material possessions are suffering from some sort of disorder themselves?

Hiding in material possessions allows us to avoid dealing with our own personal issues. Such a reliance on material possessions in an effort to avoid dealing with one’s own emotions could technically be classified as an addiction, because such a person is using possessions as a way of numbing emotional pains and difficulties.

The three criteria for any addiction are withdrawal, tolerance, and loss of control. When applied to material possessions, these criteria might look like this:
Withdrawal: The person gets irritable or even angry when prevented from indulging in his “drug of choice,” material possessions. Such a person might react badly or even with anger when asked to stop buying so many things.
Tolerance: A person with an alcohol problem needs more and more alcohol to get the same “buzz” over time because they’ve built up a tolerance. A person with an addiction to material possessions might find that no matter how much money or “stuff” they accumulate, it’s never enough.
Loss of Control: In substance abuse, loss of control often manifests when a person goes to the bar to have “one drink,” then winds up sitting at the bar at closing time because they couldn’t control their addictive behavior. With material possessions, such a loss of control might manifest with the person constantly buying more and more items or accumulating more and more wealth, and not being able to stop themselves, even if it’s detrimental to their family relationships (“He never spends enough time with me!”) or their social or occupational functioning (“Joe doesn’t play golf anymore, he’s always working”).

If time permits, you might ask the class to discuss whether or not they think that material possessions could become an addiction.

4.4 Change is Inevitable: A Tale of Two Friends
After sharing the Tale of Two Friends, I generally also share the Cloudy Day analogy: Suppose every day when I left my house I expected it to be sunny and warm outside. This is not a realistic expectation because clouds and rain are a natural part of the weather. Likewise, if I expect never to be depressed or stressed out, that’s not a realistic expectation, because being stressed or depressed is a natural occurrence among human beings. I usually ask the class if any of them knows anyone who has never been stressed out or depressed a day in their lives. This is usually good for a chuckle, because there is nobody who has never been depressed or stressed out.

4.5 Everything Changes - Ride the Wave
Experiential avoidance means trying to avoid unpleasant experiences by telling ourselves not to think about them. The problem with telling ourselves not to think about unpleasant experiences is that telling ourselves not to think about them, is thinking about them!
The more we tell ourselves to stop having stressful thoughts, the more stressed out we become when we find we can’t stop having stressful thoughts. Riding the wave is one way to sit quietly with the
stressful and/or depressing thoughts until they subside on their own. When we sit quietly in being mode with our stressful thoughts we are not trying to avoid them.

4.6 Mindful Openness: Mindfully Letting Go
Mindful openness is about gaining a sense of perspective on any problems that may be stressing us out in the present moment. As you read this, think about what you were worrying about on this exact day six months ago. Do you have difficulty remembering? Most people do. Likewise, six months to the day from this exact date, do you think you’re going to remember what you’re stressed out about today? When reviewing this with your students, it’s important not to minimize what they may be feeling in the present moment. If you have students who are stressed out or depressed don’t try to engage in telling them to “snap out of it” or “stop worrying about it.” If they do so, they are back to the experiential avoidance we discussed in the previous section. Instead, validate their feelings while gently reminding them that “this too shall pass.” They can sit with the feeling until it passes if they desire. In doing so, they are not avoiding the experience of the feeling. And if they’re able to see the bigger picture, and focus on what they might be feeling six months from now, they can take comfort in the fact that their current emotional state, however painful it might be, is a temporary one.

HOMEWORK
Have students read the Session 5 materials prior to the next session; have them complete any exercises from Session 4 that weren’t covered in the session itself; ask them to bring any questions about the materials or the exercises to the next session.

DISCUSSION PERIOD
At the one-hour mark, invite group participants to stay for the discussion period. Point out that the thirty-minute post-session discussion period is optional. Note who stays for the discussion, and who leaves. Work at the next session to more actively engage those who leave.
Session 5: Living in the Now

Living in the Now means leaving Doing Mode and entering Being Mode. In Being Mode we learn that there is no past, there is no future. There is only this present moment. Living in the Now means allowing yourself to be in the moment in which you find yourself...here and now.

Facilitator Notes for Session 5: Living in the Now

PREPARATION
Read the Session 5 Course Materials, review the exercises listed in the chapter and try them at least once yourself prior to facilitating the group.
Practice presenting the materials in this session alone before facilitating the session so you will have a good idea of how long it will take you, given your own speaking and presentation style, to go over critical materials. Adjust by adding or leaving out materials as needed, but do not cut key concepts or Priority 1 exercises and activities if at all possible.

KEY CONCEPTS
(Key concepts are those concepts that are foundational principles of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy, and must be covered in the session): Doing Mode; Being Mode; Thinking Mode; Sensing Mode; you are not your mind/thoughts; True Self; Crystal Ball Thinking; Sacred Space, and Experiential Avoidance

SECONDARY CONCEPTS
(Secondary concepts are those concepts that are not foundational, but that are important if the facilitator can work them into the session – otherwise students will read about them on their own in the reading assignments): Upstream and downstream thoughts; the River analogy; “musturbating;” Coyote Walk, and befriending the bad wolf

INTRODUCTION
As an icebreaker exercise, ask participants to discuss their experiences with Living in the Now, after defining the concept for the class. If they have had any experiences where they have had difficulty dwelling in the past or ruminating over the future, they are living in their heads, and not in the “now” of existence. Ask fellow students to offer suggestions on how to live in the present moment. Keep the focus on Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy and try to link the discussion to various “living in the now” skills from the Session 5 materials if possible.
If homework was assigned (e.g. exercises from the workbook that there wasn’t time for at the previous session), ask if there were any questions about the materials and have students share their experiences in completing the activities. Try not to spend more than ten minutes or so on this portion of the session.
SESSION 5 OUTLINE

5.0 You are not Your Mind
A common error made by beginning students in mindfulness is that it requires you to “stop thinking.” Mindful meditation and mindfulness are not about stopping the thinking process. As this section points out, if you’re telling yourself to “stop thinking,” then you’re thinking about not thinking. The goal of a mindful meditation isn’t to stop thinking. Instead, the goal is to observe and describe thoughts and feelings while recognizing that we don’t have to believe them to be true or to identify with them. Thoughts and feelings are not facts. They are simply processes of the brain.

5.1 Thought Streams: The River
If you have access to a river or other body of water in your workshop space, having students actually stand in the river while describing this concept can be a very powerful experience. If you choose to do this, and have access to such a river, remember “safety first.” Don’t use a rapidly flowing river. Make sure to have someone trained in first aid in case of emergencies, and don’t let anyone who can’t swim into the river. Also, if you’re planning to do this, make sure to prepare your participants ahead of time by reminding them to bring towels, swim suits, and other accessories if needed.

5.2 Upstream and Downstream Thoughts
If you are using an actual river, you can transition from the “river” analogy in the previous section directly into the concept of upstream and downstream thoughts in this section. If you don’t have access to an actual river, you can just have your students visualize a river instead. The key concept in this activity is the idea that the present moment is the only thing that’s real: Once the present moment is over, it only exists in memory. And if it exists in memory only, we can choose how to interact with those memories.

5.3 Time is an Illusion
Crystal ball thinking involves “catastrophizing” or “musturbating” about the future. It means placing judgments on future events based on our past experiences. But if we judge the future by the past, we cut off any possibility of change in the future. Here’s why: Suppose I say to myself, “It’s always been this way.” Let’s further assume that this statement is accurate and it really has “always been this way.” Such a statement must be made in the present moment, looking back on past events. That’s fine. But if I then say, “And it always will be this way in the future,” I’ve just cut off any possibility of change, because I’m using crystal ball thinking to refuse to accept the possibility of change in the future.
One of the concepts of living in the now is letting go of the past so that change can begin in the present and carry forth into the future. Note that this is not meant to minimize the anxiety or depression a person may feel about the past. If a person is telling themselves not to experience these feelings, they are engaging in Experiential Avoidance (see section 5.8). Instead, living in the now means taking control of the present moment to choose how to experience thoughts and feelings about the past and the future.

5.4 Reality and the Now
By living in the now we can choose, in this moment, what to believe about the future, or the past. The idea that you can re-create your past is a novel one, but not an impossible goal. Most memory is constructive, so we can change our perceptions about the past by choosing to look at it in a different way than we have before. If the way we choose to remember the past is causing us stress, we can change what parts of the past we focus on, in the present moment, so that it does not have as great an
impact on us in the future. You might illustrate this with your students by asking them to discuss instances in which they’ve changed their minds about past events so that they no longer have such an emotional impact.

5.5 Creating Sacred Space
Sacred, or “set apart” spaces, are spaces and places that exist outside of time. This is because sacred spaces are designed to help us leave doing mode and enter into being mode. In being mode, time is irrelevant, because we’re not “doing” anything. Sacred spaces should be designed to stimulate the senses. You might emphasize this to your students by lighting incense or a smudge stick, or by pointing out a scenic view in your workshop space, or by offering a pleasant snack or libation, or by playing soothing music, or by engaging in any other activity that might create sacred space by engaging the senses.

5.6 Being in the Now: Coyote Walk
The idea behind the Coyote Walk activity is that with practice we may engage in any activity in a mindful way. The Coyote Walk allows your students to practice walking mindfully, as a precursor to being able to do other activities mindfully.

Sometimes when I suggest meditation to my patients, they picture it as having to take time out of their busy days to sit cross-legged on the floor. But the idea behind the Coyote Walk is that you can engage in mindful meditation while doing other things.

EXERCISE: Coyote Walk PRIORITY 1
If you don’t have time for any other activity in this week’s session, make sure you do the Coyote Walk. It is an activity that can be done either indoors or outdoors. The importance of this activity is that you can engage in mindful meditation in many aspects of your life, and not just in sitting quietly in your sacred space.

The accompanying worksheet also allows students to be self-reflective by asking them if there are any ways they may have been deceiving themselves, or deceiving others. This exercise can sometimes be used to help people get past the denial phase if there are problems that they are refusing to acknowledge.

5.7 Wherever You Go, There You Are
Part of the acknowledgement of the True Self is the acknowledgement of what Carl Jung called the Shadow. The Shadow is where our darker impulses live. If we try to pretend our darker desires and needs don’t exist, then that denial gives them power over us. But if we acknowledge their existence, that opens the gateway to expressing them in positive, rather than harmful, ways. It’s perfectly okay, for example, to be angry. It is not, however, okay to abuse others in our anger. The feeling isn’t the problem; it’s the behavior that’s the problem.

By acknowledging our anger, we are able to act on it in positive ways, perhaps by working out a compromise with the person we’re angry with. Ultimately, we cannot run from ourselves, so by “befriending the bad wolf” we take away its power to harm us.

You might illustrate this concept to students by having them list appropriate ways to express darker and more negative emotions.
5.8 Experiential Avoidance
Trying not to have thoughts is having thoughts. Experiential avoidance means trying to avoid unpleasant thoughts, feelings or emotions by telling yourself to “get over it” or “stop thinking about it.” I sometimes illustrate this using a beach ball if I’m conducting a group near a body of water. I have students try to push the beach ball underwater. The harder they push, the harder the beach ball “pushes” back. Trying to avoid negative experiences is exactly like pushing a beach ball underwater. The harder we try to avoid them, the more energy we give them, making them stronger. If, for example, I’m depressed and I tell myself to stop feeling depressed, then not being able to stop being depressed is depressing, so I wind up even more depressed than I was in the first place.
There’s a reason this beach ball of experience pushes back so hard. That’s because the reason we get depressed or anxious about things is because we care about things. If we didn’t care about anything, we wouldn’t have anything to be stressed or depressed about. So if we try to push that beach ball of anxiety or depression underwater, we’re also trying to drown everything we care about.
If you have access to a body of water and a beach ball, you might illustrate the concept of experiential avoidance as illustrated above by having students try to push the beach ball underwater.

EXERCISE: Experiential Avoidance PRIORITY 1
This activity is designed for students to do in their own sacred space, but you can have them answer the questions in the first part of the worksheet before doing the second part in their own sacred space. If you have them answer the questions during the workshop, also have them select one thing from the list they’d like to get rid of. Now tell them to go and meditate on that one thing in their own sacred space between now and the next session, per the instructions at the bottom of the worksheet.
At the beginning of Session 6 next week facilitate a discussion about what it was like to simply sit in being mode with the thing they said they’d like to get rid of. There are more instructions for this activity in the INTRODUCTION section for Session 6.

5.9 Befriending the Bad Wolf
During the “befriending the Bad Wolf” section of this session, I often have students list one or two things that the “bad wolf” is trying to warn them about. I then have them thank the bad wolf for doing its job, and then give it permission to leave now before dismissing it. After the person speaking dismissed their own “bad wolf,” have the group say in unison, “Go now in peace.”
When done in a group setting this can be a powerful rite.
One word of caution: Due to the extremely intimate nature of this exercise, if you choose to use it, only do so on a volunteer basis. Don’t force anyone to participate if they’re not willing to do so.

5.10 True Self and the Now
The “mind trap” occurs when our thought and feeling cycles trap us inside our own heads, causing us to dwell on depressing thoughts and feelings about the past or anxiety about the future. From the perspective of the True Self, however, we may see this mind trap for what it is. It is just a process of the mind, and not fact or reality unless we choose to make it so.
At this point in the session check to see if students have integrated the materials by asking them to reflect on their own True Selves, and how living in the now might help them to more fully connect to their own True Selves.

HOMEWORK
Have students read the Session 6 materials prior to the next session; have them complete any exercises from Session 5 that weren’t covered in the session itself; ask them to bring any questions about the materials or the exercises to the next session.
DISCUSSION PERIOD
At the one-hour mark, invite group participants to stay for the discussion period. Point out that the thirty-minute post-session discussion period is optional. Note who stays for the discussion, and who leaves. Work at the next session to more actively engage those who leave.

Session 6: Centering
Centering yourself is allowing yourself to get in touch with and be open to your True Self. It is allowing yourself to realize that you are perfect just as you are, even with your imperfections, because those feelings and desires are also a part of who you really are. If you accept your imperfections and integrate them into your way of thinking and feeling about yourself, you will obtain peace of mind, and you will be centered.

Facilitator Notes for Session 6: Centering

PREPARATION
Read the Session 6 Course Materials, review the exercises listed in the chapter and try them at least once yourself prior to facilitating the group.
Practice presenting the materials in this session alone before facilitating the session so you will have a good idea of how long it will take you, given your own speaking and presentation style, to go over critical materials. Adjust by adding or leaving out materials as needed, but do not cut key concepts or Priority 1 exercises and activities if at all possible.

KEY CONCEPTS
(Key concepts are those concepts that are foundational principles of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy, and must be covered in the session): Centering; Ideal Self; Perceived Self; Acceptance vs. Change; the Ogham; your birth tree; Tree of Life Meditation

SECONDARY CONCEPTS
(Secondary concepts are those concepts that are not foundational, but that are important if the facilitator can work them into the session – otherwise students will read about them on their own in the reading assignments): Celtic Tree Horoscope; core values; personal truths; the Tree at the Center

INTRODUCTION
As an icebreaker exercise, ask participants to discuss their experiences with the Experiential Avoidance exercise from last week’s homework. In this activity, students were asked to select from a list of things they would like to be rid of. They were then asked to pick one thing in particular they’d like to be rid of, and to take it to their own personal sacred space and meditate on it by simply being with it, without trying to get rid of it.
You may ask them the following questions:
1. Did simply sitting with the thing in the moment make your experience of it worse, better, or about the same?
2. If sitting with it made your experience of it worse, were you ruminating on it (i.e., catastrophizing or musturbating)?
3. If sitting with it in the moment in being mode made your experience of it better, what did you notice about yourself and your ability to engage in being mode in this way?

4. Did being in your own sacred space add anything to your experience in the moment? Use student answers to these questions as an opportunity to segue into the concept of “centering,” which is the process of allowing yourself to get in touch with and be open to your True Self. Link the concept of Experiential Avoidance to centering by noting that if you are trying to avoid experiences, you are trying to avoid parts of your True Self, and no matter where you go, you cannot run away from yourself. By learning to center, you are able to allow yourself to experience the fullness of being that is your True Self.

If homework was assigned (e.g. exercises from the workbook that there wasn’t time for at the previous session), ask if there were any questions about the materials and have students share their experiences in completing the activities. Try not to spend more than ten minutes or so on this portion of the session.
SESSION 6 OUTLINE

6.0 Finding Your Center
Centering is the process of getting in touch with your True Self in the present moment by letting go of thoughts about the past and the future and focusing on living in the now. Introduce this week’s material by defining “centering.”

6.1 Who are You?
Discuss the idea of the Ideal Self vs. the Perceived Self. You might ask students to describe how far apart the two are for them. You could then follow up by asking what would move each person’s Ideal Self and Perceived Self closer together.
Next, discuss the idea of acceptance vs. change. Link it to the idea that we can only change ourselves. We cannot change others. We can ask others to change, but if they refuse to do so, then we have to accept that it is beyond our capacity to change others. Either that, or we must accept that this is not a relationship we need to be in. Sometimes when I discuss this idea, there are students who insist on trying to get other people to change. In such a case, it is usually because the student is using the idea of forcing others to change as a defense mechanism to avoid the responsibility of changing themselves. Either that, or they are clinging to a relationship that they probably shouldn’t be in. In extreme cases, such as abusive relationships, “acceptance” doesn’t mean accepting the abuse. It means accepting that this is a relationship that must end in order to avoid being hurt any further.
The ultimate in acceptance is to be able to accept one’s Perceived Self as easily and as readily as one can accept their Ideal Self. When the two are one and the same, the ultimate acceptance has been achieved.

6.2 Which Tree are You?
In this and the following sections, trees are used as metaphors for personality traits and characteristics. This is done by introducing the Celtic Tree Horoscope devised by Robert Graves. The point here is not whether the personality traits described under each birth tree is accurate. The information is used metaphorically as a way for each student to identify their own strengths and needs.

6.3 The Celtic Tree Alphabet
The dates listed for each Celtic Tree Month are approximate and based on 2016. Since this exercise is metaphorical in nature, it is not necessary to be highly accurate; however, if you are interested in how these months are calculated, the method is as follows:
To find your actual Celtic Tree Horoscope birth month, find the year in which you were born, then find the winter solstice immediately preceding the date of your birth. Next, count up in 28-day increments. The first 28 days immediately following the winter solstice would be the Birch Month, the second 28 days would be the Rowan Month, and so forth. The remaining day after the Elder Month (or the remaining two days in case of a Leap Year) are dedicated to mistletoe, and are not included in this horoscope).

6.4 The Celtic Tree Horoscope
Have each person identify their birth month using the approximate dates in the previous section. Now have each person read their horoscope and see how much it reflects their own true nature. If there are any in the class who don’t think that their birth tree fits them, have them select another tree that is more appropriate to their own personality traits and characteristics.

6.5 Your Birth Tree
If you are fortunate enough to have an outdoor workshop space with a wide variety of trees and plants, you may wish to have your students see if they can identify their birth trees on the site. If not, you may just have a tree or two on the site and just have students describe its characteristics. For example, oaks are strong, willows are supple, blackthorns are prickly, and so on. Link these characteristics to human traits. If you wish, you may ask volunteers to state which trees or plants on your own workshop site that they might identify with.

6.6 Tree of Life Meditation
Conduct the Tree of Life meditation by either reading the script out of the book or by writing your own script. If writing your own script, concentrate on the ideas of grounding, centering, and drawing energy from the earth. Practice the meditation on your own before conducting it in a class, being mindful of the amount of time available to conduct it. Try to keep it under ten minutes if possible.

EXERCISE: Reflections on the Tree of Life Meditation
After facilitating the meditation with your students, have them complete the questions on the Reflections on the Tree of Life Meditation worksheet. Facilitate a discussion on student responses to the questions on the worksheet, keeping the focus on the concept of centering.

6.7 Getting to Know Your Tree
The exercises in this section help with centering by spending time with a tree or other plant in nature. You can have your students each select a tree or other plant with which to spend a few minutes. This plant doesn’t have to be their birth tree. The idea here is to let them experience centering by exploring the plant with all of their senses in the present moment. By focusing on their senses, they leave thinking mode and enter into sensing mode. This allows them to more easily leave doing mode and enter into being mode. Centering is ultimately being in the moment with our own True Selves. After letting your class spend some time exploring a tree or other plant with all of their senses, ask them what the experience was like. Do they feel calmer and more centered? Why?

6.8 The Tree at the Center
I like to have a student read the material in this section out loud. Alternately you may read it aloud yourself. After doing so, ask your students to reflect on their own sense of oneness with all of life. Did the material help them to feel more at peace with all of existence? If so, why? If not, what would it take to help them to center and connect with all life?

6.9 Lessons from the Tree of Life
In this final section for Session 6, trees are used as a metaphor for being centered. Trees are rooted in the ground while reaching for the stars. Ask your students how they could learn from trees how to center themselves in their daily lives.

HOMEWORK
Have students read the Session 7 materials prior to the next session; have them complete any exercises from Session 6 that weren’t covered in the session itself; ask them to bring any questions about the materials or the exercises to the next session.

DISCUSSION PERIOD
At the one-hour mark, invite group participants to stay for the discussion period. Point out that the thirty-minute post-session discussion period is optional. Note who stays for the discussion, and who leaves. Work at the next session to more actively engage those who leave.
Session 7: Connecting

Suppose you could take all the spiritual paths practiced worldwide, put them into a cauldron, and boil them down to their essence. What would remain? I believe that the common thread to all spiritual practices is a feeling of connection. In this sense, spirituality means connection to others, or connection to the divine, or simply connection to nature and to ourselves. In short: spirituality is connectedness. If you think back on the spiritual experiences you’ve had in your lifetime, do recall feeling connected on some level? Many describe spiritual experiences as a sense of oneness. Oneness implies connection to something outside ourselves. In this sense, even an agnostic or an atheist could achieve spirituality through connection.

Facilitator Notes for Session 7: Connecting

PREPARATION
Read the Session 7 Course Materials, review the exercises listed in the chapter and try them at least once yourself prior to facilitating the group.
Practice presenting the materials in this session alone before facilitating the session so you will have a good idea of how long it will take you, given your own speaking and presentation style, to go over critical materials. Adjust by adding or leaving out materials as needed, but do not cut key concepts or Priority 1 exercises and activities if at all possible. Note that there are a lot of exercises in this particular session, so you will have to be particularly aware of the time factor when facilitating the various exercises.

KEY CONCEPTS
(Key concepts are those concepts that are foundational principles of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy, and must be covered in the session): Connecting; reconnecting; Faces and Masks; mindful connecting; memes, and root memes

SECONDARY CONCEPTS
(Secondary concepts are those concepts that are not foundational, but that are important if the facilitator can work them into the session – otherwise students will read about them on their own in the reading assignments): Spirituality as connectedness; barriers to connection; the persona; the numinous; the Bell Branch

INTRODUCTION
As an icebreaker exercise, ask participants to discuss their experiences with connectivity. You may begin by asking them what sorts of things help them to feel connected, or what connection means to them. Many equate connection with a feeling of love; however, we use “connection” instead of “love” because the term has less emotional baggage. Just be aware that many will say that connection equals love.
If homework was assigned (e.g. exercises from the workbook that there wasn’t time for at the previous session), ask if there were any questions about the materials and have students share their experiences in completing the activities. Try not to spend more than ten minutes or so on this portion of the session.
NOTE: The mask making exercise from Section 7.2 Faces and Masks will require most of the session. You may want to skip straight ahead to that activity after briefly discussing the concepts of spirituality and
connectivity. Students may continue to work on their masks as you go over the other activities in the chapter. Make sure to do the Things That Keep Me from Feeling Connected exercise before you begin the mask-making activity, so that the topic will be fresh on your students’ minds as they begin to make their masks.

SESSION 7 OUTLINE

7.0 Spirituality
Emphasize that for the purposes of this course and program, spirituality is defined as a sense of connection. This means that anybody, regardless of their spiritual or religious inclination or lack thereof, could benefit from connectivity. You might wish to go around the room and ask each participant how they define spirituality, and how they define connection. Ask them to link the two if possible. This prepares everyone for the exercise to follow.

EXERCISE: What Connection Means to Me PRIORITY 1
With their answers to the questions in Section 7.0 above fresh on their minds, have everyone complete this exercise. When everyone is done, you may wish to facilitate a discussion on how spiritual connection manifests in thoughts, feelings, mind and body. Can your students define what connection means using their thoughts, feelings, mind and body? Is there an element of connectivity in a spiritual sense that is beyond thoughts and feelings?

7.1 Reconnecting
Unless a person experienced some sort of deep childhood trauma, most children feel more spiritually connected to life and to nature than most adults. To them, every day brings a new experience full of wonder. During this section’s discussion I often ask my students to close their eyes and visualize a time from their childhood when they felt deeply connected on a spiritual level. I then ask them if they were indoors or outdoors when this happened. If they were indoors, that’s okay too. Different people connect in different ways. We’re all different, and some people just naturally connect better indoors. What’s more important is whether or not they had a deep sense of spiritual connection in childhood, and if it is possible to recapture that feeling in adulthood.
Note also that we’re not trying to force a particular type of spirituality or even a belief in any sort of divine. Spiritual connection in this sense is just a feeling of awe and wonder at the bounty of life and nature. You don’t have to believe in any sort of god or divinity to have such an experience.
A final word of caution: Some people, especially those who had traumatic childhoods, might not be able to think of any time in their lives when they felt connected at a spiritual level. That’s okay too. If they can’t come up with anything, ask them what would need to change in their lives in order for them to feel connected. If you get someone who answers this question with “I don’t know,” then the first step would be for them to figure out what would help them to feel connected. The rest of the exercises in this chapter may help them to answer this question, so if you have someone who is having difficulty coming up with something, ask them again at the end of the session if they still don’t know.

EXERCISE: Things that Keep Me from Feeling Connected PRIORITY 1
After your students have identified a moment or two from childhood in which they felt connected, ask them to consider if, as they matured, something might have arisen in their lives that blocked that sense of connection in some way. Usually such things are life events that interfere with one’s sense of awe and wonder. Ask them to list some of these barriers to connection in the exercise here.

7.2 Faces and Masks
Prepare for this activity by having materials that can be used to make masks. If you are doing the workshop in an outdoor setting, you might have participants forage for natural materials to use when making their masks. A word of caution: It helps to have someone familiar with the local flora and fauna so that participants don’t select things like poison oak, stinging nettles, etc. that can cause allergic reactions. Also caution your students about any “critters” that might be present in the underbrush. Note that the materials used for constructing masks don’t have to be expensive. You can use paper plates, string, colored ribbons and markers. Most of these materials can be obtained relatively inexpensively from dollar stores. You may also use dried gourds, wood, or other natural materials. Once students have completed their masks, but prior to completing the Faces and Masks worksheet in the next exercise, have them put on their masks and interact with each other while wearing them. Ask them to note if the way they interact with each other has changed since they put on their masks. One activity I usually have people do while wearing their masks is to introduce themselves to the group as their True Selves. This can be done by having them say a few things about what their true identities are. It doesn’t matter if they’re actually doing the things that they’d like to be doing as their True Selves. For example, if a student wants to be an artist or a musician, but they’ve not yet had the confidence to act on this desire, have them introduce themselves as an artist or a musician. The purpose of this exercise is to determine how they might connect to others differently if they were confident enough to live fully as who they were meant to be. Be mindful of the time when doing this exercise, and try not to spend more than ten or fifteen minutes on it if possible; however, this is the most important exercise of this session, so if you go a little long on this, it’s safe to skip some of the later exercises.

**EXERCISE: Faces and Masks PRIORITY 1**

Once students have interacted for a time while wearing their masks, have them compete this worksheet. Ask for volunteers to share some of their answers and experiences with this activity. If there is not enough time to complete this activity during the session, have them complete it at home and discuss it at the introduction of the next session. Try to keep the focus on how the answers in the exercise will help participants to connect with others, with nature, and with themselves.

### 7.3 Connecting

After reviewing the material in this section, ask participants to discuss the ways in which they feel connected, and ways in which they have not felt connected. Focus on the assumptions people make about how they can and should connect to others, to nature, and to self. Crystal ball thinking involves making assumptions about the outcome by trying to predict the future, or by assuming what others might be thinking or feeling. Discuss ways in which participants can set aside their assumptions about the order of things so that they may be open to the possibility of connection.

**EXERCISE: Ways I’d Like to Feel Connected PRIORITY 2**

For this exercise, keep the focus on assumptions as barriers to connection. In other words, what assumptions might students be making about the situation that might be acting as barriers to connection? What changes would they have to make within themselves in order to allow connectivity to occur more naturally and spontaneously? Return to the dialectic of acceptance versus change when necessary. We cannot change others. We can only change ourselves. We can ask others to change, but if they refuse, then we must accept their decision and either change ourselves in order to connect, or end the relationship. I often use the acronym “FAST” when discussing barriers to connection. The way to find connection using FAST is:

- **Flexible**: Be flexible and willing to compromise when possible, without sacrificing the core values of your True Self;
Adaptable: Be willing and able to adapt to different circumstances as they arise, always having a back-up plan when possible.

Stable: A stable person isn’t a person who doesn’t have strong emotions. A stable person is one who is able to respond and reflect to emotions in positive ways.

Truthful: Connection is about the ability to be truthful and reflective with others and with self.

7.4 Connecting with Nature: A Great Place to Start
We can begin practicing our skills of connecting with other people by starting with nature. Animal-Assisted Therapy or other forms of therapy using natural settings, such as therapeutic gardening or wilderness adventures, allows us to practice our connectivity skills with nature first, before going on to the more complex interactions inherent in human communication. You might have students discuss ways they connect with nature, and have them list ways that these skills could translate into their connection with people.

7.5 How Important is Connectivity?
This material, while interesting, can be skipped if time is a factor. The “take home” from this section is that connectivity can actually cause structural changes in the brain, wiring it in positive ways that lead to wellbeing.

7.6 Mindful Connecting
While this section is about how couples connect with each other, it can also be about any two people connecting with each other. Being in the moment with anyone is a great opportunity for connection, simply because being in the moment with another individual allows them to feel heard and respected. This is even true if the other person is a child, or even an animal.
When reviewing this section, you might wish to ask your students how many of them are in relationships. You may then generalize the skills in this section so that they apply to any two people and not just two people involved in a romantic relationship.

7.7 Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy and Connecting
If time permits, do the exercises in this section in class. If not, have students complete this exercise at home on their own. Discuss it at the beginning of the next session when you go over the homework for this week. As students discuss the materials, listen to responses and check to see if they are properly integrating the skills of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy when removing their barriers to connection.

7.8 Memes
Define “meme” for your students. The word “meme” comes from the Greek word “mimeo,” meaning “imitated thing.” So a meme is a behavior or thought that gets copied. A meme is simply a habit of thought or action that gets passed on from one person to another.
A “root meme” is a special type of meme. Root memes are memes from which other memes grow and propagate. For example, I might have several memes like, “I’m going to fail,” and “things will never work out for me,” and “nothing I ever do is good enough.” A root meme for such a cluster of memes might be something like, “I’m inadequate.” If the root meme “I’m inadequate” is eliminated, or replaced with something like, “I’m competent,” then memes like “I’m going to fail,” and “things will never work out for me,” and “nothing I ever do is good enough” automatically disappear, since they are all rooted in the meme, “I’m inadequate.”
If time permits, have students look back to their list of Things That Keep Me from Feeling Connected from Section 7.1. Have them identify any root memes they can find from the list, and facilitate a discussion about them.
EXERCISE: Root Memes that Act as Barriers to Connection PRIORITY 1
Have students complete this exercise in class if at all possible. Once it is completed, facilitate a
discussion by asking for volunteers to share their responses with the group. Once volunteers have
shared their responses you might ask the group to suggest ways in which individuals might remove such
barriers to connection.

7.9 Change Your Memes, Change Your World
Our lives are a series of memes. We are constantly taking in new ideas, rejecting others, and modifying
our own memes to conform to new world views. Our individual worlds are made of memes. This means
that if we want to change our worlds, all we have to do is change our memes.
Making change in our lives means changing our memes (beliefs) so that we may change our
consequences. Stress to your students that this might seem “weird” or “unnatural” at first, and that’s
okay. If it felt normal they’d already be doing it. Ask them to stick with it for at least a month before
dismissing the skills as ineffective. I tell my students that you don’t get buff by going to the gym one
time. You have to keep at it. Likewise, changing your memes means being willing to keep working at it.
I have my own Bell Branch that I bring to this session. Its branch shape is a great way to illustrate the
branching nature of memes, and how they all connect to a central meme. The bells on my Bell Branch
are also great representations of individual thoughts and ideas that arise from our memes.

HOMEWORK
Have students read the Session 8 materials prior to the next session; have them complete any exercises
from Session 7 that weren’t covered in the session itself; ask them to bring any questions about the
materials or the exercises to the next session.

DISCUSSION PERIOD
At the one-hour mark, invite group participants to stay for the discussion period. Point out that the
thirty-minute post-session discussion period is optional. Note who stays for the discussion, and who
leaves. Work at the next session to more actively engage those who leave.
Session 8: Nature as Metaphor

Each of us lives in our own personal fairy tale called “my life.” We all have good things that happen to us, and we all have bad things that happen to us. We create our own personal myths by choosing which things to focus on in our own lives. The good news about the myth of our lives is that we are the author. So if we don’t like the way the story is going, we have the power to do a ‘rewrite’ at any time. We can’t always choose the circumstances of our lives, but we can always choose the story we create about those circumstances. If you go out into the woods and start observing things, you will notice something begins to happen. You will begin to create stories about the events you observe there in the forest. These stories that spring to mind in the woods can tell you a great deal about what is going on in your own unconscious mind, if you know how to pay attention to them.

Facilitator Notes for Session 8: Nature as Metaphor

PREPARATION
Read the Session 8 Course Materials, review the exercises listed in the chapter and try them at least once yourself prior to facilitating the group.
Practice presenting the materials in this session alone before facilitating the session so you will have a good idea of how long it will take you, given your own speaking and presentation style, to go over critical materials. Adjust by adding or leaving out materials as needed, but do not cut key concepts or Priority 1 exercises and activities if at all possible.

KEY CONCEPTS
(Key concepts are those concepts that are foundational principles of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy, and must be covered in the session): Ecotherapy; Second-Order Change; Beginner’s Mind; the Power of Intention; Nature as Archetype; the Golden Road, and Nature as Metaphor

SECONDARY CONCEPTS
(Secondary concepts are those concepts that are not foundational, but that are important if the facilitator can work them into the session – otherwise students will read about them on their own in the reading assignments): True Self; A Closer Look Activity; the power of the unconscious mind; the Green Man; the World Tree; tree as metaphor, and animal as metaphor

INTRODUCTION
As an icebreaker exercise, ask participants to discuss their experiences with nature as a metaphor. Start this activity by asking for volunteers to tell a story in which they saw themselves in nature, or they saw nature in themselves. Link this discussion to the idea that nature can be used as a teaching tool. This discussion lays the groundwork for the activities in this session.
If homework was assigned (e.g. exercises from the workbook that there wasn’t time for at the previous session), ask if there were any questions about the materials and have students share their experiences in completing the activities. Try not to spend more than ten minutes or so on this portion of the session.
NOTE: The Closer Look exercise and subsequent reflections will require most of the session. This activity is the central portion of this session because in the Closer Look exercise you are looking for ways in which students saw stories happening in nature as they observed it. These stories are projections of their own consciousness onto the nature scenes they observed. Don’t try to put too much interpretation on their stories; instead, let them interpret them for themselves. Try to dedicate at least ten minutes of today’s session time for the Closer Look exercise.
SESSION 8 OUTLINE

8.0 What is Ecotherapy?
Define ecotherapy by first defining ecopsychology, which is the study of the effects of nature on the psychology of humans and other animals. Ecotherapy is defined as “the use of the tools and techniques of ecopsychology in a therapeutic way and/or in a therapeutic setting.”

Introduce the idea of the pilgrimage as the optional activity from this section. You may encourage students to engage in their own pilgrimage, or you may suggest to them that in a way participating in this series of workshops could also be seen as a type of pilgrimage. If you wish, you may use the questions in the pilgrimage activity to facilitate a discussion about people’s experiences with this workshop series thus far.

The questions from the pilgrimage activity are:
1. Who am I?
2. Who do I want to be?
3. What is my mission or purpose in life?
4. How am I living that purpose?
5. How am I not living that purpose?
6. What would I have to change about myself in order to accomplish my life’s mission?

When I lead groups, I read over each question and ask students to discuss how their answers to these questions may have changed over the time they have been attending the workshops. Link their answers to these questions back to ecotherapy and nature as metaphor by asking how their experiences in nature over the course of this workshop series might have changed their answers.

8.1 Second-Order Change
First Order Change involves playing the same game over and over again by the same rules and expecting different results, while Second Order Change means thinking outside of the box and re-interpreting the rules so the game can be won.

I often illustrate this concept through the use of the Nine Dot Puzzle.

The Nine Dot Puzzle introduces the concept of the paradigm shift (Second Order Change). Give students the first page of the puzzle, and explain the rules to them, but don’t show them the solution until they’ve attempted to solve the puzzle. After they’ve attempted to solve the puzzle, share the solution with them.

The natural assumption for most people attempting to solve the puzzle is that there is an invisible boundary around the perimeter of the nine dots: A “box.” But if you assume there is an unspoken rule that you cannot go outside of the box, it is impossible to solve the puzzle. People who make this assumption cannot solve the puzzle. Their natural assumptions prevent them from seeing the solution. Relate this to the idea of Second Order Change. A paradigm shift has to occur in order for the puzzle to be solved, just as a paradigm shift has to occur in our minds in order to achieve beginner’s mind and to look at things in a fresh, new way. By seeing things in a new way we are able to escape assumptions that are keeping us from seeing solutions.

Here are the rules for working this puzzle (the solution is on the next page):
1. Connect all nine dots below, using only four straight lines
2. Once you begin to draw, you cannot lift your pencil; the lines must be connected to each other in one continuous movement (think connect-the-dots)
3. It is possible to solve the puzzle!
As you can see, the only way to solve the puzzle is to literally “think outside the box.” The natural assumption for most people is that there is an invisible boundary around the perimeter of the nine dots: A "box." But the rules for solving the puzzle didn’t say that you could not go outside the box! If you assume there is an unspoken rule that you cannot go outside of the box, it is impossible to solve the puzzle. People who make this assumption cannot solve the puzzle. Their natural assumptions prevent them from seeing the solution.

Think about how you’d like to live. How many of your natural assumptions prevent you from consistently finding solutions to the problems you encounter in your day-to-day life? How many of your natural assumptions are preventing you from becoming the person you would like to be? How many of your assumptions are keeping you from living in True Self? What “rules” would have to change in order for you to make that leap? How can nature help you to challenge those assumptions? Discuss with your students.

8.2 Beginner’s Mind
Define beginner’s mind here for your students. It is a key concept for the exercises to follow. Beginner’s mind is 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. By doing so we are more easily able to achieve Second Order Change in our lives. Second Order Change is lasting because it is a change in the way we view the world.

8.3 True Self and the Power of Intention
When we live in deliberate and intentional ways, we are utilizing the power of intention. Intention is conceptualized with the following two questions:
1. What am I trying to accomplish with my life?
2. Is what I’m doing, saying and thinking going to help me to accomplish my goals?
If we are using the power of intention we are taking a solution-focused approach to problem solving. We can talk about problems all day, but until we start talking about solutions nothing gets solved. The power of intention is about solutions.
The way to live in True Self is intentionally. If you have time, you may facilitate a discussion about how students can use their power of intention to live more fully in True Self, and how nature might help them to do so.

8.4 Nature as Metaphor
Review how fairy tales like the Aesop’s Fables are nature metaphors used to teach valuable life lessons. Link this to the idea that we can create our own “fairy tales” by observing nature and using it as a
metaphor for the challenges in our own lives. If time permits you may discuss how intention and nature may work together to create metaphors that allow students to live more fully in True Self.

**EXERCISE: A Closer Look PRIORITY 1**
This exercise has to be done outside, so if you’re experiencing inclement weather you will have to postpone it until weather permits. When I do this exercise I use Hula Hoops™ and have students place them on the ground in front of them for their period of observation. The hoop marks the boundary of observation. Allow at least ten minutes for this exercise. I usually have at least one student who gets bored, gets up and wanders away during this exercise. That’s okay too. I generally ask them, during the discussion portion of the session, what caught their attention outside of the hoop. I then ask them to create a metaphor based on their observations of nature outside the parameters of the exercise. What did they see that wasn’t in the hoop?

**8.5 Reflections on a Closer Look**
The exercise that follows is designed to take the story created in the Closer Look exercise and to turn it inward; that is, to use the story as a metaphor for the individual’s own inner journey. Keep this in mind as you have your students complete the Reflections on A Closer Look exercise.

**EXERCISE: Reflections on A Closer Look PRIORITY 1**
Have your students answer the questions in this exercise after completing A Closer Look. If time permits, you may facilitate a discussion by asking volunteers to share their responses to the questions. In the interest of time, I usually read through the questions one by one and ask students to volunteer answers. I don’t take more than one or two answers before going on to the next question. You may then assign this exercise as homework once the students have a clear understanding of how to answer the questions.

**8.6 A Closer Look Inside**
The Closer Look Inside exercise uses the Closer Look to remove barriers to connection. This is done by using the story students created in the Closer Look exercise as a metaphor for their own internal states.

**EXERCISE: A Closer Look Inside PRIORITY 1**
Have students complete this exercise during the session. If students notice that they created stories that contain things that may be used to eliminate barriers to connection, this exercise should help them to figure out what those things are, and how to use those metaphors in intentional ways to connect with nature and with themselves. If time permits you may facilitate a discussion of student responses to this exercise when it is completed.

**8.7 Nature as Archetype**
Discuss the concept of archetypes and have students name some nature archetypes like the Sacred Tree or the Mandala. Link the idea of archetypes to the power of the unconscious mind by noting that archetypes reside in the unconscious mind and are inborn. Metaphors in nature that make use of archetypal energy are very powerful metaphors that can lead to Second Order Change when used properly.

**8.8 The Power of the Unconscious Mind**
During this part of the session, ask students to volunteer experiences they may have had with their unconscious minds. Such experiences might manifest as a hunch or intuition, or a dream that tells them
something about themselves, or just a feeling that they should do something at a particular time in a particular way.

8.9 The Golden Road
Freud considered dreams the “Golden Road” to the unconscious mind. In the Nature as Metaphor session, we explore some ways in which we may use nature as a metaphor for our own unconscious thought processes. Introduce this idea with the Green Man exercise that follows.

8.10 The Green Man
The Green Man exercise that follows in Section 8.12 involves using trees as a sort of Thematic Apperception Test. In other words, what we see in the tree is a projection of our own unconscious minds. For now, just discuss the idea of the Green Man as a face in the trees. Different people may see different faces, or even animals or other objects. This is because such images are merely projections.

8.11 Wise Mind and the World Tree
Discuss the archetypal image of the World Tree as a metaphor for mind. This metaphorical tree of mind has branches that reach into the life-giving sunlight of order and rational thought, while its roots stretch deep into the dark, moist and chaotic soil of the unconscious mind, where the darker emotions dwell.

8.12 Connecting through the Green Man
Prepare for the Green Man exercise by explaining the rationale for it. You will be asking students to find a face or other image in a tree of their choosing. They will then sketch it and interpret it based on what they think their own subconscious minds might be trying to tell them. Prior to the exercise, facilitate a brief Tree of Life meditation as a means of grounding and centering your students.

EXERCISE: The Green Man PRIORITY 2
Have your students engage in the Green Man exercise by selecting a tree of their own. When they feel that an image has formed in the tree, have them sketch it, then go on to answer the questions in the next exercise.

EXERCISE: Reflections on the Green Man PRIORITY 2
When this exercise is complete, facilitate a discussion by asking volunteers to share their responses with the rest of the group. Focus on using the Green Man as a metaphor for unconscious mental states.

8.13 Tree as Metaphor
Facilitate a discussion on trees as metaphors for our own internal states. Do trees have personalities? What can you learn from yourself by observing the trees?

8.14 Animal as Metaphor
Animals are used quite often as metaphors for human interaction, as this section points out. When using animals as metaphors for our own personal lives, we can draw upon the strength of these archetypes to achieve our own mindful states of being. Session 8: Nature as Metaphor prepares us for the idea of using totem animals as metaphors for our own internal states. This concept will be introduced in the next session's materials.

8.15 Nature as Metaphor for True Self
I illustrate the concepts in this section by asking students, “What is the nature of your True Self apart from material possessions?”

The next question I ask is, “What is the nature of your True Self apart from the natural world?”

The idea behind these two questions is that while we could exist without material possessions, we could not exist without nature. The more in tune we are with nature, the more likely we are to be living in True Self. Compare and contrast answers to these two questions with your students, using nature as a metaphor for True Self.

**HOMEWORK**

Have students read the Session 9 materials prior to the next session; have them complete any exercises from Session 8 that weren’t covered in the session itself; ask them to bring any questions about the materials or the exercises to the next session.

**NOTE ABOUT PREPARATION FOR SESSION 9:** *The My Own Animal Legend* exercise in Session 9 is quite lengthy. In interest of time, you may wish to assign it as homework prior to Session 9 so the bulk of the Session 9 class time may be used for the reflections and the discussion regarding the exercise. If you choose to do this, make sure your class understands ahead of time that they should bring the completed exercise with them to the beginning of Session 9. Have them do the *My Own Animal Legend* portion for homework, but save the *Lessons from My Own Animal Legend* portion for next week’s session.

**DISCUSSION PERIOD**

At the one-hour mark, invite group participants to stay for the discussion period. Point out that the thirty-minute post-session discussion period is optional. Note who stays for the discussion, and who leaves. Work at the next session to more actively engage those who leave.
Session 9: Nature as Teacher

Our ancestors knew hundreds of medicinal uses of local plants and herbs. They knew the seasons, when to plant, when to harvest, how to forecast the weather by the behavior of plants and animals, and a host of other things based on their observations of nature. The lessons our ancestors learned haven’t gone away. They’re still there, waiting in the forest like an open book. All we have to do is to learn how to read it.

Facilitator Notes for Session 9: Nature as Teacher

PREPARATION
Read the Session 9 Course Materials, review the exercises listed in the chapter and try them at least once yourself prior to facilitating the group.
Practice presenting the materials in this session alone before facilitating the session so you will have a good idea of how long it will take you, given your own speaking and presentation style, to go over critical materials. Adjust by adding or leaving out materials as needed, but do not cut key concepts or Priority 1 exercises and activities if at all possible.

NOTE ABOUT PREPARATION FOR SESSION 9
The My Own Animal Legend exercise in Session 9 is quite lengthy. In interest of time, you may wish to assign it as homework prior to Session 9 so the bulk of the Session 9 class time may be used for the reflections and the discussion regarding the exercise. If you choose to do this, make sure your class understands ahead of time that they should bring the completed exercise with them to the beginning of Session 9.
Have them do the My Own Animal Legend portion for homework, but save the Lessons from My Own Animal Legend portion for this week’s session.

KEY CONCEPTS
(Key concepts are those concepts that are foundational principles of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy, and must be covered in the session): Animal totems; archetypes; animal as teacher, and nature as teacher

SECONDARY CONCEPTS
(Secondary concepts are those concepts that are not foundational, but that are important if the facilitator can work them into the session – otherwise students will read about them on their own in the reading assignments): True Self; archetypal energy; expectations, and assumptions

INTRODUCTION
As an icebreaker exercise, ask participants to discuss their experiences with nature as teacher. Start this activity by asking for volunteers to tell a story in which they learned something from nature, or they had the opportunity to use nature as a teaching tool. This discussion lays the groundwork for the activities in this session.
If homework was assigned (e.g. exercises from the workbook that there wasn’t time for at the previous session), ask if there were any questions about the materials and have students share their experiences in completing the activities. Try not to spend more than ten minutes or so on this portion of the session.
NOTE: The My Own Animal Legend exercise and subsequent reflections will require most of the session. This activity is the central portion of this session because in the My Own Animal Legend exercise you are looking for ways in which students may draw upon the archetypal energies of various animals, places,
and situations to describe their own journeys. The story created in this exercise is a projection of their own consciousness onto the scenario offered by the exercise. Don’t try to put too much interpretation on their stories; instead, let them interpret them for themselves using the guidelines in the exercise. Since this is such a lengthy exercise, you will probably not have time to complete it during the session. I’ve gotten around this in two ways: The first is to complete it at home and discuss it at the beginning of Session 10, but my preferred method is to assign it as homework at the end of Session 8 and prior to the beginning of Session 9. That way the story itself will have already been created, and you can dedicate the class time to the reflections and discussion.
SESSION 9 OUTLINE

9.0 Animal as Teacher
This section introduces the idea that our culture already uses animals as teaching tools and symbols. From fairy tales involving animals to sports teams with animal mascots to our pet names for each other, animals as teaching tools are ingrained in our existence.

If you assigned the first part of the My Own Animal Legend exercise as homework, your students will already know that we will be using our ideas and archetypes about animals in today’s exercise. If you’re doing the activity in the session instead, you may wish to discuss how the exercise draws on our archetypes and ideas about animals and uses them to depict our own inner journeys.

EXERCISE: My Own Animal Legend PRIORITY 1
If you are doing this activity in class, don’t use more than half the time available on the exercise. If you assigned it as homework, use the first part of the time available to discuss what the experience of completing the assignment was like.

My Own Animal Legend is based on the template mythologist Joseph Campbell created in his work, Hero with a Thousand Faces. The template for this journey is itself an archetype used in crafting many legends throughout the world. It is a story about transformation. Ask volunteers to describe any transformations they may have achieved during this exercise, or during the progress of this series of workshops.

EXERCISE: Lessons from My Own Animal Legend PRIORITY 1
Have students do Lessons from My Own Animal Legend during the group time. When the exercise is completed, facilitate a discussion about student responses to the questions. Ask them to discuss what the experience was like for them, and how accurate they felt the interpretations in the Lessons from My Own Animal Legend questions were. Did they learn anything about themselves by completing the exercise?

9.1 Nature as Teacher
When I have done this session in workshops in the past, we have occasionally acted out the stories people have written. This has been especially enjoyable when people were able to wear the masks they created in the Faces and Masks exercise during the performance. If anyone is interested in doing this, you might ask them to do a brief presentation of their own animal legend while directing the performance. You should only do this if time permits.

The true nature of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy is the ability to see the world as it really is, free of expectations or assumptions. When we are able to do this we are able to create our own world by changing our beliefs and assumptions. One way to do this is to allow nature to teach us.

Conclude today’s session by asking volunteers to share what they have learned from today's experiences and how they have learned from nature.

HOMEWORK
Have students read the Session 10 materials prior to the next session; have them complete any exercises from Session 9 that weren’t covered in the session itself; ask them to bring any questions about the materials or the exercises to the next session.

DISCUSSION PERIOD
At the one-hour mark, invite group participants to stay for the discussion period. Point out that the thirty-minute post-session discussion period is optional. Note who stays for the discussion, and who leaves. Work at the next session to more actively engage those who leave.
Session 10: Nature as Nurture

A large and growing body of research has demonstrated that nature has incredible healing powers. People who go into the woods become calmer, more relaxed, less stressful, and healthier. Embracing the nurturing power of nature, we are healed.

Facilitator Notes for Session 10: Nature as Nurture

PREPARATION
Read the Session 10 Course Materials, review the exercises listed in the chapter and try them at least once yourself prior to facilitating the group. Practice presenting the materials in this session alone before facilitating the session so you will have a good idea of how long it will take you, given your own speaking and presentation style, to go over critical materials. Adjust by adding or leaving out materials as needed, but do not cut key concepts or Priority 1 exercises and activities if at all possible.

KEY CONCEPTS
(Key concepts are those concepts that are foundational principles of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy, and must be covered in the session): Doing Mode; Being Mode; non-verbal communication; animal totems; animal as nurture; your animal True Self; an attitude of gratitude; the cycle of nurture, nature as nurture

SECONDARY CONCEPTS
(Secondary concepts are those concepts that are not foundational, but that are important if the facilitator can work them into the session – otherwise students will read about them on their own in the reading assignments): Connecting with animals; the archetypal energy of animals; “the map is not the territory;” permission from nature; the Four Mantras, and the mind trap

INTRODUCTION
As an icebreaker exercise, ask participants to discuss their experiences with nature as nurture. Start this activity by asking for volunteers to tell a story in which they received nurturing from nature, or they had the opportunity to nurture nature themselves. This discussion lays the groundwork for the activities in this session.

If homework was assigned (e.g. exercises from the workbook that there wasn’t time for at the previous session), ask if there were any questions about the materials and have students share their experiences in completing the activities. Try not to spend more than ten minutes or so on this portion of the session.

NOTE: Since one of the activities in this session involves establishing the cycle of nurture by practicing an attitude of gratitude, it might be a good idea to start this session with some sort of thanksgiving offering, and by seeking permission from nature to engage in today’s activities. For more information on how to do this, see Sections 10.5 and 10.7.
SESSION 10 OUTLINE

10.0 Nature and Nurturing Relationships
During this part of the session I often do a little experiment in creative visualization. I have students take their resting heartbeat, then I guide them through a visualization in which they are stuck in traffic in a hot car with a leaking radiator. In this visualization they have only a few minutes to get to an important appointment like a job interview or a doctor visit. After a few minutes of this visualization I have them take their pulse again, and write down the total next to their resting heartbeat total. I then do a creative visualization in which they are in a peaceful nature scene with no place to be and nothing to do but to enjoy the experience. I then have them take their pulses again. Most of the time when I do this exercise, most of the class has a lower heart rate after the second visualization. The point is, of course, that nature relaxes and nurtures.

10.1 Non-Verbal Communication
Illustrate the idea of non-verbal communication by asking students to describe ways in which their pets have made their needs known to them without the use of language. Expand the idea to include humans by asking if students have ever known what someone’s intention or thoughts were by simply reading their body language without having to hear them speak. If you are conducting this session in an outdoor setting, continue the idea of non-verbal communication, if time permits, by having students spread out and find an animal, insect, or even a plant to communicate with. Have them non-verbally send a message to a creature of their choosing and wait for a reply. They should then report their results to the group. Note that if they are not successful in communicating non-verbally, that’s okay too. Nature has its own agenda and it doesn’t always match up with our own. One of the lessons of mindfulness-based ecotherapy is to allow nature to be what it is, regardless of our own intentions.

10.2 Your Animal Totem
Define “animal totem” for your students. For the purposes of this course, an animal totem is “The archetypal energy of an animal that can be used to facilitate personal change.” Note that these animal totems do not have to be real animals. I’ve had students in my classes who have had dragons, griffins, and unicorns as their totem animals. What’s important is the archetypal energy of the animal totem, and not whether or not the animal really exists. Have students name their totem animals if they know what they are. If they don’t, just have them pick an animal. This discussion is a prelude to the exercise that follows, so don’t go too far in-depth when discussing totem animals. Just have them name theirs and hold off on going further until the My Totem Animal exercise has been completed.

EXERCISE: My Animal Totem PRIORITY 1
Have students answer the questions in the My Totem Animal exercise. This shouldn’t take more than five or ten minutes. When they are done, ask volunteers to share some of their replies to the questions and facilitate a discussion on the meaning of totem animals.

10.3 Animal as Nurture
Explain how “the map is not the territory.” The basic idea inherent in this concept is that we don’t perceive reality. Instead, we perceive our own concept, or narrative, of reality. This narrative is subject to our own assumptions, perceptions, and interpretations of a greater reality. If our maps don’t match the territory, it is the map that must change, and not the territory.
Link this concept, through group discussion, to the ideas in My Own Animal Legend from the previous session. Archetypal energies are largely unconscious. One of the goals of the My Own Animal Legend exercise is to bring these unconscious energies to the surface; to make the territory more clear so that we may alter our own maps accordingly.

When the energy inherent in animal archetypes helps us to do so, it is a very nurturing experience because it reflects our innermost needs and allows the archetypal energies of nature to help fulfill these needs in new and sometimes unexpected ways.

When facilitating a group discussion on this section of the session, be sure to include these questions:

What qualities does your totem animal possess that are nurturing? What qualities does it possess that aren’t nurturing? How can you use these qualities, both nurturing and non-nurturing, in your journey to your True Self?

### 10.4 Your Animal True Self

At this portion of the session, discuss the idea that your animal totem is different from your animal True Self. Your totem animal assists you with what you may need on your journey, but your animal True Self is how you see yourself now, at this time, on the path. Your animal True Self may or may not have all the archetypal energy you need to guide you on your way. In those areas where your animal True Self is lacking, you may call upon the archetypal energies of your anima totem to assist you.

The way for your students to find their animal True Selves is in their answer to the question on the My Own Animal Legend exercise, “If you were an animal, what animal would you be?”

Note that for some their animal True Selves and their animal totems will be the same animal. If this happens during your discussion, check first to make sure that they understand the difference between the two. If you’re satisfied that they do, then having the same animal totem and animal True Self could just mean that they’re already fairly well grounded and centered along their own journey.

### 10.5 An Attitude of Gratitude

Reality is constructive. This means that what we perceive about the world creates our reality for us. We make assumptions about how the world works, and those assumptions create our perceptions. Our perceptions are the filter we use to view the world. For example, if we have an assumption that “people are out to get me,” we automatically set our perception filters to look for evidence that supports that assumption. Once our perception filters are set in this manner, even people who aren’t out to get us look like they are out to get us. That’s because if they’re being nice to us we automatically assume that since “people are out to get me,” they’re just being nice because they want something from us.

This eventually creates a reality around us based on our initial assumption. Here’s how that works: If the initial assumption is that “people are out to get me,” and then I treat everyone I meet as if they are out to get me, then eventually the people who aren’t out to get me are going to get tired of being treated as if they are out to get me, and they’re going to give up and go away. Eventually the only people left in my life will be the people who are out to get me.

So my assumptions and perceptions have created, or constructed, a reality based on my initial assumption.

The purpose of the “attitude of gratitude” section and the exercise that follows is to reboot our perception filters. By willing our assumptions to conform to this attitude of gratitude, we re-set our perception filters to look for evidence of things to be grateful for. When we find things to be grateful for, nature, or the universe, responds by creating a reality in which there are even more things to be grateful for. In short, practicing an attitude of gratitude opens the doors for nature to be able to nurture us.

Review the concept of the “attitude of gratitude” with your students.
EXERCISE: An Attitude of Gratitude PRIORITY 1
For the purposes of this exercise the “sacred space” will have to be somewhere on the site you are using to conduct your workshops unless you elect to have your students do this at home. If you’re going to have them do this at home, it’s better to do it prior to today’s session, as the materials that follow build on this exercise and if they haven’t done it they’ll be missing out on some components of the exercises that follow. This is especially true of the Cycle of Nurture exercise that follows.
The basic premise of this exercise is that students make an “offering” of some sort to nature, and wait to see if nature has granted them permission to use this sacred space. You may wish to have materials that can be used for this “offering.” I often supply birdseed or bits of bread for the local birds. On occasion I have also had a bottle of wine or ale that may be poured out on the ground as a libation. Smokers (or even non-smokers) may wish to offer a pinch of tobacco, or gardeners may wish to offer herbs from their gardens. It’s up to you what materials to use for your offerings. It is better to offer something that has meaning for the individual making the offering.
Have students spread out on your site, make their offering, and wait for some sign of permission being granted, then return and answer the questions on the worksheet.
Usually I have at least one or two students who didn’t experience anything that would look or feel like nature giving permission for the day’s activities. If that’s the case, I explore their answers on the worksheet in a little more depth, as changes within themselves could also be considered to be nature granting permission. The reason for this is simple: They are a part of nature as well.
Link the offering and the granting of permission to the idea of nurturing. Have students discuss whether or not they felt nurtured, or if they felt they were nurturing, during this exercise. Ask them to relate gratitude to nurturing before going on to the Cycle of Nurture exercise.

10.7 Establishing the Cycle of Nurture
This section is preparation for the Cycle of Nurture exercise that follows. When conducting this workshop, I have students pair off with each other, taking turns to say both of these sentences to each other:
1. “I understand that you are suffering. I am here for you. I hear you. I care. Please tell me how I may help.”
2. “I am suffering. I see that you are here for me. I hear you. I care. Please help me.”
Now ask your students to pair off and have one speak the first sentence to the other. Ask the other how it felt to hear that. Then have the other student speak the sentence to the first partner, and do the same. Repeat this procedure for the second sentence.
Use this to segue into the Cycle of Nurture exercise that follows.

EXERCISE: The Cycle of Nurture PRIORITY 1
For this exercise, have your students return to the place where they made their offering. Have the students complete the Cycle of Nurture exercise on their own, then have participants return to the meeting place. Ask for volunteers to share their responses to the questions on this exercise. Focus the discussion on the idea of nature as nurture, and whether students felt nurtured and/or nurturing during this exercise. If any students received an answer to the question, “How may I help?” have them share the answers they received if they are willing to do so. Again, keep the focus and the responses on how to receive nurturing from nature by offering nurturing in return.

10.8 Reflections on Nature as Nurture
The quote at the beginning of this section is from the movie Never Cry Wolf, about a man who goes off to learn about wolves in Alaska but winds up learning more about himself. I use this quote in my groups to process the idea of the mind trap.
To be caught in the mind trap is to be trapped by the mind into dwelling on memories of the past, or projections of memory onto the future. When we focus on thinking we are trapped inside our own heads. Such a state is eternally self-focused, even if we are ruminating over past or future events involving others, because it is we who are doing the ruminating. If we are nurturing others or nurturing nature we are moving out of the mind trap because we are focusing on the needs of others instead of our own. The more we nurture, the more we are nurtured in return because we have established a two-way nurturing cycle.

Use this part of today’s session to discuss ways in which people have learned to nurture nature, and to be nurtured by nature. Ask open-ended questions then just let the group discuss it for themselves. This usually extends to the question-and-answer period as well, as this session tends to get quite emotional at times. We all need nurture and healing, and so does the planet. This session tends to bring those needs to the surface, so be compassionate and supportive as your students discuss these topics.

**HOMEWORK**

Have students read the Session 11 materials prior to the next session; have them complete any exercises from Session 10 that weren’t covered in the session itself; ask them to bring any questions about the materials or the exercises to the next session.

**DISCUSSION PERIOD**

At the one-hour mark, invite group participants to stay for the discussion period. Point out that the thirty-minute post-session discussion period is optional. Note who stays for the discussion, and who leaves. Work at the next session to more actively engage those who leave.
Session 11: Nature as Healer

Research continues to demonstrate the healing power of nature. People in hospital rooms that have windows overlooking a garden recover faster than those who do not. People who swim with dolphins recover from depression more quickly than people who take antidepressants. Children with ADHD who play outdoors regularly display fewer symptoms than those who do not. These are just a few examples of the many beneficial effects of the healing power of nature. Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy (MBE) helps you to connect to this healing power.

Facilitator Notes for Session 11: Nature as Healer

PREPARATION
Read the Session 11 Course Materials, review the exercises listed in the chapter and try them at least once yourself prior to facilitating the group.
Practice presenting the materials in this session alone before facilitating the session so you will have a good idea of how long it will take you, given your own speaking and presentation style, to go over critical materials. Adjust by adding or leaving out materials as needed, but do not cut key concepts or Priority 1 exercises and activities if at all possible.
Note that for the Animal-Assisted Healing exercise, an animal of some sort is needed. If you have the availability, bring an animal of some sort with you for this exercise in today’s session. It might be a friendly dog or cat, a horse, or some other sort of docile and friendly animal who is not afraid of strangers. Be conscious of liability issues should the animal somehow injure one of your students. You might also ask if any students have allergies before introducing the animal to the group.
As an alternative to bringing your own animal you might have students bring their pets. Just be aware that animals who are strangers to each other might have difficulties getting along, so plan accordingly.
The best results I’ve ever had in this session is with horses who were accustomed to participating in animal-assisted therapy. Use your own discretion as to what may or may not be possible given your own location and resources.
If it’s simply not possible to have animals present for this session (for example if you have to meet indoors for some reason) then you may have your participants do this portion of the session at home. If this is your plan, make sure they have done this prior to today’s session. Don’t assign it as homework for this session, as later sections in this session build on the exercise.

KEY CONCEPTS
(Key concepts are those concepts that are foundational principles of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy, and must be covered in the session): Animal-Assisted Therapy; animal-assisted healing; nature as healer; chaos; order; Shadow; Persona, and individuation

SECONDARY CONCEPTS
(Secondary concepts are those concepts that are not foundational, but that are important if the facilitator can work them into the session – otherwise students will read about them on their own in the reading assignments): Seasonal mood changes; animal assistants, and biorhythms

INTRODUCTION
As an icebreaker exercise, ask participants to discuss their experiences with nature as healer. Start this activity by asking for volunteers to tell a story in which they received healing from nature. This discussion lays the groundwork for the activities in this session.
SESSION 11 OUTLINE

11.0 Animal as Healer
This section doesn’t require a lot of discussion other than introducing the concept that animals can help us in the healing process. You might ask students to list ways in which their pets have given them emotional and/or physical healing of some sort.

11.1 Animal Assisted Healing
Discuss some of the research demonstrating the healing power of animal assisted therapy if time permits. If you are running short on time, you can skip this section, as the material is contained elsewhere in the workbook.

EXERCISE: Animal Assisted Healing PRIORITY 1
If animals are present for this activity, you will probably have to let your students take turns doing the exercise with the animals available. The exception here would be if every student was able to bring a pet along. Students should take their pulses just prior to interacting with the animal, and they should take their pulses again just after interacting with the animal. After all participants finish the exercise, ask how many had an increased heart rate, and how many had a decreased heart rate. In most cases, heart rate decreases unless the student was wrestling with the animal, or playing fetch, or some other sort of vigorous physical activity.

11.2 Reflections on Animal Assisted Healing
Start discussion here by asking students to volunteer their experiences with the previous exercise. Next, facilitate a discussion on animal assisted healing by reviewing the bullet points of the studies in this section and asking students to reflect on times they may have experienced any of the things discovered by the studies mentioned.

11.3 Material Possessions and Healing
Facilitate a discussion by asking your students to think of some things that they could not live without. Ask them to imagine themselves stranded on a deserted island. What would be the minimum they would need to survive? The idea behind this exercise is to illustrate just how little we actually need in order to survive. Most material possessions are luxuries, and the more material possessions we bring into our lives, the more potential for stress and anxiety we bring into our lives. This is because we first have to earn the money to buy those possessions, then we have to take care of those possessions once we own them.

EXERCISE: Anxiety from Material Possessions PRIORITY 1
This exercise takes a while because it draws on responses from previous exercises. Have students do it in session today if at all possible so that they will be in the right frame of mind for the exercises that follow. Try not to spend more than fifteen or twenty minutes on this portion so there will be enough time to cover the rest of the materials.

EXERCISE: Material Possessions as Aids to Connection PRIORITY 1
When doing this exercise ask your students to be honest about their answers, and not to deny finding numinous connections from material possessions if they do have such connections in their lives. For example, my guitars and flutes are material possessions, but the music they allow me to create has healed me many times over. They are material possessions that I would prefer not to lose.
Ask your students to share some material possessions that they find spiritual connections with. After they've identified a few, ask them how much stress and anxiety they've experienced purchasing those items and paying for their upkeep and maintenance. If your students are like the majority of mine, then material possessions from which they get a sense of spiritual connection probably don’t cause them much distress. This is probably because if the connection is spiritual, we don’t mind the upkeep.

11.4 Connecting and Healing
In this section, briefly discuss the health benefits of developing spiritual connections. For the purposes of this workshop series, the definition of “spiritual” is “connected to something larger than self.” Even people who have no concept of a higher power or of the divine can reap the healing benefits of connecting. For example, many types of Buddhism don’t require belief in any sort of gods or higher power, yet most Buddhists feel a powerful sense of connection to the earth and all the life that surrounds them.

I personally like the idea of mysticism, and I often introduce the concept here. A mystic is someone who recognizes that if there is such a thing as a God or Gods, then such a thing is, by definition, beyond human understanding. Therefore when we claim to know anything about God(s), we are no longer talking about God(s). At that point we are talking about our own ideas being projected onto the unknowable.

A mystic, on the other hand, would recognize that belief in God(s) is not a necessary or useful concept when developing a spiritual connection to life, the universe, and everything. We can experience the numinous without having to believe in any sort of deity. As author and humorist Douglas Adams said, “Isn’t it enough to see that a garden is beautiful without having to believe that there are fairies living at the bottom of it?”

The more we are able to experience such a sense of spiritual connection, the more we open ourselves to the healing power of nature.

When presenting this idea, try to avoid the temptation of letting the discussion turn into a theological debate on the nature of God(s). The concept of the divine is up to the individual. The bottom line is, “Does this idea help me to connect with nature in spiritual and healing ways?”

11.5 Chaos and Order
Facilitate a discussion on linking chaos with the Shadow side of our personalities and on linking order with the Persona. When you had your students do the Faces and Masks exercise, they created a representation of their True Selves in mask form. The word “persona” literally means “mask.” Individuation is the process by which we come to live more fully in our True Selves by balancing the forces of chaos and order in our own lives. The more we live in True Self, the more we become unique individuals, completing the process of individuation.

What does this have to do with nature?

There are always seasons in nature. All of the seasons are necessary. Without the decay and death of autumn and winter, the new growth of spring and summer could not take place. Likewise, human beings experience seasons of growth and seasons of decay. It is unrealistic to expect never to have a winter in our lives, because that is part of being a human being. Just as both chaos and order are necessary for nature to thrive and prosper, so are the Shadow and the Persona necessary to complete the process of individuation so that we may become our True Selves.

Ask students to discuss what this means to them, and how they might integrate their Shadow sides into their being without trying to suppress or deny the darker aspects of their nature.

11.6 Healing Rhythms
Read over the instructions for filling out the Biorhythm Journal Chart and make sure you understand the purpose of the chart and how to fill it out. Explain the process to your students. The critical concept of the Biorhythm Journal Chart is that for many people, moods and feelings are dependent on the time of day, the seasons, and the weather to some extent. This chart will help to pinpoint these sometimes subtle changes.

**EXERCISE: Biorhythm Journal Chart PRIORITY 2**
To illustrate the use of the chart, you may have your students complete one entry for today just to make sure they understand how to use the chart. They can then complete the rest of the chart over the coming week. For best results they should plot out their biorhythms for at least a year so they may record their moods in all seasons.

**11.7 True Self and Healing**
Ask for volunteers to discuss answers to these questions:

1. “What would need to be healed within myself in order for me to live fully in True Self?”
2. “How can nature and the natural world help me to find this healing?”

Due to the deeply personal nature of these questions, don’t force students to answer if they don’t volunteer. Be aware that this can sometimes be a very emotional segment of the session, and be gentle and patient with participants who answer, offering comfort and nurture where necessary.

**HOMEWORK**
Have students read the Session 12 materials prior to the next session; have them complete any exercises from Session 11 that weren’t covered in the session itself; ask them to bring any questions about the materials or the exercises to the next session. Since the next session will be the last session of the program, you may wish to plan some sort of closing ritual or ceremony. This could include having a pot luck dinner or an awards ceremony, or just a meet-and-greet with light refreshments. If you’re planning to do this and you need your students to participate in the planning, discuss this at the end of the session today.

**DISCUSSION PERIOD**
At the one-hour mark, invite group participants to stay for the discussion period. Point out that the thirty-minute post-session discussion period is optional. Note who stays for the discussion, and who leaves. Work at the next session to more actively engage those who leave.
Session 12: Living in True Self

Do you remember a time when you knew exactly who you were, what you wanted to be, and where your life was going? When you do something that isn't healthy for you, or make a mistake, which part of you is it that recognizes the mistake? What part of you is it that holds the highest dreams and aspirations for your life? Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy (MBE) recognizes that part of you as your True Self. The ultimate goal of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy (MBE) is to realize your True Self, and to live in it.

Facilitator Notes for Session 12: Living in True Self

PREPARATION
Read the Session 12 Course Materials, review the exercises listed in the chapter and try them at least once yourself prior to facilitating the group.
Practice presenting the materials in this session alone before facilitating the session so you will have a good idea of how long it will take you, given your own speaking and presentation style, to go over critical materials. Adjust by adding or leaving out materials as needed, but do not cut key concepts or Priority 1 exercises and activities if at all possible.

KEY CONCEPTS
(Key concepts are those concepts that are foundational principles of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy, and must be covered in the session): Personal Truths; positive affirmations of personal truths; global thinking; external thinking; permanent thinking; radical acceptance; nature and the mindful body, and the power of intention

SECONDARY CONCEPTS
(Secondary concepts are those concepts that are not foundational, but that are important if the facilitator can work them into the session – otherwise students will read about them on their own in the reading assignments): Vision questing; the mirrored self, and Second Order Change

INTRODUCTION
This is the final session of the program. As an icebreaker exercise for this final session, ask participants to discuss what they’ve learned about their True Selves and how the course has helped them to live more fully in True Self. If you wish you may make this introductory discussion period longer than usual, as this is a sort of “wrapping things up” discussion in the Adjourning phase of group dynamics. Try not to spend more than ten minutes or so on this portion of the session.
SESSION 12 OUTLINE

12.0 Per Ardua ad Astra
Start the discussion here by asking volunteers to talk about what their own idea of True Self means, and what barriers might be keeping them from living in True Self. Can those barriers be removed by looking “beyond the mask?” In other words, maybe it’s not possible to be an astronaut, but think about what was fascinating to you about being an astronaut in the first place. Now ask yourself, “Is it possible to find those things in some other career path?”
Ultimately True Self is all about finding meaning. Discuss this with your students as they discover the meaning behind their own concepts of True Self.

12.1 Mindful Awareness of the True Self
Ask for volunteers to discuss whether or not they love themselves. If any say they do not, ask them to discuss what it would take for them to be able to do so. Occasionally during this part of the session I’ll have someone who says that they were taught that self-love is narcissistic. I generally point out to these people that narcissism is a personality disorder, but self-love is a sign of a healthy soul. Self-love doesn’t mean self-involvement or selfishness. Self-love means knowing yourself well enough that you are willing to share with others in positive and healthy ways. This is the opposite of narcissism.

12.2 Personal Truths
Introduce this discussion as a prologue to the My Personal Truths exercise. Have volunteers discuss some of their own personal truths.

EXERCISE: My Personal Truths PRIORITY 1
Have students complete this exercise in the group if possible. The idea behind this exercise is for your students to figure out what values they have that would help them to live in their True Selves. Think of these questions as looking for “CORE” values:
Connected: What values do I have that help me to feel connected to others? To nature? To myself?
Open: What values do I have that help me to be open and trusting with others? With nature? With myself?
Reflective: What values do I have that help me to be truthful and responsive (rather than reactive) to others? To nature? To myself?
Empathetic: What values do I have that help me to care about others? Nature? Myself?

12.3 Turning Negatives into Positives
Before doing the exercise that follows, discuss the definition of global, external, and permanent statements:
Global statements are statements that are true in all situations at all times. An example of a global thinking statement would be, “I am an unlovable person.”
External statements are statements in which your personal truth is derived from circumstances which are beyond your control; i.e., things external to you. An example of an external statement would be, “People treat me with disrespect.”
Permanent statements are statements that assume that this is the way things have always been, and this is the way they will always be. An example of a permanent statement would be, “I can’t help it, that’s just the way I am.”
After defining these terms for your students, have them go back over their Personal Truths exercise, looking for examples of global, external and personal statements. These will be re-framed in the following exercise.
EXERCISE: Positive Affirmations of My Personal Truths PRIORITY 1
In the first section of this exercise, students should re-frame any statements they had on the My Personal Truths exercise that were global, external, or permanent. If they didn’t have any, then they don’t have to do any re-frames. In that case, consider it a good thing that your students have come a long way during this course!
In the third section, “recurring themes” could be the number of global, external, or permanent statements present in the previous exercise, or any other thematic content. Finding these themes helps to live more fully in True Self by identifying the meaning to each individual’s life. The themes identified in the personal truths exercise indicate how a person feels about himself/herself.
The final section of the exercise is only necessary if students have listed any negative personal truths. In such a case, have them re-frame the statements to a more positive theme.

12.4 Radical Acceptance of the True Self
The topic that most often comes up in this section is described by the following sentence: “Healthy relationships do not require that we sacrifice who we really are for the sake of another.”
Ask your students if they have ever had to sacrifice their True Selves because of trying to live up to the expectations of other people. Radical acceptance of True Self means moving beyond what we think others want us to do or be so that we may become what we think we should be. While this can be an empowering experience, it can also be scary because such thinking requires us to take responsibility for our own lives instead of relying on others for our sense of self.

EXERCISE: What I See when I Look in the Mirror PRIORITY 2
When doing this exercise outdoors, I usually carry a hand-held mirror. Another interesting variation on this exercise can be done if you have access to a still pool of water on the site you’re using for your workshops. In such a case, you can have your students look at their reflections in the water instead of using a mirror.
When introducing this activity, don’t say too much about what sort of responses students are expected to write. Just tell them to describe what they see. The rest will be covered in the next section.

12.5 The Mirrored Self
After students have completed the What I See when I Look in the Mirror exercise, have them go back over their lists and note how many statements had to do with physical appearance, and how many had to do with their own inner experiences of themselves. Have students re-frame any negative statements about themselves into positive statements.
Have students discuss how physical appearance and inner experience are similar, how they are different, and how they are related to each other. The goal here is to move beyond physical appearance to inner experience by shifting the focus from external to internal.

12.6 Nature and the Mindful Body
For this section I share a story from my childhood: When my grandfather learned to shave, he used a straight razor. When it got dull, he simply sharpened it. When my father learned to shave, he had a razor with disposable blades. When the blade got dull, he tossed the blade away and replaced it with a new one. By the time I learned to shave, the entire razor was disposable, and when the blade got dull, I tossed the whole thing.
The average American produces 5 pounds of trash per day. This is nearly double what the average American produced in the 1960s, and the amount keeps going up in spite of recycling. We have a throwaway mentality. The moment something stops being useful we toss it in the trash without trying to
fix it. What if this extends to a psychological level? Does this throwaway mentality extend to our relationships with others? Do we “give up” and kick people to the curb the moment they cease being useful to us? How many ways could this throwaway mentality impact how we see others and ourselves? Facilitate a discussion on this topic with your students.

12.7 Wise Mind and Communication
Introduce this topic by noting that the secret to successful communication involves asking two questions before having any conversation:
1. What am I trying to accomplish by having this conversation?
2. Is what I’m about to say going to accomplish that?
I do a lot of marriage counseling. When couples come to me for such counseling, their answer to the first question is usually something like, “We want to have a happy marriage.” But if they’re quarreling all the time, is what they’re saying helping them to accomplish their goal of having a happy marriage? If such a couple admits that they’re fighting all the time, I usually ask them, “Is it more important to be right, or is it more important to get along with each other?”
We can’t change others. We can only change ourselves. We can ask others to change, but if they refuse, then the only thing we can do at that point is to accept their decision, or accept that this isn’t a relationship that I need to be in. When we live in True Self, we live in Wise Mind. In Wise Mind we are free and confident enough to allow others to be themselves.
If time permits, facilitate a discussion by having your students answer the two questions above. Use their answers to discuss the concepts covered in this section.

12.8 True Self and the Power of Intention
This section starts off by asking, “How many of your barriers to connection have to do with your own assumptions about the way things work in your life?”
If our happiness depends on the circumstances in which we find ourselves, then we can have our happiness taken away at any time, because we can’t always change the circumstances that life throws at us. If, however, our happiness depends on what we believe about those circumstances, then we can always be happy because we are always in control of what we believe. For this section, facilitate a discussion on the following questions:
1. What is your intention?
2. How will your intention help you to live more fully as your True Self?
3. How will your intention help you to live more fully as your True Self?
4. What assumptions have you been making in life that might be stopping you from being able to establish an intention and to live more fully as your True Self?

EXERCISE: What I Would Tell My Fairy Godmother PRIORITY 1
This exercise is a variation of the Miracle Question of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy. The purpose of this exercise is to establish intention. In Solution-Focused Brief Therapy the Miracle Question usually takes the form of, “If you woke up tomorrow and a miracle had happened, and suddenly everything in your life was perfect, what would be different?”
The answers your students give to the questions on this exercise help them to live more fully in True Self by establishing exactly what it is they’re trying to accomplish; i.e., by creating a solution or an intention.

12.9 Becoming the Fairy Godmother
After your students have competed the What I Would Tell My Fairy Godmother exercise, facilitate a discussion on the following questions:
Are there any answers on this exercise that are beyond your own ability to change? Why or why not?

**12.10 Killing the Goose**
Facilitate a discussion with your students about their answers to the following questions:
1. How much of your own personal happiness comes from things?
2. How much of your own personal happiness comes from your relationship with people?
3. How much of your own personal happiness comes from your relationship with nature?
4. How much of your own personal happiness comes from your relationship with yourself?

**12.11 What’s Possible**
Ernest Callenbach’s *Ecotopia* is a novel about a sustainable, environmentally sound society. What would living in such a society do for our state of wellbeing on both a physical and a mental level? This section is a sort of “wrapping things up” in which I usually ask students to discuss what their vision of Ecotopia would be, and what sort of paradigm shift would be necessary in their own thinking and in the thinking of society in general order to make their vision of Ecotopia happen. Did any of the skills they learned during this course help? Would any of these skills facilitate such a paradigm shift?

**12.12 Walking the Path**
This is a “final thoughts” discussion. I usually ask students to describe how they might implement the skills learned from this program in their daily lives.

**DISCUSSION PERIOD**
At the one-hour mark, invite group participants to stay for the discussion period. Point out that the thirty-minute post-session discussion period is optional. Since this is the last session of the program, you may wish to use this time for final thoughts. You may also distribute an evaluation at this point to help you improve future workshops and to get feedback from your students. I usually use this discussion time for a final meet-and-greet and celebration party with refreshments.
Glossary

**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.
References


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ABOUT THE MINDFULNESS-BASED ECOTHERAPY PROGRAM

The Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Program is an evidence-based 12 week program that utilizes nature’s healing power to facilitate well-being. It is available for use at any mental health organization. If you are a mental health professional interested in presenting the program at your organization, training is available for facilitators at www.mindfulecotherapy.org.

If your organization would like to implement the Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Program, Charlton Hall, MMFT, LMFT also offers facilitated live instruction and consultation on the program, as well as volume discounts on copies of the Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Handbook.

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Charlton (Chuck) Hall, LMFT/S, RPT-S, CHt is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and Supervisor in South Carolina. Chuck's area of research and interest is using Mindfulness and Ecopsychology to facilitate acceptance and change strategies within a family systemic framework, and he has presented research at several conferences and seminars on this and other topics. He facilitates workshops on Mindfulness and Ecospirituality throughout the Southeast. Chuck's approach to therapy involves helping individuals and families to facilitate change through Mindfulness and Ecopsychology techniques in a non-judgmental, patient-centered, positive environment.
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