Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

2025

Curriculum & Teaching Guide

Impressionistically Annotated
and Supplemented by
Jon Kabat-Zinn

The 2025 MBSR Curriculum is designed to be delivered by trained MBSR instructors, or used as a reference for those doing research and needing documentation as to the form, practices and science of the MBSR program. Training to deliver an MBSR course represents hours of practice, study and investigation in ways that cannot be reproduced or reflected in a written document. As such, we ask for your consideration in not reproducing this document or using it in any way without the necessary training.

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— Acknowledgements —

With gratitude and acknowledgement for the patients and participants who are the true teachers in the MBSR classroom; and to all those teachers, collaborators, researchers, and trainers who have taught the 8-week MBSR Curriculum and generously shared their learning and experience with others. From this has come a well-spring of love, integrity, practice, dialogue and community around the globe in response to this force of good in the world.

Photo: Center for Mindfulness, UMass, 2018

A Note About This Teaching Guide

From the very beginning, the intention of MBSR was to provide a safety net to catch people falling through the cracks of the healthcare system (Kabat-Zinn, 2013), and challenging them to do something for themselves that no one else on the planet can do for them, as a vital complement to the care they receive from the health care system. In that sense, it recognizes the enormity of human suffering across the lifespan, as well as our deep potential as human beings to meet that suffering with profound interior resources that are intrinsic to our humanity and human nature. MBSR extends the widest possible invitation to people to engage in cultivating reliable access to these deep interior resources as a complement to their health care treatments and to the support we can derive from family, and/or friends, as well as perhaps from our work and/or specific communities, society, and the world itself. Thus, it invites the widest embrace of all of humanity as an expression of our intrinsic wholeness, and non-separation—and a cultivation of intimacy with the non-dual nature of awareness itself. The potential for learning, healing, growing, and transformation in the MBSR classroom is made possible by inviting each participant—as they are—to simply be who and what they already are, and experiment with embracing that intrinsic wholeness in awareness. The emphasis is on experiencing directly the domain of being, through the cultivation of moment-to-moment awareness. When we let our doing come out of this direct experiencing of being, it is an entirely different doing from when it is driven by reactivity and automaticity rather than embodied and openhearted wakefulness. The invitation, and intention behind the welcome from the MBSR teacher, is to allow this domain of being to be experienced and become an intimate part of each participant's repertoire of ways of being in healthy and wise relationship with inner and outer experience in the face of the "full catastrophe" of the human condition. This is honored in the way each participant is met, included, and welcomed into the community of the class.

Photo: UMass-Nirakara MBSR Fundamentals, Bilbao, Spain, 2017

This teaching guide to the MBSR curriculum for current and aspiring teachers in training has been revised extensively by Jon Kabat-Zinn during multiple iterations, with input from a core group of experienced MBSR teachers (see Contributor List). It is offered in the public domain as a guide for prospective, early-stage, and experienced MBSR teachers. It covers the core curriculum of MBSR, with suggestions for how to understand the curriculum and its many subtleties, make use of it to further the arc of one's own ongoing personal and professional development in terms of MBSR and its foundations, and present it effectively and authentically to appropriate populations of individuals. This document is not associated with any one institution or group of teachers. Many experienced MBSR instructors have contributed to its final form. The original MBSR curriculum was short – 12 pages – outlining only the basics. It was written by Jon Kabat-Zinn in June of 1993, at the Stress Reduction Clinic, University of Massachusetts Medical Center. The curriculum and some guidance in delivering it was further elaborated in a document in 2009, co-authored by Melissa Blacker, Florence Meleo-Meyer, and Saki Santorelli. Several other iterations, including one in 2017, followed. The format and core text for this current revision was developed by Lynn Koerbel and Florence Meleo-Meyer based on earlier versions cited above. While the basic framework has been kept, this version has been extensively revised by Jon Kabat-Zinn as described in the Introduction to MBSR Instructors, and then vetted on multiple occasions by a number of international senior MBSR teachers and trainers, found on the Contributors page.

Contributions

This curriculum is the result of many voices and perspectives, shaped by the collective wisdom of MBSR teachers, trainers, and colleagues worldwide. It is offered as an open-source resource that will continue to grow and evolve through the shared contributions of our community. Below is a list of the current authors and contributors.

Originator
Jon Kabat-Zinn

Authors
Jon Kabat-Zinn
Lynn Koerbel
Eric B. Loucks
Florence Meleo-Myer

Project Manager
Frances B. Saadeh

Designers
Holt Daniels
Lynn Koerbel
Frances B. Saadeh

Curriculum Reviewers: First Version
Jon Aaron
Ana Arrabé
Rebecca S. Crane
Franco Cucchio
Geneviéve Hamelet
Jon Kabat-Zinn
Lynn Koerbel
Eric B. Loucks
Tony Maciag
Florence Meleo-Myer
Ted Meissner
Beth Mulligan
Jeffrey A. Proulx
Bethan Roberts
Bob Stahl
Shufang Sun
Anne Twohig

Subsequent Reviewers: (as of version date)
Roy Te-Chung Chen
Abraham Dejene
Kevin Fong
Helen Ma
Hui Qi Tong
Erin Woo

See also Image Credits

Note: Contributors above are listed in alphabetical order.

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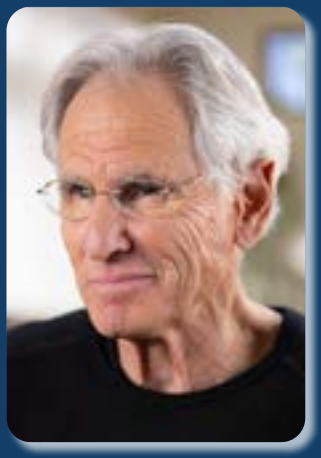

Jon Kabat-Zinn, MBSR Originator

We Welcome Your Feedback

"The wisdom of the group exceeds the wisdom of the individual." — Parker J. Palmer

This curriculum is the result of many voices and perspectives—and we welcome yours. Your insights are important to us as we work to maintain the accuracy, clarity, and authenticity of the MBSR Curriculum & Teaching Guide. Please share your comments, corrections, or suggestions by scanning the QR code or visiting [https://forms.gle/p5NyoeGtRjbnmVwv9].

While not all recommendations can be incorporated, every submission will be read and considered with care. Thank you for contributing to the continued integrity and evolution of this work.

Have Feedback?

We'd love to hear from you. Scan the QR code to submit your comments, questions, and ideas.

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Introduction for MBSR Instructors

As the writing team developed this MBSR curriculum version, we received encouragement and support from Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program (MBSR), to return to the original writing about the program, found in his first "Curriculum for MBSR," June 1993, and in his book on the MBSR program, *Full Catastrophe Living* (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 2013). With his input, we proposed the curriculum and teaching guide that follows, a format aimed at being in close alignment with the original structure, intentions, topics, themes and nuance of the program, but providing far more detail than previous iterations, as professional interest in becoming an authentic MBSR instructor grew, and the training suddenly afforded a viable career pathway and opportunity for right livelihood, one of MBSR's original aims. In addition, as editors, we took this opportunity to more explicitly address the domains of trauma, cross-cultural intersections and universality, inclusion and diversity as they might be raised and explored in contemporary offerings of the 8-week program. Appropriate resources are included as appendices.

Jon then took this material and reworked it as best he could on multiple occasions, with the aim of keeping it as true as possible to his view, understanding, and intuition regarding the essential interplay between the instrumental and the non-instrumental dimensions of the MBSR curriculum, which he sees as critical for MBSR to transmit to those who choose to take the program and those who choose to teach it, the core non-dual aspect of mindfulness as both a formal meditation practice and a way of being.

The importance of deep training in both the intent and the substance of the MBSR curriculum cannot be overstated. While this document is offered as a critical component to ensuring a high degree of program fidelity and consistency among MBSR teachers throughout the world, **there is no question that the teacher's own meditation practice and its embodied expression in the classroom is the primary vehicle for the conveyance/transmission of MBSR.** The teacher's moment by moment awareness of what may be arising in the class, as well as their capacity to meet it with some degree of recognition, acceptance, and empathy is much more important than following any specific protocol, whether on paper or in one's own mind. The format of the program itself invites a non-linear opening to multiple intelligences and clarity on the part of both instructor and participants. Balancing these two: form and essence, becomes *the signature practice of teaching MBSR.* This naturally includes an inevitable and ongoing exploration of the arc of one's own meditation practice and its relationship to one's own life as a human being and as a meditation teacher, as well as how that orientation might contribute to engaging with and teaching others in the service of enhancing and optimizing their own potential for healing and transformation.

To be of maximal use to beginning MBSR instructors, this document is structured as follows: (1) an overview that includes intentions and themes for each of the eight classes and the all-day session; and (2) recommendations for pacing in terms of both timing and duration of the various meditation practices and class activities. These recommendations closely follow the original Kabat-Zinn MBSR curriculum outline. Of course, a good portion of each class is devoted to the formal meditation practices that comprise MBSR and to conversations about the participants' experiences with those practices. Within the descriptions of each class, specific activities (for example: the raisin meditation) are given explicit timing suggestions. These are meant to provide additional support and context for new teachers. That said, ultimately the unfolding of each 2.5 hour class needs to arise out of a flow between what is suggested here and the instructor's own instincts based on the immediate conditions in the classroom and grounded in their own meditation practice and understanding of the curriculum beyond any formal written description. Without this kind of synergy, the real curriculum cannot be brought to life, or, if it arises spontaneously anyway, may be missed or colored by a teacher's desire to conform to a fixed idea of what "should" or "should not" be happening in the class at any given moment.

In fact, none of the descriptions of class sequences offered here is meant to be absolute. It is critical that the teacher be tuned to the group as a whole, to the community or communities to which they belong, to its array of individuals, and to their particular needs and contingencies. Activities and content can be shifted around within a class, and even, when necessary, moved from one

Photo: Kabat-Zinn teaching MBSR in the hospital at UMass Medical Center, 1992.

class to another. The most important thing is for all class elements to support the central intention of that class, and for there to be a major element of formal practice in each class—and conversation/dialogue/Q&A afterwards to ensure that everybody understands what we are engaging in. As there are many ways to do this, some flexibility is important to meet whatever might arise in the moment. If a teacher keeps to the timing structure offered here, cookbook-like, it almost guarantees missing opportunities to further the *actual* curriculum, namely the lived experience of the class and group as they engage with their momentary experience through the practice itself. The offerings and formats outlined here are meant to support new and relatively inexperienced teachers in understanding, embodying, and refining their own core motivation for teaching MBSR, and finding ways of being in tune with the explicit and implicit dimensions of the curriculum.

This includes dimensions of culture, language, trauma–in all the ways that show up from individual to communal–and spanning both the universality and diversity of human groups. To that end, we encourage teachers to make use of the salient article by Crane et al, *Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Our Time: A Curriculum that is up to the Task*, (2023)[1], which gathered a diverse group of MBSR teachers to hone and refine each week's theme and activities to promote inclusivity along with cultural, and racial sensitivity. This article acts as a companion to this Curriculum and Teaching Guide, adding perspectives that invite us to explore the Curriculum's form and essence, flexible to the time and needs of any moment or place, yet clearly manifesting that which can be understood as universally human.

As Kabat-Zinn explicitly wrote in the 1993 Curriculum Outline:

> *A Word About Teaching: The delivery of mindfulness-based stress reduction in any location is virtually impossible without a skilled teacher who is grounded in the practice of mindfulness him or herself. The curriculum which follows is only a general guide and indicates the overall content we try to keep in mind in approaching each of the eight classes which make up the course in our hospital setting. In order for a class or for the program as a whole to have any meaning or vitality, the person who is delivering it must make every effort to embody the practice in his or her own life and teach out of personal experience and his or her own wisdom, not just in a cookbook fashion out of theory and out of the thinking mind. Otherwise, the teaching is at risk of becoming a mechanical didactic exercise at best and the true virtues of the mindfulness approach will be lost.* ***And let's not forget the core principle of never asking anything of participants in terms of formal or informal practice that we are not asking of ourselves to a greater degree on that very day, and as best we can, moment to moment and day by day.***

About In-Person and Online Teaching

This Curriculum Guide primarily addresses in-person teaching. However, teaching MBSR online has its own virtues as well as a somewhat different set of challenges from in-person classes. It requires a range of additional methods, approaches, and skills to optimize each participantws experience.

[1] Crane, R. S., Callen-Davies, R., Francis, A., Francis, D., Gibbs, P., Mulligan, B., O'Neill, B., Pierce Williams, N. K., Waupoose, M., & Vallejo, Z. (2023). Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Our Time: A Curriculum that is up to the Task. Global advances in integrative medicine and health, 12, 27536130231162604. https://doi.org/10.1177/27536130231162604

At the same time, online MBSR is entirely compatible with the aims and challenges of teaching MBSR in-person, as was proven during the Covid-19 pandemic (2020-2022), when all in-person classes were moved to online — although it is inevitably a different experience for teachers and participants. While at the time of this publication (2025), there is no definitive research comparing the two formats, the embodied, relational expression of the practices, themes, and pedagogy are invariant and primary. Several international training centers offer specific training in teaching MBSR online. These could be helpful in getting started.

The Invitational Signature of MBSR

Welcoming, Kindness, and Compassion

There is an intrinsic spirit of welcoming embedded in the whole approach of MBSR. It begins with the initial contact a potential participant makes with the program, whether through a website, email, phone call or in-person. In addition, we begin each class by welcoming everyone–including ourselves–to this moment, this entry point into the actual and the possible, what is always, with every inbreath, a new beginning. The gentle welcome with which we begin each class is not merely a way to begin. It is meant to convey an ongoing sense of being right there in the process and practices of MBSR together with the participants. Just as the quality of the soil affects the seed that is planted in it and nurtures how it will grow, so in this case, the soil of the MBSR curriculum is mindfulness itself, the "M" in MBSR. And it is "a very big M" (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, pg 281).

It might be helpful to read and study how Jon described this "very big M" in relationship to its origins in Buddhism and universal dharma. For MBSR to be MBSR, it has to be grounded in an understanding of non-duality and non-striving on the part of the instructor — recognizing and honoring the true nature, essential wholeness, and beauty of every single person/ patient/ participant who enters the room and their potential for waking up and living in a way that recognizes and honors their own wholeness and essential worthiness and beauty.

Class 1
A. AOB, Intro to MBSR
B. Body Scan

Class 2
A. Body Scan
B. Perception

Class 3
A. AOB, Whole Body, Sound
group dialogue: pleasant
B. lying yoga, group dialogue: pleasant

Class 4
A. AOB, whole body, pain, unpleasant
group d.: unpleasant
B. Automatic Stress reaction

Class 5
A. 5point choiceless awareness
B. Mindfulness-mediated stress response

Class 6
A. choiceless awareness
B. communication

class 7 brief silent sit; making the practice your own

class 8
A: Brief Body Scan, sit
B: Course review, closure

Photo: Center for Mindfulness, UMass, Teacher Training Winter 2017

ORIENTATION

CONTEXT & INTENTIONS

Photo: © forcdan / Adobe Stock

The MBSR Orientation session is, at its heart, an *encounter* with each potential participant that ideally already encompasses—simply but clearly—the essence of what is being cultivated in MBSR: embodied awareness. Each and every encounter with potential participants before the orientation, in queries about the class—whether about one's personal history or current crisis or how to locate the building and where to park—is an opportunity to meet each person as fully as possible. In this way, mindfulness and heartfulness are integrated into every aspect of the participant's experience from the very beginning of their encounter with the MBSR program.

In parallel with the invitation to "put out the welcome mat" for everything that arises in life, and by extension, in one's meditation practice, (Kabat-Zinn, 2012, pg 29) an authentic embodied welcome, or "well come," has been a defining signature of MBSR from the beginning. It can only come out of the authentic, uncontrived presence of the teacher.

The Orientation Session offers a brief but comprehensive overview of what prospective participants might expect when enrolling in the MBSR program. It includes a range of important contextual information to help them in deciding whether to commit to such an intensive eight-week engagement. It is important to emphasize that MBSR requires an immediate and major lifestyle change, i.e., to make the time in one's life to attend the classes (in-person or online), the all-day session, and to commit to approximately one hour per day, six days a week of formal meditation practice. This is a major commitment on the part of each prospective participant, requiring something of an immediate lifestyle change to accommodate. In parallel, the Orientation Session is also an occasion for the instructor to assess, to whatever degree possible, whether a potential participant is appropriate for inclusion in a large and heterogeneous class.

The MBSR Orientation session is of necessity a bidirectional process. The applicant is assessing the instructor and what is being

offered, while the instructor is assessing the prospective participant. Is the program right for this individual at this time? Are they capable of making the commitment and engaging with the process and practices for optimal success? Does the individual understand what enrolling in an MBSR program involves and have reasonable expectations and goals for their participation in the program?

The description that follows is typical of an **in-person group orientation session.** Just as in the MBSR classroom, the same overarching guidelines apply, including explicitly establishing strict confidentiality as a collective and necessary agreement for overall safety. All participants must agree in order to go forward with the orientation, and to join a class. And just to be clear, if one cannot agree to maintaining confidentiality, it is not possible to enroll in the MBSR class and one will be asked to leave.

The topics below provide a flow chart of what needs to be covered:

- Very brief history of MBSR—along with current and local contexts
- Definition of mindfulness and what we mean by it: What it is and what it isn't (see Note under "Suggestions for Teachers," at end of this section for more details)
- Pertinent research findings, including health and wellbeing outcomes
- Practical and logistical information about the course, such as:
    - Dates and times
    - What to expect in class
    - Home assignments and other course requirements, especially the amount of time expected for daily practice
    - Benefits and risks (including criteria that may make the program more challenging or not appropriate at this time)
    - Personal commitment and motivation to optimize potential benefit
- An experience of formal practice that might include a few mindful movement exercises (either sitting or standing or both), and a brief sitting meditation, making sure that even in this brief encounter, ample invitations are made for self-care, and include a range of options for practicing
- Time for questions

The formal Orientation Session typically lasts 75-90 minutes, depending on the number of participants.

Following the formal Orientation Session, the teacher meets briefly (10-15 minutes) with each person to review the paperwork they filled out and to discuss any questions or concerns on either the participant's or the teacher's part. In some cases, this conversation can take place at a later time, either by phone or video-conference. These one-on-one encounters typically give potential participants an opportunity to introduce themselves and share more personal information with the instructor, as well as to ask questions that might not be easily asked in a group. It also gives the instructor an opportunity to answer questions and to briefly explore the participant's level of interest and potential commitment.

If there are indications that the person may not be appropriate for the program or the timing is not optimal, teachers need to have a list of appropriate referral options available. This should include skilled therapists, a family physician who can refer to

specialist mental health professionals and/or offer appropriate medication, suggested reading for a beginning practitioner, and/or other ways in which someone might engage with mindfulness at an appropriate level for their needs and circumstances (See Appendix B for Cautionary Criteria for Participation). Note that depending on context and potential conflicts of interest, teachers may or may not be able to refer to individual therapists. It may be more acceptable to identify specific therapies that may be particularly "mindfulness-related" such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Somatic Experiencing, Trauma Work or other clinical approaches. The teacher needs to understand the scope of their role, the context of their organization, and liability. MBSR teachers may benefit from a two-day Mental Health First Aid course to increase their confidence and knowledge in having conversations about mental health and well-being. This may be available or not depending on the country and context.

Note: In some contexts, teachers may choose to meet with potential participants prior to the large group Orientation. Discussion on this point is best met in training, supervision or mentoring. There is an excellent interview with Jon Kabat-Zinn on an episode of *Witness History* from the BBC, with some history of the Orientation, in Jon's own words. Like all the classes, the sequencing of group orientation and individual meetings need not be fixed or rigid, and can be readily adapted to the needs of the organization, teacher, and participants. As part of one's own preparation for teaching, it can be helpful to remind oneself of the underlying purpose of both the group orientation session and the one-to-one encounters.

General Suggestions and Notes for Teachers

Not specifically for the orientation session

Definition of Mindfulness in MBSR: The operational definition of mindfulness found below is cited in Kabat-Zinn's 2018 book, *Meditation is Not What You Think* (page xxxiv). It highlights the dimensions of meditative awareness that an MBSR or mindfulness teacher needs to keep in mind and reflect upon in terms of his or her or their own meditation experience.

The paragraph is presented here in its totality, followed by comments from Kabat-Zinn in a personal exchange during an early review of this document:

"My operational definition of mindfulness is that it is ***'the awareness that arises from paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.' If you need a reason for doing so, we could add, 'in the service of wisdom, self-understanding, and recognizing our intrinsic interconnectedness with others and with the world, and thus, also in the service of kindness and compassion.'"***

Later, in an email exchange Kabat-Zinn commented:

"My suggestion would be to use the entire paragraph in the manual, so that new teachers will understand that: (1) the definition is 'operational,' not definitive and absolute; (2) It is short and meant to be a koan of sorts, in other words, it won't necessarily be immediately obvious what 'non-judgmentally' means. What I mean by it is that we suspend judgment as best we can, moment by moment, and then notice how impossible that actually is to do, and how judgmental

the mind is. But at the same time, you can realize/apprehend that it (your judging—which is really comprised of thoughts and emotions) is not "you," nor does it affect awareness itself once you learn to attend in this way, and to, at least in some moments, cease identifying with and trying to change the contents of the mind to have a 'better' meditative experience. This might be the best approach to once and for all give MBSR teachers (A) the working definition that we use in MBSR; (B) an articulation of the greater context within which we practice/teach/embody as best we can non-dual wakefulness; and (C) an explicit appreciation for its ethical foundation grounded in an understanding/experience of fundamental interconnectedness, once we give ourselves over to non-judging attending as defined." (e-mail exchange with L Koerbel, February 6, 2020).

The above exchange might serve as a useful reminder to keep the working definition, as well as the entire purpose of a mindfulness-based program such as MBSR, in mind during all the phases of this work, whether you are a new teacher starting out, an experienced instructor, or simply as a human being who has made a profound commitment to your own meditation practice.

The above operational definition is ***instrumental***, in the sense that it is giving instructions for operationalizing a form of attention that leads to or unveils an awareness that is never *not here*, and which is really outside of time. That is the ***non-instrumental*** aspect of mindfulness, of awareness. From that point of view, as it says in the Heart Sutra, "there is no place to go, nothing to do, and no special something to attain" (see Two Ways to Think About Meditation: The Instrumental and the Non-Instrumental, in Kabat-Zinn, 2018, *Meditation is Not What You Think*, pp: 49-53). It is part of the job of the MBSR teacher to paradoxically hold both the instrumental and the non-instrumental aspects of mindfulness as a practice and as a way of being in mind at the very same time and make that possibility as palpable and as salient as possible for the people in the class—usually not via explanations but via embodiment and in dialogue in class around specific questions arising regarding the practices themselves.

Preparing for the Orientation

After a thorough review of the Orientation session and Appendix B, it may be helpful to create a teaching plan that organizes the information you will want to present in a clear way (use the *Orientation Teaching Plan* on the following pages as a guide). To whatever degree possible, you might think about ways to make the information engaging and relevant to the people in the room. Reflect on the main points you want to convey in a way that will be best understood by your group, using language and metaphors that are culturally appropriate. If necessary, practice with another teacher to cultivate a degree of comfort and confidence in your own delivery.

Orientation
Flow and Elements

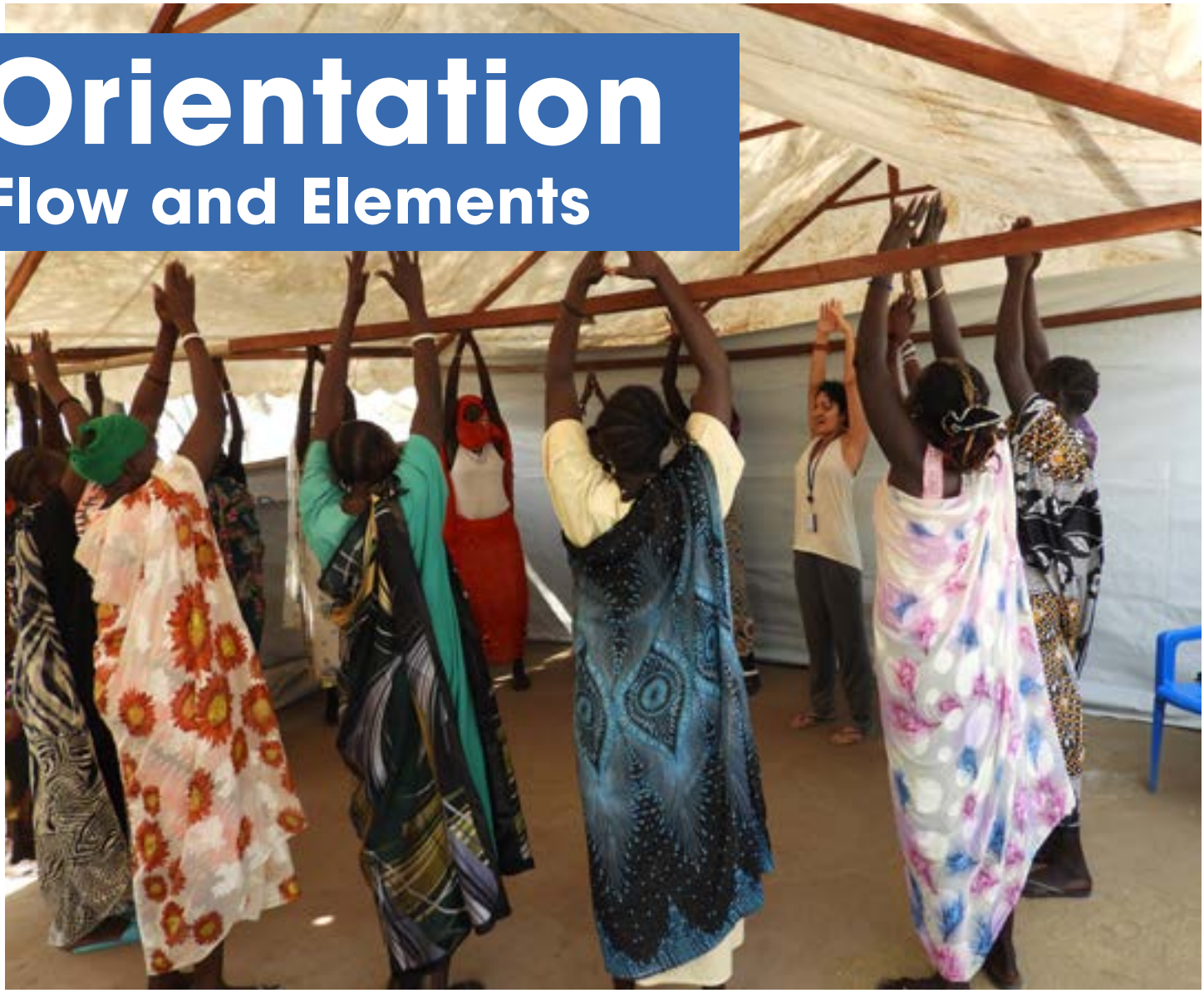


Photo: Bentiu Refugee camp, South Sudan, 2017

Class Elements

1. Welcome
2. Brief History of MBSR
3. Introduce Mindfulness
4. Brief Mindfulness Practice
5. Sharing Experience
6. Class Logistics and Agreements for Participation
7. Challenges and Benefits
8. Support for Participation
9. Questions
10. Details about Individual Meetings

Welcome, Share Overview

- Brief history of MBSR
- Introduce mindfulness
- Brief practice; sharing
- Class logistics and content
- Commitment and guidelines for participation
- Risks & Benefits
- Questions?
- Brief individual meetings with participants

Brief History of MBSR

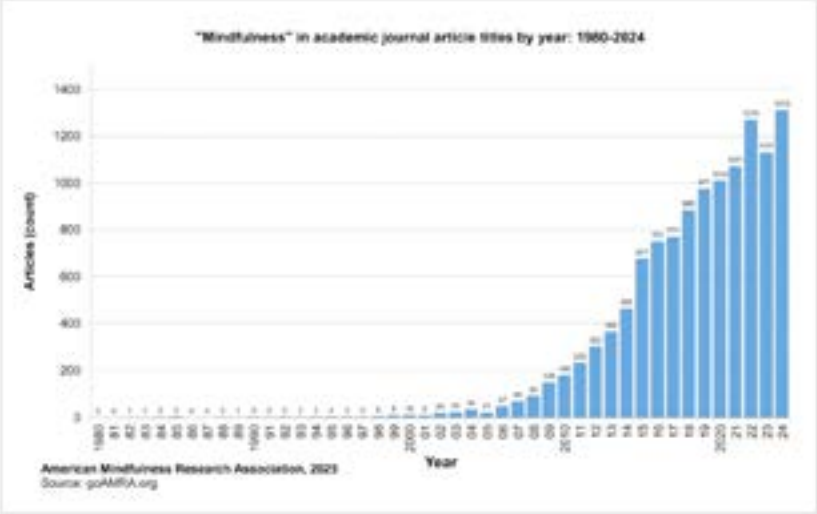
Including local context

Speak to the original intentions for MBSR as a public health initiative to shift the "bell curve of humanity towards greater health, well-being and wisdom," (Kabat-Zinn, 2018a, pg xiv), and Kabat-Zinn's background as a scientist and meditator. Include how early research on the program helped establish MBSR as a viable intervention for an array of physical, emotional and psychological conditions, and how MBSR supports primary, secondary and tertiary public health goals: preventing illness and disease—including cultivating inner resources that support resilience and healthy coping; as an intervention for current conditions, especially since stress-reduction is potentially applicable to a broad range of medical conditions; and for ameliorating effects of chronic, longstanding conditions when full recovery is not thought to be likely or possible.

From its inception, MBSR was intended to benefit and transform individual personal stress, as well as to develop a more socially conscious awareness that would address social, racial, economic, cultural, environmental, and climate stressors. Dialogue throughout the 8 weeks can include, as appropriate, topics such as stressors related to economic circumstances, job changes/loss, and oppression and/or exclusion related to any number of areas such as disability status, race, gender, sexual orientation, and religion, to name some of the societal stressors and

barriers to wellbeing that influence people's everyday lives. This inclusive and comprehensive approach is very much in alignment with the original public health intention to minimize "dis-ease" and harm, and contribute to healing and transforming society and the world.

It can be helpful to give some brief context regarding the start of the program in 1979 and the exponential trajectory of scientific research on mindfulness and MBSR, MBCT (Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy), etc. and how that has influenced the expansion of MBSR and mindfulness throughout healthcare and beyond — see figure below:



Include any relevant local contexts, as well as recent research findings, especially for some of the conditions and symptoms mindfulness has been shown to ameliorate or benefit. (*brief*) Especially powerful to highlight might be the 2023 study by Hoge et al in JAMA Psychiatry showing that eight weeks of MBSR is as effective as the premier anti-anxiety medication (Escitalopram / Lexapro) in a racially diverse group of adults with anxiety disorders.

It might be germane to note that MBSR was inspired by Jon's reading of the 1979 Surgeon General's Report: Healthy People, and that in 2022, he spoke at length about the public health dimensions of mindfulness and MBSR with the former Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, MD. That two part conversation can be accessed here:

Part 1: House Calls with Dr. Vivek Murthy: Jon Kabat-Zinn: Peace and the Domain of Being (Part 1) on Apple Podcasts

Part 2: House Calls with Dr. Vivek Murthy: Jon Kabat-Zinn: Clarity and the Domain of Stillness (Part 2) on Apple Podcasts

It should also be noted that during his tenure, Murthy issued his own series of guided mindfulness meditation practices: Mindfulness Tools with US Surgeon General.

Note: because there is now so much hype around "mindfulness" in the mainstream press, it might be useful for the MBSR instructor to note this explicitly, and state clearly that mindfulness as a meditation practice and as a way of being is an approach that is thousands of years old; and that MBSR has helped scores of thousands of people to take greater charge in their lives to reduce their suffering and improve their health and sense of wellbeing. Evidence-based studies speak for themselves and do not need to be hyped. The most important transformative and beneficial elements of MBSR derive from one's ongoing meditation practice, not from advertising how great "mindfulness" is.

Teacher Recording: If the teacher will be filming or audio recording themselves for educational and/or mentoring purposes during the classes, it is important to describe to the class participants how this will take place, where the camera or recording device will be located, how privacy and confidentiality will be maintained and protected, and that a signed consent or permission form will be collected prior to the start of class. It is best to deliver this information pragmatically and simply. When participants see a teacher's commitment to their own growth and development, they are usually very willing to give consent.

Introduce Mindfulness

Definition, what it is and what it isn't

Use Kabat-Zinn's operational definition: *"Mindfulness is the awareness that arises from paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally."* (2018b, pg xxxiv). Note that this is the cornerstone of what will be explored and cultivated during the program. Add the dimensions of innateness, relationality, "heartfulness," and the possibility of familiarizing oneself with how the mind and attention generally operate. Acknowledge that

there's no need to "quiet" the mind or try to stop one's thinking (it is impossible anyway) in order to practice — in fact, it is a complete misunderstanding of what meditation is about, which is cultivating greater intimacy with one's own body, mind, thoughts, emotions, and world through the faculty of one's own awareness — the mind will quiet down on its own over time, but never by forcing it to be a certain way — and that this will be a continual theme throughout the program. Alongside these qualities, we also try to cultivate ongoing interest, curiosity and a sense of friendliness and kindness toward ourselves and whatever is arising in awareness. The metaphor of being a scientist of our own lives, of doing our own research and investigations, collecting data on what we are discovering through our lived experience, can be helpful as a supportive orientation with which to approach the program. There is no catechism, here, nothing you have to take on faith.

For eight weeks, as best we can, we are simply giving ourselves over to exploring our lives as if they were a laboratory and we the scientists. That stance positions us to see directly for ourselves what unfolds when we cultivate this particular form of attending.

The instructor can also describe how the "automatic pilot" mode and the kind of automaticity that drives most of our actions, while helpful at times, mostly keeps us removed from our actual moment-by-moment experience. Likewise, pointing out that we are often caught up in the past or future, ruminating or planning, fantasizing or worrying. The practice of mindfulness supports embodied clarity and authenticity in the present moment. And that clarity and authenticity in turn influences our choices in that moment.

Photo: MBSR class, Beijing, China, 2018

Brief Mindfulness Practice

Yoga, sit, including practice options

A short movement sequence followed by a focused attention practice has the potential to equip participants right off the bat with a variety of "anchors" for their attention that can support a sense of agency and capacity.

The teacher takes into account the specific population and meets the needs of the moment. For example, is it the end of a work day? Are people feeling tired? Would yoga offered in a chair be a more appropriate option than standing yoga poses? Offer whatever practice you choose with the same degree of care and a range of options that are used in every class: emphasizing the participants' knowledge of their own body and its needs, not going beyond one's limits, but bringing attention and interest to the process of discovering what is actually happening, respecting any limits as they are encountered in the moment, and moment by moment.

Brief Sharing of the Experience of the Above Practice

Before starting, *establish an agreement about confidentiality as a primary container for the class, including the Orientation Session, regarding, safety. Remember that confidentiality may need to be re-emphasized in every session.*

Use participant responses to the practice to elucidate more about how the class functions: Active participant engagement, some inquiry, supporting curiosity, and meeting both the positive remarks and those that name the challenges (mind-wandering, boredom, increased pain or sensation, etc.) as equally valid, especially as a hallmark of the awareness that is being cultivated.

Class Logistics and Agreements for Participantion

Confidentiality: Define and describe the two-levels of confidentiality: (A) the opportunity for everyone to speak truthfully, knowing that whatever is shared will be held by

the group alone, and also (B) how confidentiality includes refraining from commenting to someone about what they shared in any class dialogue.

While talking about other people may be a typical way of relating in some social contexts, we are bringing a different level of care and attention to listening and being with each other. Creating an explicit embrace of confidentiality offers a rare and precious opportunity to engage with oneself and others in an environment of honesty, exploration, and psychological safety.

Confidentiality includes not taking pictures or recording without permission.

Dates & Times for Class (including All-Day class)

Have these clearly and legibly visible. Consider including a handout with details when participants register so they are well-informed about class logistics.

Self-Care

Let people know how many people are likely to be in the class, how to dress, including wearing comfortable, loose-waisted clothing for ease of movement, bringing layers for warmth, including socks if you are inviting people to remove their shoes, eating lightly before class, avoiding scented personal care products and toiletries, and bringing whatever personal props may be needed for comfort. Stress that self-care is seen as a matter of knowing what's called for in any given moment, whether that is to change positions, including standing up or lying down during any part of the class or during a meditation practice so as to manage pain or discomfort; or to opt out of or adapt a practice if strong emotions or sensations arise and are found to be overwhelming. Point out the props that are available in the classroom.

Attendance

Stress the importance of attending class each week and how the program builds on the prior week's practices and themes. If someone knows they will miss two or more classes, advise them to participate in a future cycle. Encourage people to arrive early to settle in. And note that

while every effort is made to respect the class ending time, occasionally the class may run over. If someone needs to miss class due to illness or an emergency, or are running late, they should contact the teacher. If there is a possibility of inclement weather, explain how this will be handled and how participants will be notified.

Home Practice and Recordings

Home practice is an integral part of the program, and takes up to around one hour per day. This is a good time to speak about the commitment enrolling in the program requires: the challenge of finding and making time to practice and what that means materially, socially, and logistically and the willingness to keep up one's commitment to practice over the eight weeks "as if your life depended on it (which it does)" despite and in the face of resistance, fatigue, boredom, restlessness, fear, pain, or whatever else may arise. It can be helpful for the teacher to ask participants what they are willing to give up in order to create the time for daily home practice, and to consider now, when and where they will schedule practice time into their day.

It is an immediate lifestyle change just to take the MBSR program and engage with the curriculum over the eight weeks. This needs to be explicitly acknowledged and honored by the teacher. As we say, "It can be stressful to take the stress reduction program." Maybe cite the analogy of needing to sometimes start a fire to put out a bigger fire.

The program offers a radical opportunity to befriend oneself moment by moment by timeless moment. This includes all those moments that may not be pleasant or welcomed, or comfortable. MBSR is an invitation to be gentle with yourself, as well as to also be firm, committed and disciplined in the various mindfulness practices over the course of the eight weeks.

It can be quite useful and illuminating to invite a few participants from prior classes to visit the orientation and speak directly, if briefly, to these various elements: i.e., to recommend based on their own experience how they think these new participants might most productively engage in the program over the next eight weeks. Hearing directly

from individuals, especially medical patients who have themselves been through the program, speaks far more powerfully than anything the instructor might say. As best you can, invite previous participants who can articulate why they came to the program, what they learned, the challenges they faced themselves, how they dealt with them, and any advice they might have for people just starting out.

Logistics and Class Content

Audio recordings of the main practices are provided along with the home assignment. The teacher is available between classes via email or phone. Emphasis is on both one's own capacity to meet the demands of the program, and the opportunity of support from the teacher if necessary.

Explain that each class includes major time focused on the formal and informal mindfulness practices assigned each week, and conversation about one's experiences with them, both at home and in the class. The list includes the body scan; mindful yoga—lying down, standing, and possibly sitting in a chair; sitting meditation; walking meditation; and eating meditation. In addition, time is spent in both small and large group dialogue about home practice, including what you are discovering, and how you are working with whatever challenges might arise.

Certain classes (2, 4, and 5) explore topics of perception and its role in the experience of stress; stress psychology and physiology; conditioning; and one's unique automatic, habitual, physical, emotional and cognitive patterns in reaction to high-demand situations. We learn from first hand reports how a mindfulness-mediated stress *response*, as opposed to a more automatic and mindless *stress reaction*, might serve to interrupt one's habitual patterns and offer opportunities for clearer seeing and more creative *responding*. Other topics include stress in relating to others; how mindful communication can support more presence and clarity in one's life; what we consume (both materially and in terms of media); and how we relate to change, uncertainty, and stress during this era of tremendously rapid societal and global change and the various crises the planet and humanity are faced with.

Challenges & Benefits

Photo: © shurkin_son / Adobe Stock

Challenges

Engagement with the entire program might be seen as impinging on one's current lifestyle, given the time and commitment necessary. In fact, taking the MBSR program requires an immediate lifestyle change in coming to all the classes and in making time every day to practice for up to an hour. It can be helpful to name some of the challenges that might arise (specifics are addressed below). Of course, challenges are always to be expected, especially when embarking on something like MBSR. The group and the teacher can be tremendously supportive in sustaining your efforts, commitment, and discipline over the eight weeks of the program.

Participants are encouraged to stay in touch with the teacher when challenges come up. The teacher should sensitively but directly highlight ways that the regular practice of mindfulness may exacerbate or bring into one's awareness in a vivid and stronger way whatever physical, emotional, psychological, social or relational challenges one might be dealing with in one's life. It is not hyperbole to share that while this sounds simple, in Kabat-Zinn's words, "attending in this way with consistency and stability is actually the hardest work in the world for human beings...." (2017, pg. 293). In MBSR, the basic invitation is to, as best one can, practice the art of being fully oneself moment by moment.

Physical Challenges

Participants who have specific physical challenges of one kind or another, including musculoskeletal or neurological conditions, prior injuries or surgeries, pregnancy, or conditions that make balancing or engaging in certain movement more difficult should be encouraged to check with their health care provider, especially as regards the need to either refrain from or modify any or all of the yoga postures. Illustrations of the sequence of yoga postures can be provided to facilitate this check-in with their specialist.

The ongoing invitation is always to listen deeply to the body during the movement and to respond wisely—not forcing any posture or stretch, dwelling at the boundary of what might be possible without going beyond or pushing through your limits (which may change over time), but staying open to exploring what is actually possible moment by moment by moment. The yoga offered in an MBSR class may be unlike other kinds of yoga that participants are familiar with, especially those that focus on attaining an end goal, or perfecting a specific alignment or posture.

Emotional/Psychological Challenges

When we sit or lie still during practice, it is possible that experiences that have carried strong emotions or have had a strong psychological impact may surface. These may be events from long ago that have been forgotten, or familiar ones that may or may not have been encountered or worked with in therapy. More recent events may also arise in the mind, and with them, emotions that we might have thought we had already dealt with. What is more, *all* emotions may be felt more strongly as you pay closer attention to your experience from moment to moment. If there has been a recent loss or life change, emotions may be more acute and labile. These too, may surface during practice. Those who have a history of trauma or abuse or who have a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) may find that some or all of the MBSR practices are challenging. Emphasize that mindfulness meditation can provide a very real support, even in the midst of such challenges, and that your teacher is a willing ally, here to help you to adapt these practices to appropriately

meet your individual needs and circumstances. This can be conveyed gently and matter-of-factly. Participants should be encouraged to speak privately with the teacher about any personal concerns.

Identify clearly those conditions that may make MBSR more difficult or may be contra-indicated such as suicidal ideation, current use of drugs, alcohol or other unhealthy coping attempts, as well as being in early recovery from an addiction, acute depression, social anxiety, or a recent loss. While there may be participants who are experiencing these factors but have a strong support network and would benefit from the class, these issues should be raised in private, in the individual meeting, since they may require more time to be flagged and discussed. (See Appendix B for more information on challenging conditions, contraindications, and referral suggestions.)

Social Challenges

In addition to the need to create time for practice which may hinge on shifting family or work responsibilities, as you practice, you may find that you are changing in ways that you can't anticipate. Those around you may be either pleasantly surprised or uncomfortable with new behaviors and/or attitudes on your part. In addition, you yourself may be surprised or challenged by some of the changes.

Time

Finding and making the time for formal practice takes concerted commitment and discipline. There will be times when, for all your efforts, it doesn't happen. At the very beginning of MBSR, it can be helpful to strategize for yourself when and how you can make the time to practice for 45 minutes per day, six days per week, with the guided Meditations. Forty-five minutes per day, six days per week is the standard that should be encouraged.

This is often an area of great interest and energy throughout the course: *Why so long? Couldn't I do it for a shorter time?*, especially as participants encounter boredom, restlessness, sleepiness, aversion and more. While there is a paucity of dosing studies, what evidence there is shows that the longer practice time supports stronger beneficial outcomes. For example, the Mindfulness-Based

Blood Pressure Reduction (MB-BP) program that is grounded in MBSR showed that the amount of time people practiced during class predicted blood pressure levels two years afterwards, regardless of how much they practiced in the interim (Loucks EB et al. Am J. Cardiol. 2024; https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38447891/). For more details on how to answer questions about how much participants should practice (e.g., do I really need to meditate 45 minutes a day?), see the *Psychology Today* article by Eric Loucks PhD, entitled ***How Much Should I Meditate? The science and practice of dosing mindfulness meditation***).

Self-care should be emphasized, including during meditation, and respecting the wisdom of our bodies and minds and the feedback they are giving us on what they are sharing about how we are experiencing the meditation practice in terms of both its content and duration.

This immediate lifestyle change (45 minutes per day, six days per week) will inevitably require making new life choices that might include waking up earlier, choosing one's daily activities more wisely, and intentionally restructuring one's daily routine to support the commitment to practice over the eight weeks. It is helpful to highlight the value of giving full priority to the program for the duration of the eight weeks to optimize its potential benefits.

Eight weeks is relatively short compared to the conditions that have probably brought you here. Making the most of that time will give you the best chance to see the impact of the program clearly. It is also helpful to stress that the eight weeks will be over before you know it, so it is truly worth the effort, given the years that most folks have had their primary health-related problems, to commit oneself to being disciplined about the 45 minutes per day, six days per week commitment to the formal practices.

There is also the paradox to explore that by making this kind of time commitment, we may discover the value of the present moment, and how we might optimize our relationship to the twenty-four hours of the day that constitutes our lives.

Benefits

Past participants have reported a number of significant benefits, including: improved sense of well-being—even in cases when symptoms and conditions stay the same; major symptom reduction, often long lasting; increased focus and reduced distraction; emotional balance; increased joy and contentment; greater ability to meet high-stress situations and care for oneself in the midst of demands; increased appreciation and awareness of inner and outer resources, and more.

It is important to stress that participants will all have different responses to mindfulness meditation practices, and that there are no guarantees of any specific outcome, nor is there one ideal outcome. MBSR is an experiment in what might be possible when you engage your experience fully and directly through the various practices offered.

Evidence for the program's effectiveness, beyond anecdotal reports from individual participants in specific cases, is based on aggregate data rather than individual experiences. In general, people who practice regularly and consistently report more positive outcomes, but specific outcomes cannot be predicted for any individual, and certainly not projected or guaranteed.

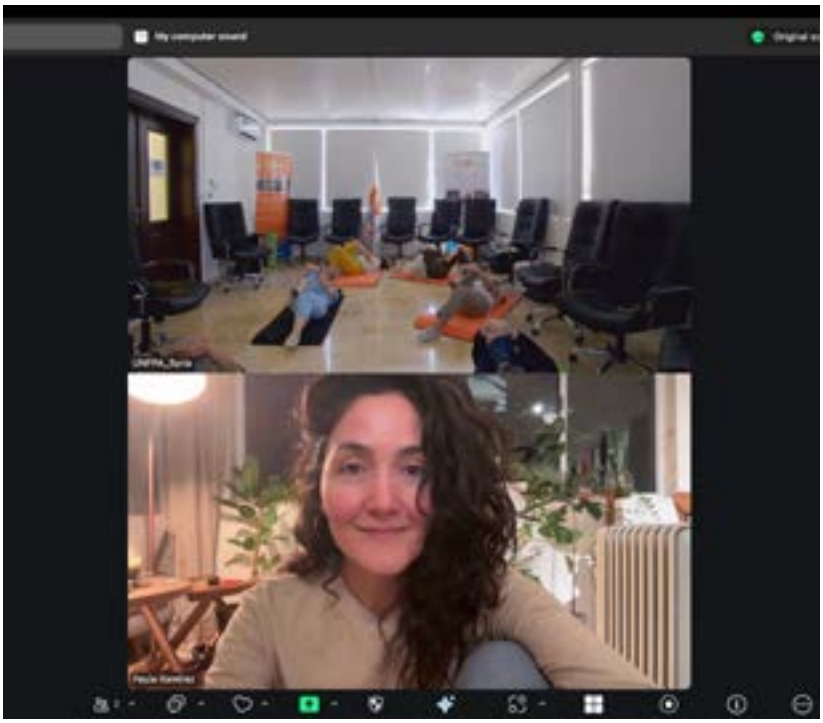


Photo: Online MBSR class, UN, Syria, 2025

Below are citations for a variety of conditions

See this article by Eric Loucks in *Psychology Today* on the science and practice of mindfulness dose.[1]

MBSR has particularly strong findings for its effects on stress, anxiety, depression symptoms, and pain management.[2,3,4]

Training programs are available for teachers on the science of MBSR, and how to talk about the scientific findings with participants.

Support for Participation

The teacher clearly articulates the features that support participants in getting the most out of the course. These include:

- A strong commitment to daily practice and all that means in terms of time and scheduling, family and work demands, inner resistance, time urgency, time stress, boredom or other inner and outer challenges;
- Actively cultivating a stance of genuine interest in your own mind, body, life and relationships can be hugely helpful in maintaining a high degree of self-discipline throughout the eight weeks. This involves approaching the curriculum with open-minded skepticism as well as curiosity—welcoming whatever arises during the eight weeks, or in any moment, treating your lived experience in the program, as it unfolds moment by moment and day by day as a kind of laboratory, a laboratory in which you are the investigator, the scientist, and at the same time, the subject of the investigation; this includes the possibility of the whole program being

[1] Loucks, E. B. (2022, September 18). How much should I meditate? The science and practice of dosing mindfulness meditation. Psychology Today.

[2] de Vibe, M., Bjørndal, A., Fattah, S., Dyrdal, G. M., Halland, E., & Tanner-Smith, E. E. (2017). Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) for improving health, quality of life and social functioning in adults: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Campbell Systematic Reviews, 13(1), 1–264. https://doi.org/10.4073/csr.2017.11

[3] Herman, P. M., Anderson, M. L., Sherman, K. J., Balderson, B. H., Turner, J. A., & Cherkin, D. C. (2017). Cost-effectiveness of mindfulness-based stress reduction versus cognitive behavioral therapy or usual care among adults with chronic low back pain. Spine, 42(20), 1511–1520. https://doi.org/10.1097/BRS.0000000000002344

[4] Hoge, E. A., Bui, E., Mete, M., & the MBSR vs Escitalopram for Anxiety Disorders Study Group. (2023). Mindfulness-based stress reduction vs escitalopram for the treatment of adults with anxiety disorders: A randomized clinical trial. JAMA Psychiatry, 80(1), 13–21. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2022.3679

approached as an adventure and an exploration, as "play," an opportunity to get reacquainted with yourself, to bring a quality of interest and intimacy to your own life;

- Attendance for the full program, including the All-Day class;
- Engaging fully in the class even if you might choose not to share;
- Recognition that while the practice seems simple—it is not necessarily easy; it requires an ongoing reminder of our original commitment. In a way, stringing even two moments of mindfulness together is a major challenge, perhaps the hardest thing for us humans to effectuate. That is why mindfulness is so powerful and worth engaging in fully. It is a way of reclaiming our moments, all of them, which together constitute our very life.

Questions

Provide Details on Scheduling Individual Meetings

End with Brief Sitting Meditation

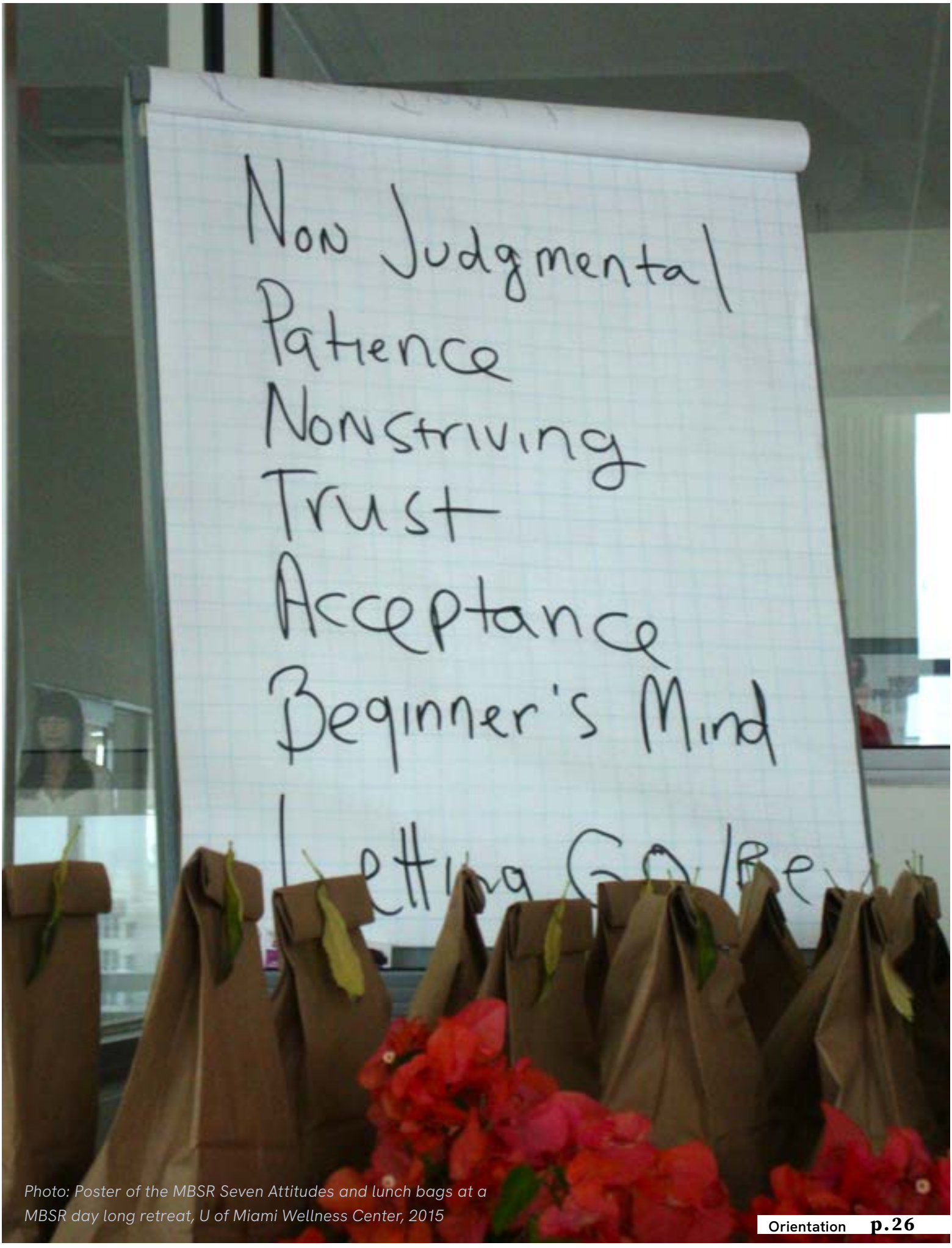


Photo: Poster of the MBSR Seven Attitudes and lunch bags at a MBSR day long retreat, U of Miami Wellness Center, 2015

CLASS ONE

OVERVIEW & THEMES

The first class sets the stage for the entire 8-week MBSR program in terms of the centrality of awareness and the cultivation of mindfulness (using Jon Kabat-Zinn's working definition, see Orientation notes) in all that we are doing as an MBSR teacher, including the guidelines for the classes, and, of course, as an MBSR instructor, your own personal commitment to engage wholeheartedly in the practice—both in class and at home. The overriding orientation of wholeness and the beauty of being alive is summed up by Jon Kabat-Zinn:

"As long as you are breathing, there is more right with you than wrong with you, no matter what is 'wrong' and no matter how ill or hopeless you may be feeling on any given day or in any given moment. Challenges and difficulties are workable. Mindful awareness, defined as the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally, is fundamental to this approach since the present moment is the only time anyone ever has for perceiving, learning, growing, healing, and transforming."

Full Catastrophe Living, p. xxviii

This approach emphasizes that human beings are far larger and more whole than the self-oriented narratives we tell ourselves, and that we all have innate resources for learning, growing, healing, and transformation that, for the most part, go unrecognized and untapped.

It is critical to remember that healing is not the same as curing. Rather, we define *healing* as "coming to terms with things as they are," which includes meeting our moments, as best we can, *with as much wisdom and compassion as we can muster.* This orientation can represent a radical shift in a participant's identity and relationship with their conditions and lives (Kabat-Zinn, curriculum correspondence notes, Jan 2020).

In addition, without any direct naming or listing of the foundational attitudes (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, pp. 19-31, and O'Brien, 2016, https://themindfulnesssummit.com/sessions/9-powerful-meditation-tips-jon-kabat-zinn/) it is part of the teacher's responsibility to skillfully embody and communicate this perspective over the course of the eight weeks, gently pointing out that awareness can be brought to virtually any given moment in the classroom, as in life itself, including moments in which strong emotions well up, or anything else for that matter, including feelings of resistance, boredom, pain or other challenging circumstances.

The theme of one's own wholeness, and the ability as a human being to mobilize innate resources we all have by virtue of being human, supports the unfolding of the learning community that takes life in Class One with the invitation for each participant to say what brings them to the MBSR program at this particular juncture in their lives. This lived, intimate experience of what participants share directly and hear in each others' stories dramatically highlights the ubiquity and poignancy of the First

Noble Truth—"the actuality of suffering"—without it ever being named. Sitting in a circle around the room, so that everybody can see everybody else, we simply ask: "What brings you to the stress reduction program at this particular moment in your life?" Participants are encouraged to speak from the heart, and for everybody in the room to listen as mindfully and as non-judgmentally as possible. Remember: we are not asking people to share their entire life story – i.e., do not start from "when my mother and father first met, " but rather in whatever way feels most appropriate in this moment in time. It can help to introduce this part of the class with an invitation for everyone to reflect on the question themselves: "What brings you here now?" A brief silent reflection that invites participants to ask this question of themselves before the group engages in speaking and listening can set the stage for an optimal unfolding, as everybody is invited to make space for respectful listening to whatever arises in the room, as well as in one's own heart.

Emergent topics for Class One include defining mindfulness and exploring the experience of moment-to-moment awareness through one or more of the senses, inhabiting each moment as best one can with openhearted spaciousness. The teacher acknowledges the range of responses to practice that the participants may be experiencing—including those that may be labeled "ordinary," "unremarkable," or "unpleasant." This perspective reinforces the notion that the curriculum of mindfulness and MBSR really includes anything and everything that might arise in the room. It is important to encourage the participants to speak openly and honestly, to whatever degree they care to, about whatever they are experiencing.

While it may or may not arise specifically in any particular class, it is incumbent on the instructor to be aware as best one can be of the various identities, conditions, and intersectionalities that may be present in the room, including ethnicity, race, socio-economic circumstances, gender, sexual orientation, religious background, neurodiversity, disability status, or other identity domains (See Appendix A). Awareness of what may be unspoken in the room but felt within the group allows the teacher to skillfully include and name the values and agreements for group participation, including the possibility of seeing oneself—and others—with fresh eyes, in alignment with the core value of MBSR that honoring the uniqueness, integ-

Photo: Two foxes in the snow, Center for Mindfulness, UMass, Winter 2017

rity, and identity of every participant—while at the same time, keeping in mind the ultimately empty nature of self (see Kabat-Zinn, 2019, Emptiness, in *Meditation Is Not What You Think*, pp. 160-172).

Class 1 introduces a variety of formal and informal mindfulness practices including mindful yoga (standing), a brief introduction to what it means to *attend* to any aspect of one's experience in a mindful way (including experiencing the sensations associated with breathing and how that might be felt in different parts of the body; sensations in the hands or feet via contact, including with the ground and the air; or the hearing of sounds and the spaces between them) as well as the formal raisin-eating meditation. The eating practice introduces mindfulness by focusing on experiencing a small amount of a common and familiar food (typically a raisin) through all the senses. Starting out with an eating meditation has multiple virtues. In particular, it underscores that meditative awareness can be natural and ordinary, an everyday, every moment experience of whatever is unfolding, rather than as something unusual or difficult, like sitting cross-legged on the floor. It thus can be something of a surprise and a wake-up call in itself, because it is not what most people expect when they hear that we are going to engage in a period of formal meditation practice. It underscores that life itself, and how we live it, is the real meditation practice, and that everything that might arise becomes, by definition, part of "the curriculum." Life and awareness are not intrinsically separate. Only unawareness and getting lost in thought can create a separation between life itself and one's awareness and intrinsic wisdom. This is a major source of delusion and suffering.

The eating meditation practice can also present opportunities to include themes of continuity, history, and other arenas of context. For instance, how this morsel of food came to be in our hands (see *Full Catastrophe Living*, p. 536), where it comes from, how it was made, who was involved. The reflection on the earth itself, and the ingredients of sunlight and rain, as well as the "innumerable labors" to quote a Zen meal chant, that are involved in getting this or any morsel of food into our hands and then our bodies. It also provides an uncontrived opportunity for some participants to perhaps share that their ancestors were grape pickers, and for pointing out and airing issues around inequitable labor practices. This often arises organically from the group when this second reflection is included in the practice. The whole world is in the raisin, just as the poet W.B. Yeats pointed out: "To see a world in a grain of sand..."

When the body scan is introduced for the first time, the instructor can link the raisin tasting practice to the flow of the breath, inviting participants to "*taste*" this breath coming in, and *taste* this breath going out. The important aspect in this transition is to experience directly whatever is present — whether it is the breath or the entire body lying down, or any neutral anchor or focus of attention (which may be wiser if the breath is a challenge for any reason). The raisin meditation supports a seamless transition from the informal eating practice to the more formal body scan meditation.

Depending on how large the group is and how much time the go-round takes (which should not be rushed), the body scan we engage in together in the first class may be shorter than the 45-minute version the group will engage in for home practice. It is important for the teacher to guide at least a part of the body scan in Class 1, to give people a taste of what it is like to practice and what is involved in a full body scan. In this first class, it may be that one can only get ten minutes or so into the full body scan.

The teacher embodies the principles of the practice from the very beginning—even if the first body scan is only 10 minutes and consists of a thorough exploration of one foot, or a broader sweep of larger regions of the body. If the body scan is limited to one region of the body—whether it is one foot, both feet, or more, make sure that there is some guidance to include the rest of the body in a way that allows people to feel complete and connected before the meditation is over and they leave the classroom.

When reviewing the home practice assignment, it is important to encourage a gentle and open-hearted approach to the body scan. There's no need to like the practice, or to burden oneself with the feeling that the experience of the body scan meditation has to be pleasant. Rather, the invitation to practice with it involves putting out the welcome mat for whatever unfolds as we follow the guidance and bring attention to the body and its various regions in a systematic way, as a formal meditation practice. The sincerity and regularity of one's practice is what is most important, rather than whatever one might experience on any given day, or in any given moment while practicing. At the same time, if pain or strong emotions arise in the practice, it is wise to suggest that the participant connect with the teacher to get support rather than merely pushing through discomfort or abandoning the practice altogether. This orientation can be encouraged and reinforced by the teacher over and over again, in a matter-of-fact way, during the class.

Teaching Notes

At this early stage in the program, there may be many questions and doubts, especially about whether or not mindfulness will "work," i.e., be helpful for the particular person's major challenges. Discerning when and how to meet such questions is critical in supporting new practitioners. The teacher's encouragement to fully engage with the program, attend all classes, and practice at home and as best as one can, while suspending the expectation for immediate, concrete results of any kind can be extremely helpful. It is only by fully participating over the eight weeks that one can gain a clearer and more visceral understanding of the potential value of mindfulness in one's life and in regard to one's health. In the interim, people should be encouraged to practice diligently but gently, whether they feel like it or not on any given day, and whether they like the practice or not, or feel they are benefiting from it or not. This attitude nurtures both intention-

Photo: Evening meditation, Mindfulness Tools, Algeria, 2020

ality and investigation, as well as a degree of equanimity in the face of unpleasant or challenging experiences.

To this end, care should be taken in how scientific evidence in support of MBSR and mindfulness more broadly is offered, and in what detail. Both neuroscientific and more clinically oriented mindfulness research findings may be introduced lightly when appropriate, in a way that links it to the participants' first-hand experience. While the various scientific findings can be compelling, an embodied emphasis in staying with the practice of attending to one's own experience and to what can be known directly supports a participants' full engagement with the practice and the gradual cultivation of interest and direct investigation as they unfold over time. This is one reason why the program is eight weeks long: time is a necessary ingredient in the process. Neither a rose nor a chrysalis benefits in the end from being forced to open before its time. The MBSR curriculum explicitly fosters the development of patience, intentionality, and a number of other attitudes and commitments on the part of participants (see Full-Catastrophe Living, Chapter 2: The Foundations of Mindfulness Practice (pp 19-38).

Class 1 - Timing for Practices and Activities

The body scan is the primary formal meditation practice in Class One. But, as noted above, in Class 1, it probably needs to be significantly shortened in order to make sure that there is adequate time in for the go-round, and that everyone has had a spacious opportunity to share what brings them to the program if they care to (Note that it is usual to extend Class 1 to three hours). At the same time, it is essential for the instructor to guide at least an abbreviated body scan practice in Class One, so that the participants have a first-hand sense of what they will be getting into during the week before Class 2. An abbreviated body scan might involve a highly detailed attending to sensation in the left foot and lower leg for a time, followed by a widening out of the field of awareness for completion's sake to briefly include the other regions of the body in a way that connects and makes sense—but which might be only about 15 minutes long in total. The class needs an experience of guidance so they have a sense of what is on the recording, as well as what and how they will be expected to practice on their own over the coming week. Still, this first exposure to the body scan in class may be quite brief, as just described.

Integrating Mindful Movements, Class by Class

The standing yoga sequence can be easily divided so that a few poses from this sequence are offered in Classes 1-5. In this way, when participants receive the recording for the standing practice in Week 5, they will have experienced each of the poses to some degree in the prior weeks. And it is also important for the teacher to make sure the flow of movements in each brief practice session makes sense and builds appropriately to avoid injury. It can be skillful to introduce the initial arm raising in this sequence from a chair, thus normalizing a formal movement practice and suggesting how it might be integrated more fully into our daily lives. Emphasis can be placed on how such movement practices can be done sitting, standing and lying down. It is not necessary to include the entire sequence as part of Class 5, and this step-by-step practice over the first four classes allows ongoing familiarization with these movement practices and postures, week by week.

Class One
Flow and Elements

Photo: Providence, RI, August 2021

Class Elements

1. Welcome / Opening Practice
2. Review Operational Definition of Mindfulness
3. Review Agreements for Participation
4. A Guided Reflection on What Brings You to Class
5. Group Introductions
6. Yoga / Mindful Movement
7. Eating Meditation
8. Transition to Body Scan Practice
9. Body Scan
10. Review Home Practice

Welcome

As the first class gets underway, acknowledge the energy and courage it may have taken to get here. It is unusual to commit to an endeavor that asks so much of us. Honor the "showing up" to this first class and potential new beginning to one's life.

Opening Practice

Week to week, this brief 5-10 minute practice is an opportunity to purposefully shift from whatever activities came before to being fully present, to move from **doing** to **being**, and to invite a settling, starting with the body. This may include some movement to release tension and support fuller breathing and connecting with the entirety of the body.

It is also a simple reminder that awareness can be accessed right here and now, by arriving into the room, into the body, opening the "door" of awareness to what is on one's mind and in one's heart, open to perceiving and receiving whatever is present without pushing anything away.

Review Operational Definition of Mindfulness

"*Mindfulness is the awareness that arises through paying attention on purpose in the present moment, non-judgmentally..., in the service of wisdom, self-understanding... kindness and compassion*" (*Kabat-Zinn,* 2018b, pg xxxiv).

Also, highlight:

- Awareness
- Innate, human capacity
- Heartfulness
- Wakefulness
- Relationality

Review Agreements for Participation

- Confidentiality, including the two "levels" (see Orientation)
- Self-care and all that means:
- Being together as a group includes agreement to: avoid using scented products the day of the class; being on time: not giving advice: avoiding cross-talk: listening respectfully to what others are saying as an aware-

ness practice; bringing awareness to how much you speak or do not speak in the group (with the reminder that while no one is ever forced to speak, the teacher will continue to invite everyone to share as a way to respectfully include all voices.

- Availability of the teacher between classes for support, especially if challenges arise. Provide contact information matching the group's communication preferences, such as email address and phone number for calls, texting, or video chats.
- Other agreements? Invite the group to briefly share additions that may be needed to support an optimal learning environment. The guidelines or class agreements are not meant to be a rote offering or list of rules. Rather, these serve to create a safe "holding environment" (Winnecott), conducive for learning, growth, and healing. Revisiting the agreements as needed as the program progresses can be a potent reminder to the community that everyone's presence and contribution is equally welcome and important.

A Guided Reflection on What Brings You to Class

Take a brief moment to drop into stillness and being present, sensing what is here now, underneath the story of why you enrolled in MBSR—although the narrative you are telling may be completely authentic as far as it goes. Allow space to feel what may be wordless, a felt sense of the body, images or emotional currents that may be present, staying open to whatever might arise, whatever might be new or surprising. Acknowledge the possibility of not knowing exactly why you are here, and seeing what emerges in this very moment, if anything, with no expectations. Some reflections might include: *What really brings you here, today? What do you really, really want from this program?*

Small/Large Group Introductions

(After the reflection, giving participants a chance to share in small groups of three or four allows everyone a chance to speak and be heard. This is something of an "icebreaker," and making it somewhat easier to feel

comfortable when the conversation shifts to the whole group)

Each person has the opportunity to speak in the larger group about what brings them to the program. Emphasize/ invite speaking from the heart and trusting in the present moment, based on the earlier reflection. Suggest that they take their time, sharing as much or as little as they care to. It is helpful to give a brief example of what the sharing might look and sound like—how to convey the "heart" or essence of why they are here, in a succinct way that honors the fact everybody needs to have an equal opportunity to speak if they care to. The size of the group will determine how long each person might have, but a realistic minimum suggestion might be for everybody to take at least 2 minutes. The invitation includes articulating what is present for you now, why you are here in *this* moment. This can be framed as bringing awareness even to as simple a task as introducing oneself.

While it is not required that everyone speak, everyone is encouraged to say something, even if just their name.

Reminders to avoid cross-talk, and also letting the group know that you, as the instructor, may make occasional observations, comments, ask a question, or respectfully interrupt to manage the time. Also, that there's no need to rehearse what one is going to say—or you can be aware of the tendency to do that—trusting that when the time comes, you will know what you want to say. This go-around can be launched with an invitation to listen fully—allowing what each participant shares to be fully received. That, in turn, may serve as a prompt for when the next person feels ready to speak, without getting into interruptions or cross-talk.

At the end, the teacher also says why they are there, offering a brief introduction to themselves, their motivation, their intentions for practicing along with the class, and what being a part of this group and the larger work of MBSR means to them. This should be succinct, so that the focus continues to be on the group as a whole and to the process we are all engaged with. In addition, the teacher provides a few closing remarks to transition to the next phase of the class, while inviting the question, *"What brings me here?"* to continue to resonate throughout the

class and the whole eight weeks of the course, plumbing the depths of the intention and willingness to show up more fully in one's life.

Yoga [1] / Mindful Movement

As participants have been sitting for a while, making a time for movement serves to connect with, honor, and bring some movement into the body, all undertaken with the same attitude we have been cultivating in our listening to each other, but now, with the focus on body sensations. A few poses from the standing sequence can be offered.

Eating Meditation

(20-30 min. suggested)

The act of eating is common to all of us, as well as all animals. We often take it entirely for granted, even though our very lives depend on it. Beginning the class with eating as a first meditation practice underscores how mindful awareness is an ordinary, everyday part of our human experience, and that meditation means bringing attention to whatever is unfolding in the present moment. The object of attention is not so important. It is much more about the attending itself! So meditative awareness (mindfulness) is available to us in any and every waking moment, during virtually any and all activities we might be engaged in. That said, it requires *remembering* and *choosing* to be present.

Two or three raisins are offered to each participant with the instructions to approach these objects with interest (the instructor bends over backward not to name them with the word "raisins"), and to engage with them as a Martian scientist might (for example), never having seen them before, observing and experiencing directly through all your senses as the "instruments' for receiving potentially relevant data! This can be playful. Prompts may be, for instance, *"What does the object look like*? Evoking responses of color, form, shape, without evaluation or association. *What is its heft? What does the object feel*

[1] Use of the word "yoga" can be problematic in certain contexts, as some populations may be more or less open to yoga and have different ideas about it. Additionally, there is sensitivity that many MBSR teachers are not certified yoga teachers. While the posture sequences are drawn from traditional yoga postures, using the term "mindful movement" may be helpful to name that we are approaching this practice as an awareness practice, and may be different than what one might experience in a yoga class. This respects certified yoga instructors, the distinct discipline and training in yoga, and acknowledges sensitivity to language and context. It also values the training that MBSR teachers receive in guiding the movement practices with embodied wakefulness.

like when rolled around in your fingers? What happens if you press on it? What happens when you hold it up to the light? How about sound—does the object make a sound when you roll it around near your ear? What happens as you bring it to your mouth? What is the feeling if you place it between your lips? And as you bring it into the mouth? What is the experience of taste before biting down? After biting down? How does slowly chewing, at first only once or twice, then more, all the while experiencing what is going on in the mouth in terms of your experience of sensations, whatever changes the object is going through? What does it feel like finally to swallow it? And then, how does it feel like after swallowing?

Photo: © oles / Adobe Stock

As outlined above, the entire process can be a continual pointing to what and how we know whatever is coming into awareness. This is also a powerful time to recognize how the mind naturally (and automatically) makes associations, has preferences, creates concepts, and how these patterns and actions of the mind can also be brought into awareness in the present moment if we pay attention as we just did. Eating as a formal mindfulness meditation practice can support slowing down to allow time for the senses to register what is being received, time to actually taste what is in one's mouth, and examine through direct first-person experience the moment by moment experience of eating.

It is fine to give instructions for each step of the practice as you move through the various senses, experiencing it as

a group and asking for comments as you go. It is also fine to offer guidance in seeing, feeling, hearing and tasting the raisin in silence, and then inviting verbal responses after the experience.

Whole group responses can lead to a fuller explication and inquiry into what we take in from the outside in the form of nourishment; how we usually approach food; what it is like to take time to be intentionally aware of the ordinary life-sustaining act of eating; where our food comes from; how it connects us to the natural world — i.e. can you see the sun, the cloud, the air, the rain, the earth, the farmer, the trucker, etc (if a raisin is not used, using a natural food that is grown is supportive to this interconnectivity); how it connects us to the people who helped to grow, harvest, ship, and sell it. This can point to the interconnectedness of all life, and how we may or may not be aware of all the interconnections in every moment, but they are all always present.

The dialogue that unfolds following this simple mindful eating exercise (Note: no one *has* to eat the raisin, and sometimes people do not, for whatever reason), provides multiple opportunities to touch on important elements of meditation practice, as well as related themes such as the value of cultivating present moment awareness, interest and curiosity, wholeness, interconnectedness, our individual relationship to food, to the body, to our mind, our thoughts and emotions, and pointing out how the automaticity of the mind often clouds our direct perception. It may or may not also be appropriate and relevant, on occasion, to mention the stressful consequences of global warming, extreme weather, the climate crisis and how intimately everything on planet earth is connected to everything else.

In addition, the raisin meditation provides an opportunity to look afresh at other aspects of our totally interdependent and interconnected lives: how we relate to family members, to others more generally, to nature, etc.

Use the participants' responses to guide you. It is always best to highlight the wisdom in the group, and on occasion, if it feels useful, adding something or commenting to encourage a deepening of curiosity and engagement among the participants, all offered with a light touch, in the service of developing greater awareness and appreciation of the present moment.

Transition to Body Scan Practice

Transitioning from the raisin meditation to the body scan practice can be skillfully done by first bringing awareness to the very "ordinary" and often taken-for-granted experience of breathing. Keep in mind that on rare occasions, people may have had traumatic experiences related to breathing (such as firefighters in smoke-filled environments or people who have been choked, or people with asthma or other respiratory conditions). In such cases, a more neutral focus for one's attention can be offered, such as the bottoms of the feet. *Participants are invited to bring the same quality of attention that they brought to their mouth and the tasting of the raisin to the sensations in the body associated with breathing.* To detect the abdominal component of the breath, participants can be invited to put their hands on the abdomen/belly as a way to experience the movement directly. Then, to experiment with taking the hands or hand away and seeing if one can feel the movements of the belly without the hands: i.e. awareness itself experiencing the sensations of breathing. In this transition to the body scan practice, we are inviting participants to directly explore the sensations of breathing in this particular region of the body: feeling it, being present with it as best one can, non-judgmentally, with interest and with gentleness, with kindness toward the body, toward one's belly, toward oneself.

The focus on the belly, lying down on one's back in most cases (or sitting if lying down is problematic for some individuals) is a skillful way to introduce the formal body scan practice for most people. Other anchors or foci of attention—including being with sensations of the entire body lying down or in whatever position the body is in, function in the same way: namely to be present with the felt experience of the living, breathing body.

While the breath is a major focus in the body scan practice, it is important to keep in mind as you guide the practice, that for some participants, the breath may not be a benign place for nurturing a sense of direct connection with one's body. Possible alternative foci can be offered, Including the weightiness of the body (whether on the floor or in a chair—however the body is being supported in the body scan practice–contact points, or sounds. See Appendix A for more guidance.

Body Scan

Practicing the body scan is another opportunity to be present with and for oneself. The major invitation is to experience the sense we call proprioception, the ability we have to feel the body inwardly, including all its various sensations. The suggestion is to practice the body scan lying on one's back, if that is possible and the conditions allow for it. Take care to ensure that your introduction to this practice includes encouraging the primacy of self-care and safety in the practice, with various options offered that might align with each individual's particular needs (i.e. for lying down, sitting, or standing) as well as respecting the principles of trauma sensitivity and an overall attitude of gentleness, non-harming, and non-striving.

If time allows, it is important to take at least a few minutes at the end for participants to share their experience of this "taste" of the body scan they will be engaging with at home for the coming six days. This can be done by inviting comments from individuals in the class or by forming small groups to speak briefly about their experiences of the practice. It is important to take time for questions, if there are any, since the body scan will be the formal daily practice for the coming week.

Photo: Body Scan, Corewell Health Center for Mindfulness, Royal Oak, MI 2016

Review Home Practice

- Practice the body scan with the recorded guidance at least 6 times this week (practice in the class this week can count as one time).

- If using the 9-dots puzzle, include it in the home practice assignment. You may also choose other perception-focused methods that fulfill the same intention.[2] Whatever method is used, the focus is on how we might approach these "puzzles," as a way of perceiving the conditioned habits of mind that may be operating and narrowing our ability to be creative and see new options and openings for facing old problems. This includes awareness of thoughts, emotions, attitudes, body sensations and whatever impulses or actions arise from them.
- Eat one meal as mindfully as possible, i.e. with full awareness moment by moment. If this too much of a challenge, try at least taking the first 3-5 bites mindfully. *If participants eat a meal with family or friends on a regular basis, they might try to share the practice of mindful eating with family or friends over dinner.*
- Pause Practice: Periodically throughout the day, pause: come to stillness and check in with (i.e be aware of) how things are in the body, in the mind, with one's thoughts, emotions, mood. Use these "mindful check-in's" to take stock of what adjustments you might make in that moment to be more present. Take just a few moments to cultivate friendliness and interest in how things are right in this moment.

  Such brief check-in's can begin to "seed" self-care and a continuity of awareness and embodied presence throughout the day.

End the class with a brief Focused Attention meditation with a range of suggested options for anchors: i.e. the breath—wherever it is felt most vividly and clearly in the body; or contact points in the body, i.e the feet and/or the hands, or sounds. With eyes open, one might also choose an object in the visual field. See Appendix A for more on guidance on Focused Attention practices.

[2] The 9-dots exercise, while applicable in many settings, may be less appropriate for some marginalized communities. See pg 27, in Resources to Support a Socially-Engaged Mindfulness-Based Program Pedagogy, linked to Crane, R. S., Callen-Davies, R., Francis, A., Francis, D., Gibbs, P., Mulligan, B., O'Neill, B., Pierce Williams, N. K., Waupoose, M., & Vallejo, Z. (2023). Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Our Time: A Curriculum that is up to the Task. Global advances in integrative medicine and health, 12, 27536130231162604. https://doi.org/10.1177/27536130231162604

CLASS TWO

OVERVIEW & THEMES

Starting Class 2 with a full body scan practice (at least forty-five minutes) allows everyone to re-engage with the practice no matter what has transpired in the intervening week of home practice. After the body scan, conversation about the home practice can begin in small groups, with time for everyone to listen deeply and share. When the large group gathers, essential topics to cover (which usually come up in participant responses) are the universality of "the wandering mind," and how participants experienced and worked with it. In addition, sleepiness, boredom, resistance, discomfort (a more skillful word than "pain" in many contexts) or strong emotions arising in relation to the body scan can be explored. Use the participants' reports of their own direct experiences to delve into these topics. This is a skillful way to encourage engagement and interest.

"... the way we perceive a problem tends to limit our ability to see solutions to it..... The point is that we do not always know what our true limits are."

Full Catastrophe Living, pp. 181, 184

The theme for Class Two is perception and creative responding. Perception strongly influences how we experience our daily lives as they are unfolding; how we see or don't see things, including the stresses and challenges that may have brought a person to MBSR in the first place. It also influences the degree of discipline and commitment they apply to the program. Using the 9-dots exercise, the class can explore together what happened as they did or didn't succeed in solving the puzzle. How did they approach it? Did they recognize familiar cognitive or emotional reactions and/or behavioral patterns in response to the puzzle? Were those reactions felt in the body in the moment? Were they recognized as thoughts in the mind? Or as emotions? Did anyone come up with a solution to the puzzle? How did you arrive at it? Was there anyone who came up with a different solution?

The conversation that arises out of the 9-dots puzzle can be connected to the ways that our habitual perceptions may be limited or skewed. For instance, issues around implicit bias and the habitual patterns set in motion due to early learning may arise or be raised by the instructor as part of the class exploration. The belief that "this is just how I am" can become an invitation to explore how beliefs and stories may hold partial-truths, opening the door to understanding more directly what is happening moment-by-moment by moment, and possibly expanding our perception beyond prior limiting and self-imposed boundaries, often without realizing that we are doing that to ourselves, and that it is an old habit that maybe we don't need any more if it no longer serves us.

It is helpful for the teacher (or it may come from one of the participants) to then point

out that there is, in fact, no box! We impose the limit on ourselves. We fabricate "the box" in our own mind. This can lead to a rich discussion about how we sometimes "box ourselves in through how we shape our experiences and opinions, or by our often limiting ideas about ourselves and others. In a diverse classroom, what often arises are the ways that individuals do indeed feel that they are boxed in by others' perceptions of them, and the ever-present stress that comes from being judged by such boxes / labels including, as Martin Luther King, Jr. put it: "the color of their skin and not the content of their character." Other "boxes" might include size, age, physical limitations and disability, accent (if they are an immigrant or grew up in another region), sexual orientation, gender, religious belief. This may lead to a conversation about subtle acts of bias; of discriminatory and/or exclusionary behaviors. It can be a place to skillfully examine and address intent vs impact in human encounters. Such conversations have taken place in Black, Indigenous, and People of Color MBSR classes.

Encouragement is offered to see self-responsibility as an essential element of self-care: Discovering the boundary between one's growing/learning edge and being overwhelmed—whether in relation to doing the home practice or in taking on a work project or some other life event—and learning new ways to meet and work with one's own reactions, thoughts, and emotions moment-by-moment-by-moment.

In Class Two we also offer some instruction on finding a stable posture for practicing formal sitting meditation, understanding that "finding a stable posture" allows for each individual to choose what is wise for the condition of their body. This may mean lying down, standing, or taking whatever posture is best for one's body on that particular day. Encourage everyone who is able to try out a range of options: experimenting with props, sitting on a chair, cross-legged on a zafu or cushion on the floor, kneeling using a meditation bench or zafu, trying out different body configurations to discover for oneself what might be optimal positions in support of one's sitting practice. This is in preparation for this week's home practice, in which short periods of formal sitting meditation are introduced.

Home practice for Class Two continues with a daily body scan practice with the class recording. In addition, there is a 10-15 minute, silent "Attentional Focus" sitting meditation (no recording), which is to be practiced at a different time from the body scan. This encourages participant's agency and capacity early on and invites participants to begin to "guide themselves" based on what they are learning. Finally, participants agree to identify a common daily activity that they can choose to engage in with full awareness. Examples include brushing one's teeth, feeding the dog, making one's morning beverage, washing one's face, taking a shower, reading to one's kids, etc.

Participants choose just one to do every day, with the instruction that it doesn't have to be done slowly, but simply with presence and full awareness, recognizing–just as one does in formal practice–when attention drifts away. This recognition is mindfulness, and including this step in the informal practice can be illuminating and support integration of the practice of mindfulness into one's everyday life.

Class Two - Timing for Practices and Activities

This week, the full body scan should be offered at the beginning of the class, for about 40-45 minutes. The nine-dots puzzle and the dialogue on perception can take 30-40 minutes.

Class Two
Flow and Elements

Photo: "Old Woman/Young Woman Illusion," anonymous German origin, late 19th century, later popularized by W.E. Hill (1915). Adapted with individualized stylizations.

Class Elements

1. Welcome
2. Opening Attentional Focus Practice
3. Standing Yoga
4. Guided Body Scan
5. Small Group Dialogue
6. Large Group Dialogue
7. 9-Dots Puzzle
8. Preparation for Sitting Meditation
9. Review Home Practice
10. Brief Closing Practice

Welcome

Opening Attentional Focus Practice

With options for various foci/anchors

Standing Yoga

A few poses from the standing sequence

One option is to begin the movement while sitting, which can accommodate those who have difficulty standing for very long.

Guided Body Scan

(40-45 min. suggested)

Photo: Body scan; FL State Judges College of Advanced Judicial Studies, Annual Conference, Orlando, FL, 2016.

Small Group Dialogue

Have a conversation about practice, including the body scan that was just done in the class, the body scan we did for home practice, and the mindful eating practice. *How did it go in this first week of practice? What, if anything, did you discover? How easy or difficult was it for you to make the time? What challenges, if any, did you encounter?* Remind participants that they can also be mindful of speaking and listening in the present moment—so that those moments too are moments of practice.

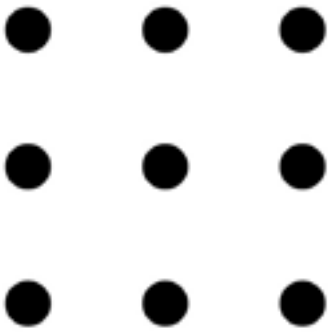
Large Group Dialogue

The conversation continues in the large group, where more responses can be gathered on how it went with the body scan and the mindful eating practice. The universality of the wandering mind, the pervasiveness of sleepiness and other challenges will inevitably be part of the conversation, in all likelihood arising from the participants' direct experience. Point to the radical possibility of meeting *everything*

that arises with friendliness—even those experiences that we don't want or would rather go away—as well as a firm reorienting to the bare actuality of what is unfolding in the present moment, as best one can without forcing anything or being harsh or judgmental toward oneself. The teacher's presence and guidance during the meditation practice can help encourage the cultivation of attentional stability with both discipline and gentleness toward oneself. The teacher can also remind the participants that mindfulness is also a way of being in relationship to life, and to the present moment. This expands the frame of practice beyond attending to just the body, to include being with whatever arises in experience during the formal practice—even boredom, sleepiness or resistance. This introduces and reinforces the on-going theme that *life itself is the real meditation practice*, and that everything that unfolds in our experience can be embraced in awareness because it is already here. The challenge is always the same: not whether we like what is unfolding in the moment or not, nor whether we want it or not, but **rather, how are we going to be in wise relationship to it in this moment?**

Continue discussion of eating meditation and the participants' discoveries, surprises or challenges with this.

9-Dots Puzzle



The classic nine-dot puzzle presents nine dots arranged as above. Participants are asked to connect all the dots using four straight lines without lifting the pen from the page. Most people assume they must stay within the "box" formed by the dots, but the solution requires extending the lines beyond the perceived boundaries. The exercise illustrates how unconscious assumptions

can limit problem-solving and invites creative thinking "outside the box."[1]

There are several references to solutions found online including video solutions such as this one.

Engage the group collectively in the 9-Dot puzzle. *How did people work with it? What thoughts, emotions, and body sensations arose in response? Are these familiar? Did anyone solve it? Were there creative solutions?* It can be helpful to use the flip chart and together look at the puzzle, exploring the frames of perception and what emotional or mental habits arise when faced with this kind—or any kind—of challenge. *How is the puzzle, and the approach to the puzzle, perceived? What might be called for to connect all the dots with four straight lines without lifting the pencil? Does the thinking mind make automatic assumptions that may close off unseen possiblities?*

This discussion can move into a larger investigation on how we perceive ourselves, our lives, the stressors that brought us into the class—as well as our resources and capabilities. Also, what boxes, if any, might we sometimes put ourselves into unwittingly, and then blame others, or outer circumstances?

The subjects of implicit bias, attentional blindness, and unrecognized social conditioning might all be appropriate to raise here, or might arise on their own. Such perceptual habits can be pointed out as usually unconscious conditioned responses to everyday experiences, and that mindfulness can support new, more creative and potentially wiser (and wider) perspectives on what we are experiencing, especially in the social and interpersonal domain. The importance of bringing kindness to meet any feelings of vulnerability or shame that might arise as we become more aware of our own biases should be skillfully emphasized.

Other trompe l'oeil or visual perception aids such as the old woman/young woman figure, or the bird/rabbit figure, or examples of change blindness (basketball video) can be useful here, and underscore the "a-ha" moment or

[1] Wikipedia contributors. (2025, August 29). *Nine dots puzzle*. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nine_dots_puzzle

flash of insight that can arise as we see what the moment before we were unable to see. Seeing what the moment before one did not see is usually a mind-opening experience, reminding us that we may not know as much or even perceive as much as we sometimes think we do.

Preparation for Sitting Meditation

Invite all the participants to try out various postures for sitting meditation (which may include standing or lying down, if needed). Offer alignment principles for both sitting in a chair and the floor, using props as needed. This can be a time to acknowledge that what is most important is the intention and sincerity you bring to the posture, rather than forcing the body into a position that doesn't feel right to you. We want to find a posture of relative ease that supports moment-to-moment wakefulness. Another way to put it is to adopt a posture that for you embodies dignity and wakefulness.

Attentional Focus Meditation

Introduce a brief practice (10-15 mins) offering various foci/anchors for participants to explore (this may have been done last week, but more briefly). Take the time needed for this in this class since it will be one of the home assignments this week and in following weeks. As best you can, find a primary "anchor" for your attention, one that is familiar, easy, accessible, simple, and with a neutral emotional valence. The intention is not to "shop around" for a place to rest one's attention, but to use whatever anchor or focal point you choose to support stabilizing your attention, and thus developing your ability to concentrate, as you bring the attention back to this primary object over and over again every time the mind wanders.

As participants begin to explore this practice, the in-class practice *can* and *should* be an opportunity to try out and investigate various objects of attention as potential anchors. These can include: the breath (specifically, where in the body the breath sensations feel most vivid and available), the contact points of the body with whatever one is sitting on, the hands or feet, and/or sounds and the spaces between them; and/or a narrowly focused visual field, choosing a place to rest the eyes. More information

can be found in Appendix A.

Afterward, check in to hear people's experiences with this practice, and to clarify any questions about it.

Review Home Practice

- Practice the body scan with the class recording at least 6 times this week (practice in class can be counted as one time).
- Attentional Focus meditation: 10-15 minutes per day (not necessarily before or after the Body Scan) with focus options. Participants should be supported in choosing a primary "anchor" that is familiar, easy, accessible, simple, and with a neutral tone. There is no recording for this practice. The intention for this practice supports the capacity of participants to guide themselves and hone their ability to recognize when the mind is wandering and bring it back to the chosen object of attention.
- Choose a routine daily activity to be mindful of during the week, as a form or informal mindfulness practice. Note that it does not have to be done particularly slowly. It is an invitation to just engage in one routine daily activity with full presence, moment by moment). Examples: Brushing one's teeth, washing one's face, making tea or coffee in the morning, feeding the dog or cat or other household chores, reading to one's children, taking out the garbage, etc. Should be brief, something done every day, and fairly routine and ordinary.
- **Optional:** Continue exploring mindful eating: either for several bites or an entire meal, using all the senses, chewing well, fully tasting.
- Fill out one entry per day in the Pleasant Experiences Calendar. Give examples: The introduction of this assignment can be linked to the role of perception, ie, what do we *perceive* as pleasant? What are the contents of the "box" we've labeled as pleasant experiences? What makes for a pleasant experience? Why?

Close with Sitting Meditation

CLASS THREE

OVERVIEW & THEMES

The theme for Class Three focuses on the power of being present, and knowing through one's direct experience how moment-to-moment embodied wakefulness, or presence, is experienced in the body and in the mind through the formal disciplines of mindful hatha yoga and mindfulness meditation, as well as, and equally important, informally in everyday life. We are actually *only* alive in *moments*, alluded to in Henry David Thoreau's expressive phrase, the "bloom of the present moment," (Walden, 1854, p. 146; Wherever You Go, There You Are, 1994/2023, p. 1) and Martha Graham's injunction to "make the moment vital and worth living... do not let it slip away unnoticed and unused." (Wherever You Go, There You Are, 1994/2023, p. 45) These quotations imply a certain kind of intentionality, a strong commitment to bring our attention to the immediacy of what is happening right now, no matter where you find yourself or what is unfolding.

After practicing the body scan for two full weeks for home practice, Class Three includes an hour or more of the lying-down yoga postures (adapted as needed for those for whom lying on the floor is not possible or advisable). In addition, a brief body scan may be included at the end of the yoga sequence, in order to better *experience* how awareness can hold the universe of sensations in the body associated with moving into and holding various yoga postures, and also the universe of sensations associated with the body in stillness. It can be pointed out [see below] that, in the end, both practices are doors into the very same room, the room of awareness itself. These practices as well as a sitting meditation practice (15-20 minutes) are offered, and optionally, walking may be included as well, time permitting.

"Yoga is meditation."

Full Catastrophe Living, p. 98

The guided formal practices take up most of the time in Class Three. As noted, although they are all different in terms of the forms they take, they are all *awareness practices*, i.e., forms of mindfulness meditation. In that sense, they really are different doors into the very same room—the "room" of one's own direct moment by moment experience in awareness. This might be pointed out from time to time, if it feels appropriate, while guiding various practices. It might also be skillful to invite participants to notice for themselves what arises inwardly when we "like" or "don't" like a particular practice; or, as participants often put it, when they feel a practice "works" or "doesn't work" for them. The subject of liking and disliking (or more basically, approach and avoidance behaviors) can be explored and investigated as part of the practice itself. It may also be pointed out how, even if we don't particularly like a practice, we can learn something by becoming more aware of *how* and *why*

we don't like it, in the very recognizing of the not-liking, sometimes called *aversion*. Remember that it is the awareness itself that is primary here, not the liking or not liking of the pleasant or unpleasant.

The practices in Class Three may be offered in an extended format, one following and blending into a seamless continuity with the next, like a mini-retreat. Or, they may be skillfully interspersed with small or large group dialogue, inquiring into home practice and how awareness may be showing up in ordinary moments of participants' lives, whether in "pleasant" moments or in more charged or challenging moments. Whatever decision a teacher makes in guiding the flow of the class, it is important to emphasize keeping up as best one can a *seamless continuity of awareness*, not only during formal practice, but also during moments of speaking and listening together!

Because the body is the central focus in Class Three, with the introduction of the mindful yoga, care should be taken regarding the possibility that some participants might experience a reactivation of previous trauma. Sensitivity to language (i.e., movement may not be pleasurable for everyone, so it is important not to assume that everyone will experience it as such), offering options to modify poses, encouraging respect for one's limits, and staying attentive to participants who may be unable or unwilling to practice are paramount. Lying down on the floor in close proximity to others may also be challenging for some. This should be honored in whatever ways are most skillful by the instructor.

The Pleasant Experiences calendar may be unpacked in Class Three or unpacked together with the Unpleasant Experiences calendar in Class Four. Either way, it's important for the teacher to have studied and explored for themselves, in their own lives, the second foundation of mindfulness in the Buddhist tradition, namely vedana. While the Pleasant and Unpleasant Experiences calendars are specific to Classes Three and Four, these themes can and do arise throughout the program. In addition, teachers may have a pattern of over-emphasizing the unpleasant over the pleasant, suggesting that the "real work" of mindfulness and meditation is to recognize the ways that we might avoid opening up to and becoming closer to the more painful experiences in our lives. While becoming familiar with our reactive experiences is a critical component of the practice and a major theme in the program, our relationship to the domain of pleasant emotions such as joy, a sense of interconnectedness, of beauty, of belonging and awe (among many others), are just as critical. These emotions are also part of the human experience and can be deeply nourishing and healing.

Through their experiencing of various mindfulness practices, participants often report how these "pleasant" experiences often appear alongside stress and challenges of various kinds, serving as resources for stability, resilience and wisdom, and as reminders of the fullness and texture of one's life, even under difficult circumstances.

If the Pleasant Experiences calendar is explored in Class Three, allow class discussion (rather than didactic presentation) to highlight themes of connectedness, belonging, and the possibility that there may be pleasant moments even during times of challenge or crisis. It might be skillful to recommend savoring (see Eric Garland: https://drericgarland.com/the-components-of-more/) particular moments, especially pleasant ones, but without clinging to them. Pleasant moments, even in memory, can act as buffers in stressful and chal-

lenging times, serving as reminders that life is never entirely a binary of "good" or "bad," but full of texture, paradox, poignancy, and nuance.

Class Three - Timing for Practices and Activities

The full lying down yoga sequence is offered, which should be at least 45 minutes, and may be close to an hour or a little more If Pleasant Experiences is offered in Class Three, this can take 15-20 minutes.

Notes for Yoga Guidance

Use of the word Yoga

In some populations, e.g., K-12 educational settings, use of the word "yoga" may be problematic, conjuring religious or philosophical roots that are antithetical to the context of the class. It may be most skillful to identify this practice as "mindful movement," while keeping to the simple postures that are part of the MBSR sequence. It is critical for a teacher to stay connected to the main aims of the MBSR program, which is to offer awareness practices in a way that is commonsensical, ordinary, accessible, and without any need to believe in or adopt a philosophy of any kind. While yoga has made its way into most mainstream cultures, and it may often be fine to acknowledge this, care should be taken in how the mindful yoga practice in MBSR is framed. It should be clearly stated at the outset that we will be practicing "mindful yoga" and that if people have any problem with the term, they can simply think of it as mindful stretching, strengthening, and conditioning.

Photo: MBSR, Teknaf Rohingya refugee camp, Cox Bazar, Bangladesh, 2019.

Practice Notes

Introduce the practice without assuming that participants have or have not had any experience of yoga. Acknowledge assumptions or judgments participants may bring—about movement, the body—and invite an attitude of being with and accepting things as they are, moment-by-moment in the body and in the mind (i.e. thoughts and emotions).

Approached as described above, the yoga becomes simply another awareness practice, with nowhere to get to, nothing to fix, nothing to prove or improve upon. It is a friendly and encouraging invitation to feel one's way, ever so gently, up to whatever one's current limits are in a particular stretch or posture, and to investigate those boundaries freshly, without forcing or overriding them. As we come into contact with the limits and restrictions of the body, it helps to bring a sense of interest and kindness to whatever we are experiencing. In this way, we discover that our limits might be very different from we may have thought. What is actually experienced, moment-by-moment, may be new, or come as a surprise. For those who tend to overdo things, the invitation is to experiment with bringing greater ease and gentle exploration to the postures. For those who tend to stay well away from their edges and limits, the invitation is to experiment with coming a little closer to those creative edges, while always stay on the safe side of not causing pain or damage. Make sure options for sitting or for modifying poses are offered. Move through the sequence of postures on the Lying-down Yoga recording, with clear guidance and comments interspersed as required. The teacher needs to stay in close connection with the participants, pausing often to look around to see how participants are working with the guidance, and clarifying things and advising as needed.

The teachers' guidance and language need to be clear, precise, invitational, and continually reminding participants to stay within their own limits—no matter what the teacher is saying in any given moment, or what others are doing. Optimally, participants should be able to follow along without looking at the teacher. In most cases, it is recommended that the teacher does the yoga sequence while guiding it. It may also be necessary for the teacher to show chair options, if there are participants in the class for whom being on the floor is not doable or advisable.

This means the teacher is guiding, doing the poses, and keeping a close eye on the participants as they engage with the movement. This takes some practice.

Mindful yoga as taught in MBSR is not the type of yoga where emphasis is on "picture-perfect poses" or maintaining the posture for longer than it is comfortable. This orientation can and should be stated, when appropriate. For those participants, or even teachers who offer yoga instruction or who have taken yoga for a number of years, this approach may feel unfamiliar and may require a kind of "unlearning" of the formal yoga they are used to or have trained in. For this reason, cultivating one's own embodiment and comfort with the poses as well as the intentions of the practice within the larger MBSR curriculum will support the conveyance of the spirit of the mindful hatha yoga practice most clearly.

Class Three
Flow and Elements

Photo: Outdoor Walking Meditation, MBSR all-day session, Mindful Kids, Miami, FL, 2017

Class Elements

1. Welcome
2. Opening Practice
3. Lying Down Yoga
4. Sitting Meditation: Attentional Focus
5. Small/Large Group Dialogue
6. Review Pleasant Experience Calendar
7. Review Home Practice
8. Brief Closing Practice

Time Activity Teaching Notes

_____ Welcome

_____ Opening Practice

_____ Lying Down Yoga

(Note—this practice may begin the class, or, alternatively, may come at the end of class; see notes in overview).

Introduce the practice without assuming that participants have or have not had any experience of yoga. Acknowledge participants' assumptions or judgments—about movement, the body—and invite a gentle, exploratory attitude of being with and accepting things as they are, moment-by-moment as they arise in the body in terms of sensations, and in the mind in terms of thoughts and emotions. In this way, the mindful yoga becomes simply another awareness practice, engaged in moment by moment, with no place to get to, nothing to fix, nothing to prove or improve upon. There is an invitation and a gentle encouragement to feel directly, through the movement, one's current limits, and to investigate them freshly without forcing or overriding them. As we come into contact with limits and restrictions, in a kind and interested way, we may find our limits to be different than we may have thought. What is actually felt, moment-by-moment, may be surprising or new. For those who tend to overdo things, the encouragement is to experiment with more ease and gentleness. For those who tend to stay well away from their edges and limits, the encouragement is to experiment with coming a little closer to those edges. Make sure options for sitting or for modifying poses are offered. Move through the sequence of postures on the Lying-Down Yoga recording, with clear guidance and comments interspersed as required. The teacher needs to stay connected to the group, pausing often to look around to see how participants are working with the guidance, and clarifying things as needed.

The teachers' guidance and language need to be clear, precise, invitational, and continually reminding participants to stay within their own limits—no matter what the teacher is saying or what others are doing. Optimally, participants should be able to follow along without looking at the teacher. In most cases, it is recommended that the

teacher does the yoga sequence while guiding it. It may also be necessary for the teacher to show chair options, if there are participants in the class for whom being on the floor is not advisable. This means the teacher is guiding, doing the poses, and keeping a close eye on the participants as they engage with the movement. This takes some practice.

Mindful yoga as taught in MBSR is not the type of yoga where emphasis is on the way a posture should look, and this can and should be stated, when appropriate. For those participants or even teachers who offer yoga instruction or who have taken yoga for a number of years, this approach may feel unfamiliar and may require a kind of "unlearning" of the formal yoga they are used to or have trained in. For this reason, cultivating one's own embodiment and comfort with the poses as well as the intentions of the practice will support the conveyance of the yoga practice most clearly.

It may be skillful, time permitting, to end with a brief body scan (10 min.), experiencing what is here now, in the aftermath of all the movement, in the stillness.

Sitting Meditation: Attentional Focus

(15-20 min. suggested)

Begin with guidance related to establishing a stable, upright and balanced sitting posture, revisiting what might be beneficial from last week's exploration. After a week of practicing at home, this practice can assume participants have identified at least one anchor or place to rest their attention. Guidance can be offered in a way that supports this settling and collecting of attention. Optional anchors/foci are offered.

Small and/or Large Group Discussion

On yoga, body scan, sitting practice and mindfulness in daily activities.

Explore how the body is experienced both in movement and stillness—the mindful yoga and the body scan—while staying very close to the participants' direct experience. Explore, too, what it is like for participants to go from moving the body for a time and then dropping into a

sitting meditation posture and a greater degree of stillness. Invite dialogue on differences, discoveries, including what may have been uncomfortable or unpleasant. Explore the entire range of experiences encountered. Emphasis is placed on describing sensations as they are experienced directly in the present moment, as distinct from one's habitual desires, opinions, or judgments about the body.

Optional: Introduce walking meditation (may come at end of class)

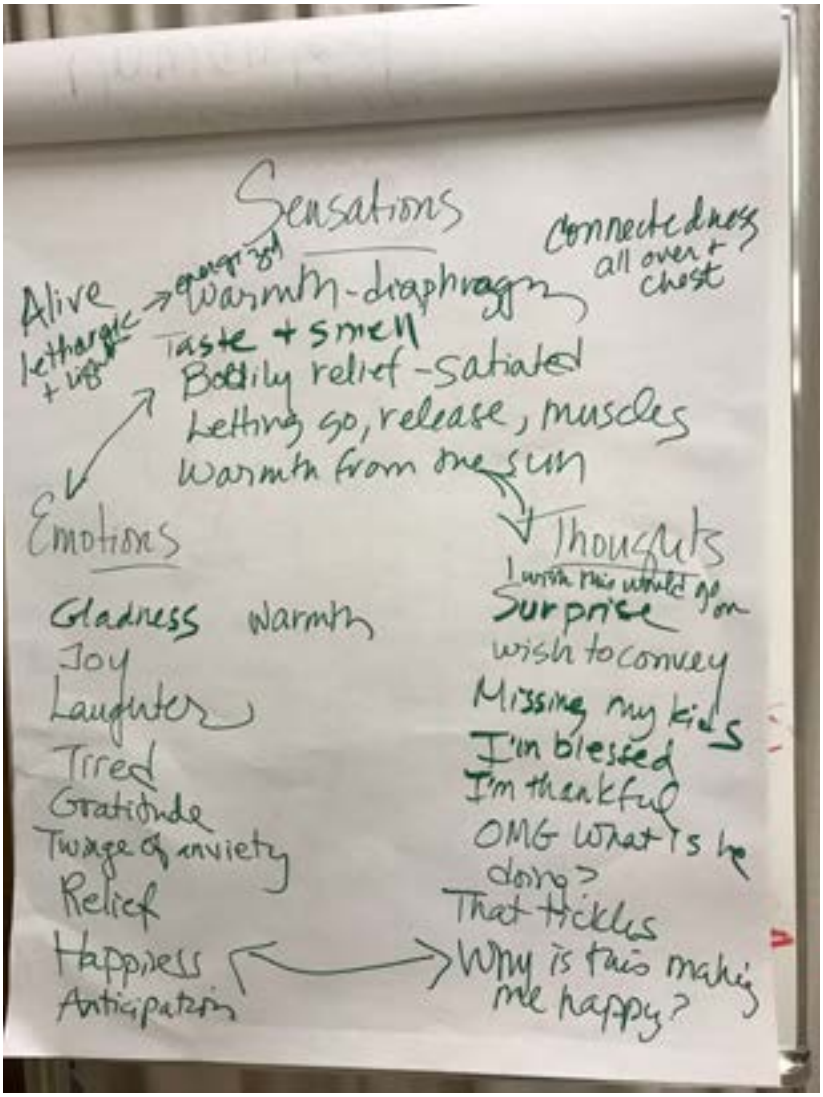


Photo: Class responses to Pleasant Experiences Calendar, Center for Mindfulness, UMass, 2017.

Review Pleasant Experiences Calendar Through Interactive Dialogue

How was the pleasant experience recognized / known in thought? In emotion? In the body? Explore what makes a pleasant experience pleasant in the first place, and why. Explore the unique, individual narrative experience of this in the stories we tell ourselves about our likes and dislikes, as well as the more generalized human impulse to move toward that which we want (and usually wanting more of) and moving away from and rejecting what we do not want— i.e. the homework for the unpleasant experiences calendar). Continue with themes that have emerged in Class Two on perception and conditioning, expectations, and what mindfulness practice may be bringing to light. Also, it is important and skillful to inquire into whether there have been any moments of experiencing something pleasant during the various mindfulness practices this week. While having a pleasant experience is not the goal of practice, of course it is fine to have and to note them if and when they arise, along with everything else that might unfold during a period of formal practice. How do we relate to pleasant experiences in general? Is it possible to enjoy the pleasantness without holding onto it or running after it?

It can be helpful to include or augment the observation that we miss many of our pleasant moments, often focusing only on that which is unpleasant. Other possible themes that may arise include connection, belonging, and contact as important elements of what many of us find pleasant. For instance, in sharing the pleasant experience with others, perhaps there may be even more pleasantness. Also, is there the possibility of being content with what is here, as it is, without necessarily wanting or needing more? In addition, are there pleasant moments in the midst of a crisis, or during periods of emotional or physical pain? Highlighting these paradoxical possibilities, if carefully done, engenders interest, including being curious about where we get stuck or "solidify" around what is constantly changing. Another possible theme to explore is how nourishing and supportive it can be to tune into and linger in pleasant experiences. This points to the possibility of "savoring" what is unfolding in the moment without trying to make the experience stay, which we can't control.

Care should be taken to weave this theme in through group dialogue and inquiry, drawing from the group's remarks and sharing. The learning that arises within the group is usually stronger than that introduced by the teacher as a specific topic or theme.

Optional: Pleasant Experiences can be unpacked in Class 4, along with the Unpleasant Experiences Calendar, depending on time and the inclination of the teacher.)

Review Home Practice

- Alternate practicing the lying down yoga sequence with the body scan every other day, at least six times this week.
- Sitting meditation: Attentional focus (with optional anchors), 20 minutes per day, no recording. The intention for this practice supports the capacity to self-guide and direct, strengthening the ability to know when attention has wandered, to recognize where attention has gone and to then return to the chosen object of focus. It also keeps up and builds on the continuity from last week, as the length of time for this practice increases.
- Become aware of ordinary moments during the day, "capturing" in awareness what is happening in the body, the mind, and within the emotional field. Likewise, become aware of autopilot moments. Once you bring awareness to them—do they stay automatic? What shifts? Are there particular experiences (fatigue, overwhelm) or particular circumstances (certain people, certain environments) where being on autopilot occurs more frequently? Without needing to change anything, bring some degree of openness and interest to it all.
- Fill out one entry per day in the Unpleasant Experiences Calendar; enter one entry for each day (give examples). Include reminders, re: choosing an experience that is not a "10" on the scale of unpleasantness. Encourage working with something milder, wherever possible.

Brief Closing Practice

CLASS FOUR

OVERVIEW & THEMES

Classes Four, Five, and Six together constitute the "central axis" of the MBSR program—delving into the domain of stress and stress reactivity and how to use the meditation practice to experiment with responding mindfully to whatever arises, rather than reacting mindlessly out of the autopilot mode. The curriculum becomes the field of life itself and all its challenges, including all those that brought the participants to MBSR in the first place. After three weeks of daily formal meditation practice in the various forms they have been introduced to up to this point, the sitting meditation practice this week specifically addresses how to work with aversive experiences — the unpleasant — when it arises, whether in the form of discomfort in the body of any kind, or strong emotions, or challenging thoughts. Specific options are offered for how to recognize, welcome, and work with whatever arises, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral — even the most unwanted or difficult arisings — with openness and interest, simply because they have already arisen.

These central classes provide countless opportunities to name and explore in greater breadth and depth how stress affects our individual bodies, minds, and nervous systems, society more broadly, as well as the wellbeing of the planet itself. They offer numerous opportunities to contextualize the participants' specific experiences of stress within the larger framework of societal and planetary stressors; and thus, the possibility of contributing to greater social and planetary wellbeing / transformation in small but hardly insignificant ways — one person at a time as well as collectively — and thus, potentially influencing the direction of the larger social systems we are embedded in. As always, it's best if such themes arise naturally as the classes unfold, within the larger context of health: i.e. you can't be fully heathy in an unhealthy world or in a toxic environment. Contextualizing the experience of individual stress, where appropriate, within the larger context of societal and world stress can an important element of the healing process, in the sense of recognizing and coming to terms with things as they are, even when they are extremely challenging. That "coming to terms" is an active process that has nothing to do with passive resignation, but very much a sense of being able to find new ways of living meaningfully in the face of challenges, as well as new ways to change what needs changing in whatever ways possible, both inwardly and outwardly.

"Anything that threatens our sense of wellbeing--challenges to our social status, our ego, our strongly held beliefs, or our desire to control things or to have them be a certain way--can trigger the [fight-or-flight reaction] to some degree."

Full Catastrophe Living, p. 320

The Unpleasant Experiences Calendar can be used to explore the nature of what we find stressful, and the unique effects various stressors have on each of us, as well as the shared human biological impacts of both acute and chronic stress, and how homeostasis and allostasis can be restored and strengthened through the cultivation of mindfulness as both a formal daily meditation practice and in how we bring it into our daily lives moment by moment by moment.

Through the weaving together of interactive dialogue with appropriate didactic information, the physiological and psychological basis of acute and chronic stress and stress reactivity can be drawn out from the conversation, using the figures explaining reacting versus responding in Full Catastrophe Living. By drawing out participants' experiences of their own unpleasant experiences, the instructor can elucidate how mindfulness of body sensations, emotions, and thoughts can help us recognize and understand how stress manifests and, if not attended to effectively, can build up in us over time.

The critical role of feeling tone (*vedana*) can be explained, since it is so relevant to automatic and therefore usually mindless approach and avoidance behaviors. We tend to be habitually captured by what we perceive as pleasant (and want more of it); are aversive to what we perceive as unpleasant (and want it to go away); and hardly notice things when they are neither perceived as pleasant or unpleasant. This topic highlights the "hard-wired" nature of our biology — we instinctively seek out (approach) food, shelter, warmth, community, love on the one hand; and instinctively avoid danger, poisons, extremes of heat or cold on the other. We are simply wired this way. So there is no need to fault oneself for it, or to try suppress it. Rather, with awareness, we can recognize and understand our automatic reactions better and learn to modulate them more effectively.

We explore how stressors may originate from external events or internal perceptions, thoughts, emotions, memories, and how bringing moment-to-moment awareness to those unpleasant and thus unwanted moments that we typically resist or turn away from can give us access to a more direct knowing and a greater ability to inhabit our moment-by-moment experience as it is unfolding, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or emotionally neutral (in which case, we are often unaware of it entirely). This direct knowing, in turn, often shifts our perception of what we are encountering (you might want to refer to Class 2 and the 9-dots puzzle), and opens up a broader perspective and *acknowledgement* of how things actually are, and perhaps a greater acceptance of the situation in the moment, as it is. With even such a modest change in perspective, new experiences and behaviors may arise spontaneously. In momentarily seeing things more clearly and in broader perspective, it becomes possible to step out of reactivity and the autopilot mode, and intentionally choose an option that might be more aligned with one's deepest values, priorities, and aspirations: in other words, choosing to **respond** mindfully, rather than being caught up in a more automatic and habitual **reaction**.

Some possible explorations in this class include:

(a) What makes an experience unpleasant?

(b) What happens when one's expectations are not met?

(c) What happens when we are not aware of the expectations we may be holding?

(d) What does it means to get "one's own way"?

(e) How long does the sense of satisfaction last if one does get one's own way, before something else is felt to be missing (and therefore wanted) or something arises that is unwanted?

Recognize and acknowledge the myriad sources of stress (by eliciting input from the class), and list both inner and outer sources of stress as well as various coping strategies (both adaptive and maladaptive) that people use. Incorporating a brief history of stress is appropriate here, including Walter Cannon and fight, flight and acute stress (in Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 312); Hans Selye and what he called the general adaptation syndrome, including "eustress," and "distress" (in Kabat-Zinn, 2013, pp. 288-89, 29, 301, 303); Richard Lazarus and Suzanne Folkman (in Kabat-Zinn, 2013, pp. 292-95) and the transactional view of stress between the experience or stressor and the person, and its cognitive appraisal, as well as the appraisal of resources to meet it (in Kabat-Zinn, 2013, pp. 292, 295), Robert Sapolsky (see his book, *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*, 2004) and Bruce McEwen: allostasis and allostatic load, found in McEwen's *The End of Stress as we Know It*, 2002 (also in Kabat-Zinn, 2013, pp. 300, 302). Telomere and cellular aging may also be included, and the role of meditation in reversing or slowing telomere shortening. (See Blackburn and Epel, *The Telomere Effect*, 2017). It is not possible or recommended to draw on all of these sources, but the teacher's knowledge of theory and practical applications is useful in supporting the participants' lived experience and in inspiring them. The scientific research on stress and stress resilience shows that it is important to recognize, appraise, turn toward, and even "put the welcome mat out" for what is unwanted and stressful. In doing so, we learn how to not merely to cope with such challenges, but to optimize our ability to face them effectively, mindfully, and to whatever degree possible, find new ways to live with challenging and unwanted circumstances and even thrive in the face of them. Often these lessons come out of the reports of participants about how their meditation practice went in the past week, or since the program started.

It may also be appropriate to include, if it does not arise in what someone brings up

Photo: Standing Yoga, Mindfulness Tools, Algeria, 2020

in class or in the dialogue, how planetary stress acts on a great many different levels to impact communities, countries, and particular ecosystems (for example, the high Himalayas provide fresh water for billions of people in South and East Asia), and on the world. This highlights the need for a systems approach to stress and the challenges we are facing globally, sometimes termed the "polycrisis," and how mindfulness might be applied at all these levels. This conversation could include the local effects of climate change and how they are affecting the lives of the participants right now; other threats to one's local environment, including economic and social conditions; and intergenerational trauma. Allow this subject to arise naturally, focusing on what is alive in the group and only lightly touch on other topics if it feels appropriate. Teachers need to be sensitive to the possibility of overwhelming the group with wider/global issues which may be true–but not a salient part of the class dialogue. In some geographical areas or within a specific cultural context, these elements may be important to name and acknowledge.

Thus, we begin to explore how, by practicing mindfulness, we cultivate openness to the full range of our human experience, and through this process, develop a more flexible attentional capacity, greater resilience in the face of challenging experiences, and the possibility of relating to our lives differently, drawing on the full range of our inner and outer resources. Another way to put it is that we are learning to let our *doing* come out of our *being — alone and together*.

Class 4 - Timing for Practices and Activities

The main formal practice offered in Class 4 is the longer sitting meditation which may be as long as 25-35 minutes, depending on how things are going with the class participants. This practice includes the ways to work with what may be "unwanted," unpleasant, challenging or difficult. Also, we are "stretching the envelope" a little bit in terms of extending the silence and the stillness in the sitting practice, while strategically guiding it as necessary.

The presentational elements in this class—whether "Unpleasant Experiences" or both "Pleasant" and "Unpleasant Experiences," along with stress and automatic, habitual stress reactivity can take up to 45 minutes or longer, including the class dialogue.

Class Four
Flow and Elements

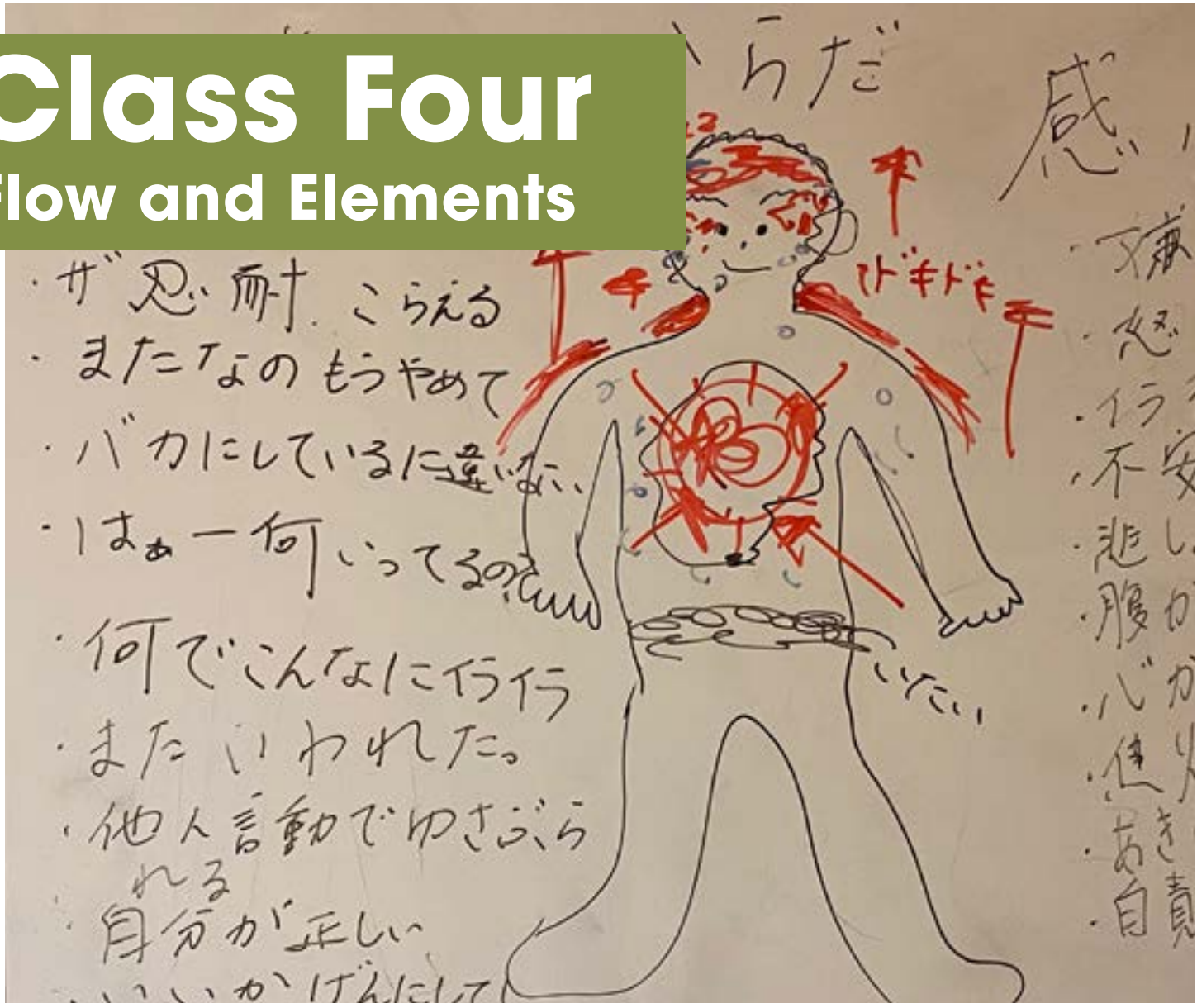


Photo: Automatic Stress Reactivity, Tokyo Mindfulness Center, Tokyo, Japan, 2019

Class Elements

1. Welcome
2. Opening Practice
3. Standing Yoga Postures
4. Sitting Meditation
5. Options for Working with the Difficult
6. Group Dialogue
7. Review Unpleasant Experiences Calendar
8. Review Home Practice
9. Close with Brief Sitting Meditation

Time	Activity	Teaching Notes

Welcome

Opening Practice

With options for various foci/anchors

Standing Yoga Postures

Continue offering a few poses from the standing sequence.

Sitting Meditation

(30-35 min. suggested)

Establish a stable base with postures and participants' choice of attentional anchor, and give time and space for things to settle. Then expand the field of awareness to include a sense of the body as a whole sitting, allowing adequate time for this practice to be entered into. Invite an exploration of unpleasant sensations, perhaps introduced with a brief scanning through the body while sitting. It is important to include awareness of any thoughts and emotions that may also be present, especially as they relate to strong, uncomfortable or painful sensations in the body. The practice is invitational (as per Rumi's poem, The Guesthouse), emphasizing working with whatever arises, including the unpleasant and the unwanted: whatever shows up and predominates in any moment, whether it be in the domain of emotion, thought, or the body itself. It is good to keep in mind that at this juncture in the practice instructions, stability in one's attending is very likely most reliably accessible through the body. Attending to body sensations might include suggestions to be aware of tension of any sort, itching, pulsation, a sense of contraction, discomfort, or restlessness. This exploration can then be expanded to invite attention to more challenging sensations associated with deep tension or pain, as well as to any painful or discomforting thoughts and emotions that might be present.[1]

[1] These options are also appropriate if the unwanted is showing up as a thought or emotion. What is more, the unwanted often arises in one domain and then impacts others: A painful sensation can lead to a cascade of thoughts, memories, or strong emotions. It can be helpful and skillful to point out that these various dimensions of experience arise naturally on their own during the practice. It is equally important to leave room for participants to explore what they are experiences for themselves without too much guidance or talk from the teacher.

Options for Working with the Difficult

- Shifting the position of the body if the sensations are posture related;
- Directing attention to a more neutral area of the body, or to the domain of sound, or to an object in the visual field if the discomfort is too intense to maintain focus; this may be one's chosen anchor, or it may be an expanded sense of the body as a whole, widening the lens of attention, or shifting attention to a more neutral area or object;
- Focusing in on the difficult sensations, and with more interest and openness, investigating the sensations directly by placing them center-stage in the field of awareness. This is a form of "putting out the welcome mat," as well as exploring the possibility of actually befriending the unwanted. Guidance can include ways of relating to and investigating the nature of the sensations one is experiencing: *What are the qualities of the sensations? Dull or sharp? Pulsating? Cloudy or clear? What is the duration? Is there a clear boundary around the sensation or is the boundary diffuse? Are thoughts or emotions arising in relation to the sensations? Is there a pushing away, or a tightening in other parts of the body? Etc.*

Choosing a difficult or "unwanted" sensation, emotion or thought as an object of awareness is always a choice that the practitioner can make. Here, too, the habit of contracting around or "bearing down" or obsessing about what is already challenging may be a familiar pattern for some participants. Likewise, if one's natural tendency is to avoid the unpleasant and the unwanted, investigating whether it might be possible to *turn towards* whatever one finds challenging in some small way, even if just for a moment, like dipping one's toe in a swimming pool rather than diving right in—in other words, neither overwhelming oneself by setting too high a standard, nor altogether avoiding the unwanted, but rather, seeing if it might be possible to find a middle ground, with a degree of gentleness directed toward oneself.

The theme of working skillfully with difficulties can be an opportunity to include mention and guidance on what

is called "pendulation," the process of moving attention closer to the discomfort, holding it in awareness for however long feels right – even a brief peek — but not overwhelming oneself, then coming back to a more neutral focus, such as the breath, sound, one's hands or feet, a spot on the wall; then returning to the discomfort with more stability when ready, and going back and forth in this way, ever so gently.

Alternating the more challenging focus with a more neutral focus builds attention and strength, compassion, curiosity, and a sense of capacity that allows the practitioner to grow in confidence while being in relationship with potentially overwhelming or painful sensations, thoughts or emotions. It is not unusual for participants to discover that the "intractable" pain (or painful emotion or habitual cognitive pattern) has a richer and more textured character than was originally realized, or that the story one is telling oneself about the discomfort or the pain is not fixed, but is continually changing, if only incrementally. This gentle, disciplined investigation supports resiliency, self-efficacy, self-regulation and an experience of agency or sovereignty. It can help uncover, discover, or recover inner resources and capacities one might not have realized one had, and that are available to be called upon at any moment.

Group Dialogue

May start with dyads or trios

Begin with a conversation about the opening sitting meditation and what it was like. How was it to turn toward and work with the unpleasant, the unwanted, if you tried doing that? What did people do, and what happened when they directed attention in the specific ways suggested? Then, after exploring the class sitting practice, invite reports about the home practice this week. *What surprises, learnings, discoveries, and challenges, if any, came up? How did you meet them? work with them? Are there any fresh insights in terms of the body in movement (the yoga practice) and body in stillness (the body scan), and how these mindfulness practices might be converging, and influencing each other?*

Review Unpleasant Experiences Calendar

If Pleasant Experiences Calendar was not reviewed in class 3, begin with Pleasant Experiences, either in dyads or with the whole group.

Explore the nature of what participants discovered in recording their experiences. Using the lenses of *thoughts, emotions* and *body sensations* to support the clear, direct knowing that is often eclipsed by the drama of the story we tell ourselves. And while it is important to acknowledge the story and whatever meaning it might hold, can we explore the construction/fabrication of an experience in our own mind through the lens of the thoughts, emotions and sensations that contribute to it, and then explore resting in awareness itself as a potentially unifying, clarifying, and liberative option, at least for a moment?

Connect the experience of the Unpleasant Experiences with stress. This can be done by making a list of participants' stressors on a blackboard or easel. Keep it personal, since this highlights the individual nature of our reactions, patterns, and responses while also recognizing what is a shared part of the human experience in the class. We may not all have a cancer diagnosis; we may not all be going through a divorce; but we all know something about what gets activated in the body and mind when we experience a threat. And our natural empathy and compassion help us to recognize the humanity of what other people in the class are struggling with—or "carrying"— the root meaning in Latin of the verb, *to suffer*.

Weave into this exploration the biology and physiology of stress reactivity and its usefulness in human survival, especially with acute stress. *Fight-flight-freeze*, and *tend-and-befriend* are both adaptive coping mechanisms with a biological basis. These capabilities protect the organism's integrity when faced with acutely stressful situations. Sharing some of the most current research on stress can support and validate what participants already know from their own lived experience.

In addition, highlight the kinds of social and emotional "threats" that can bring about the same cascade of physiological responses as those triggered by a more physically

challenging event. Threats to one's sense of wellbeing can come from numerous sources at the global, national, local, and community levels, often simultaneously. These can include racial injustices of all kinds, various forms of structural, institutional, and political oppression and racism; and other, dynamic social or environmental expressions of "threat," including school shootings, wars, and the erosion of democractic norms. While all these domains may or may not be present in the room in any given moment or in any given year, it may be skillful for the teacher to draw out what is actually in the room, acknowledging the reality of the embedded systems we all inhabit, the interconnectedness of all things, and how stress is not merely an individual problem, because we are relational beings inhabiting a relational and highly interconnected world. The nature of this conversation about the stress in the room and in people's bodies and lives may arise in some contexts much more than others. It behooves the teacher to be aware of what is in the room and "in the air" when it comes to current events, and particular vulnerabilities facing different populations.

In predominantly White classes, with a White teacher, it can be helpful for the teacher to add these societal stressors to the list of both external and internal stressors to the flip chart. People of color, LGBQTI+ participants, and other marginalized individuals often do not feel safe even naming these stressors, unless the teacher has taken responsibility to honor everybody in the room and appropriately named these issues from the beginning.[2]

Delve into the difference between acute and chronic stress and what happens to the body and mind when stress becomes overwhelming and prolonged. Allow the groups' experiences to lead the way, contributing more conceptual and perhaps academic information only if it aids understanding. Include the effects that such stress can have on one's family and in the workplace.

[2] Crane, R. S., Callen-Davies, R., Francis, A., Francis, D., Gibbs, P., Mulligan, B., O'Neill, B., Pierce Williams, N. K., Waupoose, M., & Vallejo, Z. (2023). Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Our Time: A Curriculum that is up to the Task. Global advances in integrative medicine and health, 12, 27536130231162604. https://doi.org/10.1177/27536130231162604

_____ Review Home Practice

- Alternate Body Scan recording with Lying-down Yoga recording, every other day at least 6 days per week
- Sitting meditation for 20 minutes or more each day, with the attention focused at first on whatever one's chosen anchor is; then as appropriate, moving to include awareness of the whole body, with the possibility of opening to and investigating sensations (or emotions or thoughts), especially those that are challenging or "unwanted."
- Be aware of automatic habitual stress reactions and behaviors during the week, without trying to change them in any way. Bring awareness to the thoughts, emotions and sensations that arise in relation to the reactivity with the same kind, curious, and open presence that has been cultivated over the last three weeks. What are you learning?
- Be aware of feeling stuck or blocked, contracted or numb, or of any tendency to close off to the present moment if and when it happens this week. Do you recognize any habitual pattern here? How does it feel in the body when feelings of being stuck or stymied arise? Approach these two assignments as an experiment, and as an opportunity to possibly see and learn something new (as with the 9-dots puzzle).
- Review information about stress (from Full Catastrophe Living).

_____ Close with Brief Sitting Meditation

CLASS FIVE

OVERVIEW & THEMES

Photo: © MarekPhotoDesign.com / Adobe Stock

Class five marks the halfway point in the program. Making note of this in class gives participants a chance to take stock, to reflect on what has occurred thus far, what learning, growth or change might already be apparent, and also to intentionally consider how one wishes to go forward for the rest of the program. It is an opportunity to recommit, no matter what one's experience has been up to this point. It is worth noting that growth is rarely linear. It is not always a smooth, ever-upward trajectory, but often a series of ups, downs, and twists and turns. Even when it appears that there is no movement at all, we can trust that something is very likely happening inwardly, beneath the surface, changes that may not yet be perceptible—especially if we have been conscientious in making the time and engaging in the gentle discipline of the meditation practice in its various forms, as well as showing up each week for the class, which is itself a significant statement of commitment. It is helpful to encourage a sense of openness and intentionality at this half-way point, as we bring awareness to our expectations and recommit to full engagement with the program in the coming weeks.

The main meditation practice in this class is the full spectrum sitting practice characteristic of MBSR, in which the primary object of attention shifts over time from the breath (or the chosen anchor), to a sense of the body as a whole sitting and breathing, along with whatever sensations may be present anywhere in the body (and putting out the welcome mat, as best one can, for those sensations, whatever they may be), to hearing (sounds as they arise and pass away, and the spaces between them), to thoughts and emotions as mental constructs — events in the field of awareness spontaneously arising in the mind, to choiceless awareness/open presence,

followed toward the end by returning to the breath sensations in the belly, or to the whole body sitting and breathing, or to whatever one's chosen anchor for the attention might be. The theme of impermanence, which has also been noted in the body scan and the mindful movement, can also be highlighted here in all the various domains of practice, recognizing how all phenomena are in a state of change and flux, arising and passing away, not in themselves permanent — even those seemingly intractable thoughts or sensations one might at times feel plagued by. Please see the "Mindfulness-Based Interventions: Teaching Assessment Criteria" (MBI:TAC) Domain 4: Guiding Mindfulness Practices for more.

This longer sitting meditation practice (45 minutes) serves to further extend the range and flexibility of one's attention, while also introducing the possibility of inhabiting the always-present open space of choiceless awareness. It should include more frequent and longer stretches of silence, giving the opportunity for participants to engage in the practice on their own. It can also include making the suggestion to drop underneath the verbal guidance and even into the silence in between and underneath the words of guidance during the meditation practice, as one experiments with dropping into and resting in wakefulness and open awareness, with "no place to go, nothing to do, and nothing special to attain or acquire in this moment."

Two major themes are highlighted in this class: 1) Awareness of one's automatic, habitual, conditioned patterns — what we can call mindless reacting in stressful situations when our buttons get pushed; and 2) how it is possible to respond with greater mindfulness, and see how mindfulness can help us to recognize and become more familiar with these frequently restrictive, limiting, and unhealthy automatic patterns. This recognition itself is a moment of mindfulness. It can literally interrupt the pattern, and thus create space—even briefly—for new attitudes, choices, behaviors, and insights to emerge.

In Class 5, as participants return from a week of simply noticing their automatic and habitual stress reactions whenever they arose, but without trying to change any of it in any way, they often express a new sense of clarity and possibility regarding both their stress and their lives more generally. This often takes the form of realizing that they may have practical options for facing and working with whatever is stressful in their lives in ways that they may not have recognized before. This is a sign that the meditation practice is beginning to take root, and that they may be recognizing a new sense of agency and possibility in regard to their life challenges, both big and small, as they unfold during the MBSR program. Frequently, participants note that just bringing awareness to their reactivity in the moment shifted things, sometimes dramat-

"...as soon as you intentionally bring awareness to what is going on in a stressful situation, you have already changed that situation dramatically and opened up the field of potentially adaptive and creative possibilities just by virtue of not being unconscious and on automatic pilot anymore... simply by holding whatever is happening in awareness, you are actually changing the matrix of the entire situation even before you do anything overt, such as take action, or even open your mouth to speak."

Full Catastrophe Living, p. 336

ically, in ways that resulted in their doing something different without even intending to. This is often a critical turning point in their understanding of the meditation practice and its potential value in navigating the ups and downs of the day, and more generally, of life itself.

In this regard, as already mentioned in Class 4, Classes 4, 5, and 6, serve as the central axis of the entire eight-week program. The discovery that it is possible to relate differently to challenging, especially emotionally charged experiences as they are arising in the present moment is frequently brought up by the participants themselves as a key realization. When that occurs, it is helpful for the instructor to explicitly highlight and reinforce the wisdom and power of that realization, and encourage other class participants to share any similar experiences they might have had during the past week.

The conversation in class can be supported by visuals/diagrams explaining the role of stress and stress reactivity in health and illness. If skillfully used, these can support the participants' first-person experiences in the practice and explain the scientific underpinnings of mindfulness (as both a formal meditation practice and as a way of being in one's life) and its relationship to health and illness over one's entire lifespan. The most germane are Kabat-Zinn's two figures (9 and 10) in Full Catastrophe Living, 2013, that distinguish between the physiological, psychological, and health consequences of "mindless reacting" (Figure 9, p. 308) versus the possibility of "mindful responding," (figure 10, p. 337), in which the vicious cycle of automatic (mindless) reactivity, which always leads to more stress, and thus to more reactivity can be broken by responding with greater mindfulness in the present moment. This overall schematic can be supplemented, when appropriate, by other research findings and models, such as (b) Judson Brewer's habit loop (Brewer, 2017, pp. 7-9, 10-11); (c) research on the effects of stress on the length of our telomeres and how their shortening due to stress can be reversed through mindfulness (Blackburn and Epel, The Telomere Effect) ; and (4) any other figures or illustrations that be helpful in anchoring, confirming, reinforcing, and supporting the ongoing learning of the participants.

This ancillary scientific framework, if used judiciously and sparingly, can serve to reinforce and support the participants' first-person experience of the meditation practice itself and the MBSR curriculum more broadly. It can most skillfully be introduced as a complement to what the participants themselves are reporting about their experiences, rather than as a lecture. One or two illustrations, at most (most likely the two from Full Catastrophe Living), are probably all that might be necessary. It is important not to overload participants with scientific details.

These scientific themes are best introduced during the conversation in Class 5 about the home practice assignment in Week 4, and what might have been learned or realized. Did anybody notice that they responded differently to a stressful situation during the past week? What was different? What did they learn from that experience? This is the place to introduce the two figures from FCL depicting responding mindfully to stress as opposed to reacting on autopilot (mindlessly). Any more recent research findings, when relevant, can be woven into the class dialogue and conversation as appropriate. The science has a much greater impact that way than when presented as a didactic presentation.

Every attempt should be made to draw on and integrate the participants' actual life

experiences into a larger conversation in regard to the science of mindfulness, highlighting their personal experiences in the practice and, as appropriate, relevant scientific findings.

While the science of mindfulness has expanded exponentially over the past twenty-five years, almost none of it is appropriate to introduce in class. The MBSR instructor should be cognizant of some of the most important broad domains of research and recent findings. But for the most part, that information should only be used to strengthen their own familiarity with the field. As an MBSR instructor, even if you only draw on a small fraction of what you know from having studied the literature, your familiarity with the science can help at times in class to reinforce the participants' reports of their direct experiences with the practice, and perhaps inspire them to keep up the momentum of practice week by week as the program unfolds.

Various themes may also be appropriate to draw upon in particular instances. These might include problem-focused, emotion-focused, and meaning-focused coping strategies (See Kabat-Zinn, 2013, pp. 292-3, Lazarus and Folkman, and Folkman), or "commitment, challenge and control," (See Kobasa, in Kabat-Zinn, 2013, pp. 247-8, 270, 292), or Schwartz and Shapiro's model of intention leading to attention, which leads to connection, regulation, order and ease, (in Kabat-Zinn, 2013, pp. 279-283), and/or Antonovsky's stress hardiness and sense of coherence (in Kabat-Zinn, 2013, pp. 248-49). These all relate to stress-hardiness, resilience, emotional regulation and link the participants' experience to the science

Photo: Body Scan at MBSR All Day, Society of The Four Arts, Palm Beach, Fl, 2014

and theory of mindfulness-mediated stress response.

Further and more current resources to support teaching skill and knowledge include: Holzel et al, (2011) and Davidson et al (2003), (also mentioned in Kabat-Zinn, 2013, pp. xliv-xlv). More on the Default Mode Network DMN) can be located in Kabat-Zinn (2018 c, pp. xii-xiv) and Brewer (2017, pp. xv-xvi, 100-104,166-67). See also Jon Kabat-Zinn's highlights in his papers in Appendix D.

Note: It is expected that as new research findings unfold, this scientific background material will grow and may provide new and inspiring foci for this conversation about how mindfulness functions on multiple levels. Thus, MBSR instructors can benefit from staying broadly aware of new findings in mindfulness research. That said, a familiarity with some of the early work in the field can provide important context as well.

Two quotes that may be helpful to include in this central trio of classes:

> "Everything can be taken from a man [person] but one thing: the last of the human freedoms--to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." (*Man Search for Meaning,* Viktor Frankl, as cited in Kabat-Zinn, 2013).
>
> "It is not the potential stressor itself, but how you perceive it and then how you handle it that will determine whether or not it will lead to stress." (Kabat-Zinn, 2013)

Daily mindfulness practice is assigned, with an emphasis on the continued observation and application of moment-to-moment awareness in daily life, in addition to formal practice assigned. It might be helpful to propose that the real meditation practice is life itself, experienced moment by moment by moment, and not merely the time one devotes to formal practice.

Class 5 - Timing for Practices and Activities

The full MBSR sequence of guidance in the sitting meditation is presented and assigned for homework this week. The guided sitting meditation is about 45 minutes long. The class discussion about the home practice assignment for the past week—bringing awareness to automatic, habitual stress reactivity without attempting at this point to change those reactions is a major topic, along with people's reporting on their experience with the 45 minute sitting meditation practice. Together, these two topics of conversation and inquiry can take 45-60 minutes. If a reflection on being at the midway point in the course is put off until the end, it's best to leave about 15 minutes for participants to complete it. Those who want to take more time can stay longer (see class flow for more information).

In addition, if the All-Day class happens between week 5 and week 6, instructions for the All-Day will need to be included as well.

Class Five
Flow and Elements

Photo: Meditation, online and in-person, Korea Center for Mindfulness, Seoul, 2024

Class Elements

1. Welcome
2. Opening Practice
3. Standing Yoga Postures
4. Sitting Meditation
5. Midway Reflection
6. Class Discussion
7. Review Home Practice
8. Closing and Brief Sitting Mediation

Time	Activity	Teaching Notes

Welcome

Opening Practice

Brief, with options for various foci/anchors

Standing Yoga Postures

Choose a few more postures from the Standing Sequence; consider starting the sequence while seated, and then moving to standing.

Sitting Meditation

(40+ min. suggested)

Beginning with anchor/breath and systematically moving and expanding attention to the entire body (including reminders about working with pain or discomfort), sounds, and the field of mental events (which includes both thoughts and emotions, any and all of which, if they arise, are valid and appropriate objects of attention), opening toward the end into choiceless awareness— the possibility of resting in awareness itself, in a space of "open presence" or "choiceless awareness" without privileging any particular object of attention – like an "empty mirror," simply reflecting whatever comes before it, but not pursuing anything or rejecting anything that might arise momentarily in the field of awareness. In guiding the full sitting meditation practice, each domain of potential objects of attention (the carriage of the body in the sitting posture; breath sensations in the body; a sense of the body as a whole sitting and breathing; hearing — awareness of sounds and the spaces between them — awareness of thoughts and emotions, and their expressions in the body, if detectable), need to be given ample time to explore, while also *making sure there are sufficient stretches of silence between the elements of guidance for people to drop into their own experience of what is being invited and pointed out.* Obviously, this is a lot, given that this class is the participants' first exposure to the entire sequence, and that just introducing choiceless awareness is in itself a major addition, and potentially challenging. So it is important to keep in mind that this class is merely a first exposure, a "launch" into the full sequence, and that the audio guidance over the week will build on this initial exposure in class and

continue the work of familiarizing and deepening participants' practice experience with this complete meditative sequence. *Keep in mind that leaving appropriate stretches of silence interspersed throughout the guidance is essential, and depends on your own sense of what is best in the moment for the people in the room.* Obviously, investigating mental events needs somewhat more guidance in the sequence, since this is the first time that thoughts and emotions and awareness itself have been introduced as valid objections of attention.

It is very helpful, as a way to ground and stabilize the practice, to round out and bring the meditation sequence to a close by returning to the breath sensations in the body or to whatever anchor a person has chosen for a brief period, before bringing the guided meditation to a close.

It may also be helpful to emphasize at some point that whatever the object or objects we are choosing to attend to at any given moment, whether body sensations, sounds, thoughts, emotions, other objects in the inner and outer landscapes, or awareness itself, it is always the very same awareness! The objects of attention, whatever they might be, are of only secondary importance. What is always most important is the awareness itself. The objects of attention can be usefully thought of as different doors into the same room, the room of awareness itself.[1]

Most important is not to be attached to, or stand in, or build stories about the doorway, but, rather, to enter the room, if only or even for the briefest of moments. And then, to keep coming back, over and over again if maintaining continuity in the awareness is challenging — as of course it will be a great deal of the time.

It is also important to point out that every single one of us is born with this awareness, so it is not something we have to acquire. We already have it. Or, perhaps more accurately, we could say we are it. It (awareness) is an intrinsic and defining aspect of our nature as human beings. What

[1] In the case of awareness itself, just for the instructor, this practice cultivates what is known as "meta-awareness," i.e., awareness of awareness. And just to be explicit about it, mindfulness is another word for awareness. They are synonyms. And that awareness, along with the realization of the interconnectedness of all things, is both intrinsically compassionate and selfless. This can be verified for oneself through directly investigating own own experience.

we are cultivating in MBSR and in mindfulness more generally is access to awareness, so that it can be maximally available to us and used effectively in everyday living. And that access takes ongoing cultivation, over and over again, moment by moment by moment. That is what the daily practice is helping us to cultivate: access to our own awareness, so we can draw upon our own innate and intrinsically trustworthy wisdom when we need it most.

Midway Reflection

Offer a brief reflection on what has unfolded thus far in the first half of the course, and invite a renewing of one's personal intentions for the second half—no matter what has or hasn't happened thus far. Acknowledge one's initial hopes and expectations for the course, as well as what has actually been experienced and learned, and the possibility of renewing one's commitment at the half-way point—*given that growth and learning are non-linear, and do not always unfold in ways we might want or expect.* We do have control, however, over how and how much we invest our energy.

This reflection can itself be approached as a practice, and an important and necessary inquiry that can be yet another way of bringing mindfulness to our lives. Participants may be invited to write or dialogue about how the course is going for them at this point, what they are learning, if anything, and if and *how* they are managing (or struggling with) making time to practice in their lives each day. This conversation or writing exercise is not an evaluation of the teacher or of the course, but rather an opportunity to help the participants reflect on and share their experiences of MBSR so far. *(Reflection and writing may be done at this point* ***or at the end of class.*** *Writing is only seen by the teacher and is an opportunity to let the teacher know how things are going, and also, if more support is needed, the teacher can offer written comments, or make arrangements to meet with the participant for more dialogue and clarity.)*

Class Discussion

May begin with small groups, move to large group

Several topics should be covered in class:

The longer sitting practice and what people experienced, discovered, and were challenged by. **Being at the mid-point of the course:** Inquire as to what new or renewed intentions may be present. Also acknowledge any feelings of disappointment about "progress," and suggest the possibility at this mid-point to reappraise and renew one's initial commitment for the next four weeks, and perhaps institute an appropriate "course correction" for the next four weeks.

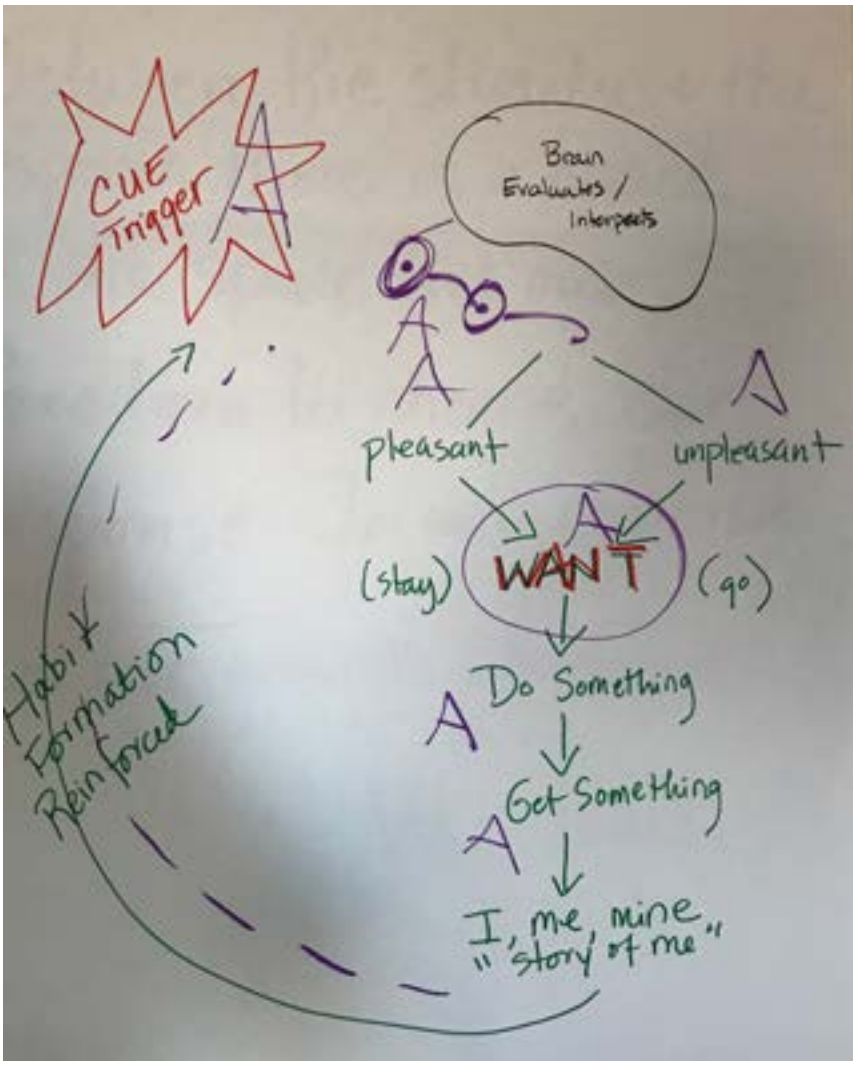


Photo: Mindfulness-Mediated Stress Response, Center for Mindfulness, UMass, 2017

Home practice of recognizing stress reactivity during the week without trying to change it. Use participants' experiences to underscore the practical impact of greater awareness—knowing more closely one's reactive patterns, and how this can support developing clearer seeing and the possibility of stepping out of automatic, habitual patterns, i.e., responding mindfully, rather than reacting mindlessly.

The use of diagrams and conceptual models (see "themes and overview" for options), can support and validate the participants' experiences and encourage ongoing engagement in the practice through recognizing shifts in their own perception, attitudes, or behaviors.

Inquire into **adaptive and maladaptive strategies** for working with chronic stress and **explore how mindfulness may support new ways of being in relationship to ongoing life challenges.** This may loop back to previous class discussions in which participants may have shared how their growing awareness is shifting certain behaviors and attitudes. Note that this awareness may include both knowing something more about stress and reactivity and also knowing something more about one's own growing capacities and creativity to meet the stress. This can be tied to Lazarus and Folkman's work on cognitive appraisal as well as Suzanne Kobasa's research (See Kabat-Zinn, 2013, for more), or more recent research findings.

Can also connect to an exploring and sharing within the group of the resources that are already present in one's life, and the recognition that the participants have already been expanding their own repertoire of internal resources by incorporating the cultivation of mindfulness moment by moment into their daily lives. This subject is best explored through interactive dialogue, with short, didactic points made by the instructor as needed to clarify and focus the discussion. Recognize the radical nature of the invitation to turn toward and approach (i.e. get in close to) what is frequently avoided, and how to do this skillfully, with kindness and curiosity, as an act of befriending ourselves and our experience, and as a new way to deal with challenging situations.

Optional: Preparation for all-day session (if the all-day session will happen before Class 6, make time to describe and prepare participants. See pages 56-57 of this Guide, in Week 6). *If using a written "midway reflection," review home practice first. Participants can complete midway questions, turn in to the teacher, and leave as they finish*

Review Home Practice

- Recordings/download links are distributed for the longer sitting practice and standing yoga sequence recordings. Alternate the 45-minute sitting practice with the standing yoga, lying down yoga or body scan, every other day. For example: Mon: sitting practice, Tues: body scan, Wed: sitting practice, Thurs: standing yoga, etc. Continue using the recordings provided, at least 6 days per week.
- Continue to bring awareness to moments of reactivity, and this week, actively explore—with the same qualities cultivated in practice, namely friendliness, curiosity, openness—new possibilities. This may include using one's anchor as a way to ground or center oneself—even for a moment—or the option that there may be nothing to do (so often reactivity fuels an urgency to fill the space.) The use of **S-T-O-P** may also be offered as an option to support pausing in the midst of stressful experiences:

Photo: © seanlockephotography / Adobe Stock

S: Stopping; pausing in one's movement or activity

T: Taking a moment, perhaps a breath, or several, connecting with an available anchor, and getting interested in what's happening;

O: Observing and opening to what is happening: in the body and mind, and perhaps even in the environment; taking stock; inviting a kind, gentle interest in what's happening;

P: When you are ready, proceeding but with perhaps some new information intentionality, and possibly some new options for meeting the next moment fresh. *(Note: This is a formalized and more specific version of the "pause" practice suggested in Week 1 home practice, which can be offered along with the other homework as a precursor to the more formal STOP practice).*

The STOP practice is a fruitful line of inquiry and may be informally explored as home practice is reviewed if the subject didn't arise during class discussion. Participants may offer ways they've begun using their meditation practice to interrupt habitual patterns, or simply to become aware of them. These reminders may inspire or benefit the entire class.

- Complete the Difficult Communications Calendar

All-Day Preparation (if between Classes 5 and 6)

- Include information about the all-day session so participants are able to prepare.

Close with Brief Sitting Meditation

CLASS SIX

OVERVIEW & THEMES

In Week Six, the participants continue to build on the content of Class 4 and Class 5, investigating what is being learned and experienced first-hand when intentionally bringing awareness to moments of reactivity, and thereby strengthening the skills, practices, and learning trajectory involved in engaging one's experiences, and especially stressful experiences, in this way. Additional elements of the model of mindfully responding to stress as opposed to automatically and more or less mindlessly reacting (automatic pilot mode) that were not introduced in Class 5 may be helpful to introduce when engaging with the participants' own reported experiences.

Neuroplasticity, flexibility of thought and behavior, the surprising power of some of the attitudinal foundations of mindfulness practice: not-knowing, non-doing, trust, letting be, patience, and others—all may be touched on or highlighted in the class as participants share their discoveries, challenges, learning, and questions.

"Even when we are feeling threatened. angry, or frightened, we have the potential to improve our relationships dramatically if we bring mindfulness into the domain of communication itself."

Full Catastrophe Living, p. 480

In Class Six we continue to build on the themes developed in Classes 4 and 5, and begin investigating and familiarizing ourselves with reactivity and responsiveness in the intrapersonal context. Building on the foundation from Classes 4 and 5, we open up to explore interpersonal reactivity, and the dynamic web of relationality and interdependence we are all immersed in. Class Six also features the highly important theme of communication, and in particular, stressful communications: how they arise and play out, their effects on our own experience of stress, anxiety, depression, feelings of frustration or inadequacy, etc.; as well as in how they affect our interpersonal relationships. We explore how greater mindfulness brought to both one's own speech and in listening and actually *hearing* what others are saying might support the quality of our interactions with others in our everyday lives. Bringing such mindfulness skills—newly honed and/or deepened in class and through ongoing daily practice—to bear on relational elements in our communications with others, verbal and non-verbal, furthers the investigation in class of the far-reaching applications of the meditation practice in everyday life and, specifically, in our interpersonal interactions. Acknowledgement of the emotional layers that interpenetrate and shape most of our patterns of interpersonal relating can highlight how mindfulness can support balance, courage, truthfulness, appropriate vulnerability—and boundary-setting—in interpersonal encounters of all kinds. For example (from Kabat-Zinn's original 1993 curriculum outline: the impor-

tance of learning how to say "no" and the resistance/difficulty in saying "no" to some people. Other topics that may arise or be appropriate to raise on the part of the teacher include identifying and addressing the impact of race, gender differences, and the power dynamics inherent in communications where inequity, hierarchies, and power differentials are significant factors. This may also include workplace or family power dynamics.

Additionally, habitual, automatic, and unconscious patterns of reactivity in our communications, especially when we feel threatened in one way or another, may be explored as (1) unnecessary barriers to a more heart-felt and honest relating; and (2) how mindfulness in such moments might catalyze more skillful ways to connect authentically with another person, especially around challenging topics. Teachers may use a variety of learning activities that offer participants an experience in listening and speaking with increased awareness. Options include:

- Acting out various communication styles (assertive, passive, and aggressive, for instance) to physicalize and articulate what may be relatively unconscious habitual patterns of relating.
- Mindful speaking/listening dyads using the "pause" guideline from the Interpersonal Mindfulness Program. (See Meleo-Meyer, 2017, pp. 69-92, and Kramer's *Insight Dialogue*,[1] 2007). This can be paired with one or more specific experiences captured on the Difficult Communication Calendar, or with other invited recollections, such as recalling a time that one felt deeply listened to, heard, and seen. Such an exercise invites one's more wholesome relational resources to be recognized and brought to the fore.
- Expanding the application of the "pause" guideline to the realm of technology: when to text or email; when to share photos; the impact of "instant" sending and receiving; as well as the addictive draw of our devices and of 24/7 connectivity, possibly at the expense of our present moments and connectivity with ourselves through embodied wakefulness and non-doing in the present moment — a huge and ever-increasing challenge since the age of social media and now, Chatbots and AI.
- Aikido (verbal or physical, with the caveat: Unless a teacher has a strong grounding and understanding of this activity and how to present it skillfully, it is wise to omit this option. There are plenty of other accessible options that are less likely to activate trauma or upset.)
- Unpacking of the Difficult Communication Calendar in dyads and large group; additionally, rather than focusing on the difficult communication itself, it is also possible to inquire into when we have felt heard, received, and seen, either as a listener or speaker. This option can cultivate wholesome qualities that influence *how* we listen, and can be brought to bear in our daily life to support greater openness and opportunities to recognize and perhaps shift or expand our perspective.
- Other mindfulness-based and body-based activities that support integrating moment to moment awareness and emotional intelligence into one's relating to others.

[1] While all six of the interpersonal mindfulness guidelines are listed in these references, it is not advised to use more than "pause" in the MBSR class due to time constraints. Working with *pause* alone is much like S-T-O-P, which participants may have already been introduced to. The pause extends this, and invites deeper investigation into presence while in dialogue with another.

While the activities listed above are formulated for in-person, face-to-face communications, it is also helpful and essential to acknowledge the myriad ways in which we currently communicate (phone, email, text, voicemail, Zoom, social media)—as well as the way that news feeds, Instagram, Tik Tok, social media of all kinds, TV, radio, and other outlets that we have fingertip access to 24 hours a day—might impact us and even "colonize" our minds with a never ending stream of toxicity, and enclose us in echo-chambers. This attention capture through our devices is so pervasive and addictive that it can easily go unrecognized, to say nothing of how difficult it is to break such addictive habits, in part because the technology itself was designed for effective attention capture (eyeballs on screens). Awareness of our entrainment into these domains offers a comprehensive and inclusive frame for recognizing the sheer volume of communications that most of us experience daily, and offers us the possibility of making wiser choices regarding what we are willing to expose ourselves to and allow in to influence the quality of our waking moments.

Finally, guidelines and information for the all-day session are introduced (if the all-day class comes after week five, this will necessarily shift to the prior week).

Class 6 - Timing for Practices and Activities

The sitting meditation in class 6 should, as appropriate, contain longer stretches of silence than heretofore, within the full 40-45 minutes MBSR sitting practice. The discussion of the all-day session (if the all-day was held before class 6) should have adequate time and space to unfold. Depending on the size of the class, it might take between 20 minutes (for a class of fewer than 20 participants), or 30 minutes, or even more. The theme of communication can take up to an hour, including discussion, some dialogue practice, and/or the Aikido exercises (either physical or verbal) if you feel comfortable doing them and they feel germane. Given the complexity of the topic of communication and the multiple dimensions of relationality, it is important not to rush through this theme, or pack too much into the communication component of the class. Having a strong sense of the relevance of this subject in the curriculum and a clear plan for going forward, even if in the end you do not follow it, will be supportive. Again, the more time you have, the better, so as to not feel rushed or try to compress too much into too little time. If you are citing research in relationship to mindful communication, you might mention Tania's Singer's research in Germany studying what they call "dyadic compassion meditation." Insight Dialogue might also be mentioned as appropriate, in terms of bringing greater mindfulness / embodied presence / deep listening to one's interactions / communications with other people. Even if not mentioned in class, it might be helpful for the instructor to familiarize themself with this domain as background.

Photo: Taiwan Mindfulness Center, Taipei City, Taiwan (Republic of China), 2025

Class Six
Flow and Elements

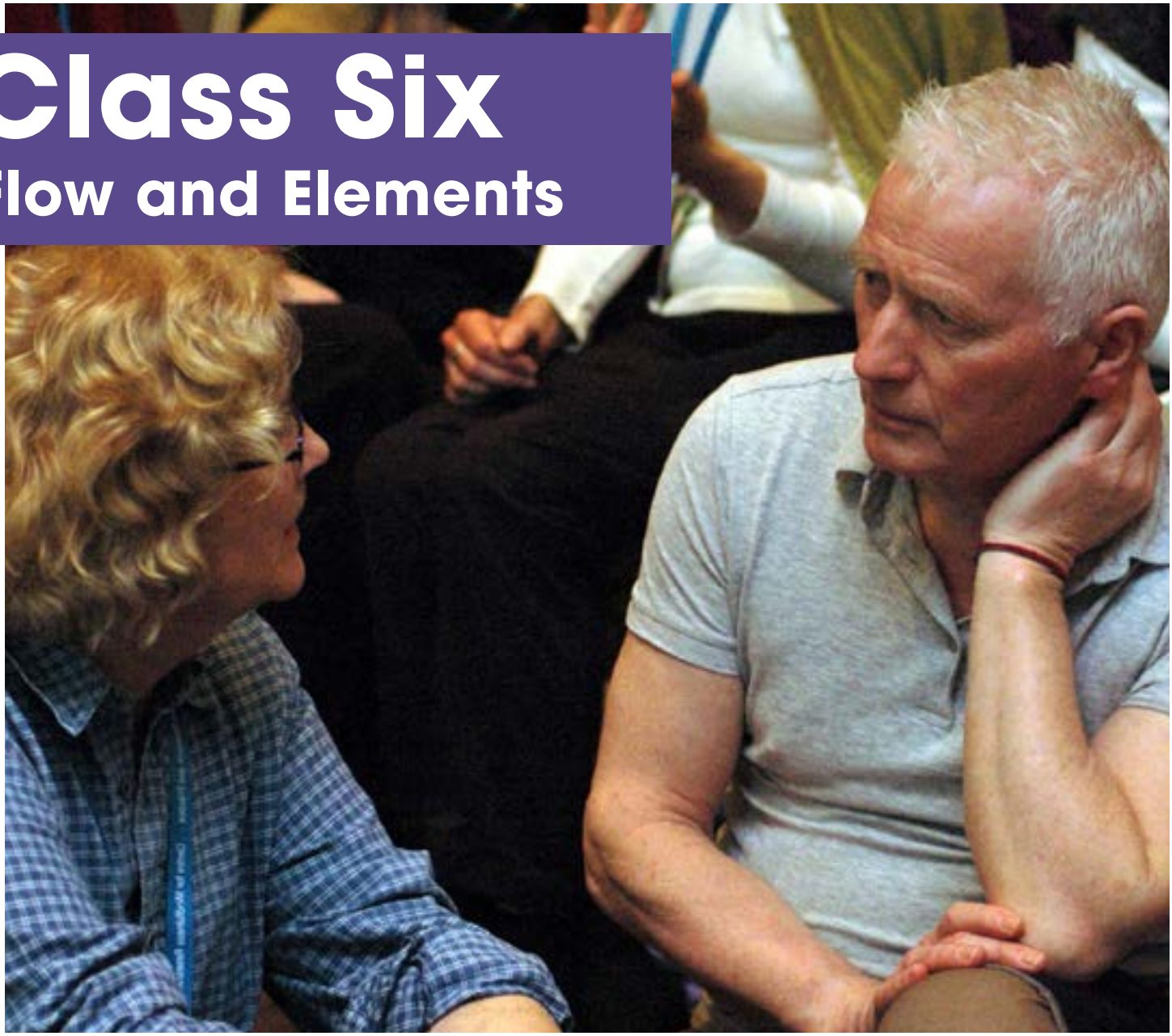


Photo: International Mindfulness Conference, Chester, UK, 2015

Class Elements

1. Welcome
2. Opening Practice
3. Standing Yoga Postures
4. Sitting Meditation
5. Class Dialogue
6. Introduce All-Day Class
7. Activities on Difficult Communications
8. Review Home Practice
9. Brief Closing Practice

Time	Activity	Teaching Notes

Welcome

Opening Practice

Brief, with options for foci/anchors

Standing Yoga Postures

Choose from the standing sequence and/or begin with adapted poses in the chair.

Sitting Meditation with More Silence

(35-45 min. suggested)

The full MBSR sitting meditation as introduced in Week 5, and with more silence: anchor/breath, body, sounds, thoughts and emotions, choiceless awareness/open presence, returning to breath or anchor at end (35- 45 minutes).

Class Dialogue

May begin with dyads or small groups

Invite reflection on the sitting practice that was just engaged in, as well as the home practices for the past week using the guided recordings and possibly the STOP practice in one's everyday moments from time to time.

Inquire whether people are noting the arising of any spontaneous creative responses rather than the usual reactions arising during (1) any of the formal practices; (2) ordinary moments of throughout the day; as well as in (3) more highly emotionally charged stressful moments. *What, if anything, are you learning?* Explore both intentional pausing and the explicit development of mindfulness skills as well as what may be arising spontaneously for the participants as an outcome of regular, consistent practice. Recognize and acknowledge the non-linear nature of the learning and growing that may be unfolding, as well as how the discipline of consistent practice, supported by one's ongoing intention and energy and an overall attitude of non-striving offers space for something new, and perhaps unexpected to emerge.

Emphasize that this can be glimpsed in small but important ways, even as we acknowledge how challenging it can be to establish and maintain such a consistent daily discipline in one's life.

Keep in mind the option of offering some remarks on the participants' written midway reflections (if they were completed) to encourage continued engagement with practice for the second half of our time together. Aggregate the comments and offer summations of the overall points. This can be particularly helpful in reinforcing understanding and personal engagement in every aspect, formal and informal, of the various meditation practices that have been introduced up to this point. Emphasize if appropriate, the metaphor of "many doors, one room."

Introduce and Discuss the Upcoming All-Day Session

Describe the all-day session on the upcoming weekend, whether Saturday or Sunday, emphasizing that it is an integral part of the MBSR program and that attendance is expected, as was emphasized from the beginning in the Orientation session.

The day is an opportunity to refine and deepen the formal mindfulness practices experienced thus far, and an opportunity to explore what arises as we engage in an extended period of ongoing formal practice, away from the usual activities and responsibilities of our everyday lives. An extended period of practice, often called a retreat, or in this case, because it is so short, a "mini-retreat," is a powerful opportunity to deepen one's meditation practice and also have a more direct experience of the seamless continuity of our lives, and thus, of every moment being a perfect moment to be a bit more present and see what is unfolding with eyes of wholeness.

This quotation from Marcel Proust might be germane and inspiring in this context: "The true journey of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having fresh eyes."

The all day session can be seen a precious opportunity to set aside our usual activities and commitments for a stretch of time (about seven hours *in total*, and give ourselves over to cultivating some degree of continuity within the formal and informal meditation practices we have been engaging with over an entire day. Explain the power of intentionally maintaining noble silence throughout the day, and how it

will be held in an expanded community of practice that in many places might include people from other MBSR classes, as well as "graduates" of earlier programs, all of whom you may be seeing for the first time.

Give enough information about the framework of the day to help people prepare. This includes details and logistics about lunch, avoiding the use of technology, especially checking phones, texting, etc; that there are no "breaks" during a retreat, and that even going to the bathroom is an opportunity to keep up a seamless continuity in one's practice. There should be an emphasis on the importance of taking care of oneself (self-care), along with strong assurances of the instructor's availability throughout the day if anything should arise that requires checking in verbally.

Activities and Group Discussion about Difficult Communications

A variety of learning activities, exercises or practices may be used to explore the topic of interpersonal relating and communications. However, any activity should adhere closely to the overall framework and intentions of the entire MBSR program, and its grounding in moment-to-moment awareness — i.e., practice.

Emphasis is on developing greater awareness and skill in navigating one's relationships with others. That may include recognition of maladaptive communication patterns and styles, habitual reactive patterns in both thinking and emotional expression, as well as opportunities to explore new ways of relating built on the mindfulness practices / skills that are being cultivated in the program.

As a way to introduce this topic, a guided reflection on a challenging or difficult communication may be offered, recalling a situation from the Difficult Communications Calendar. Examine habitual relational patterns and how they are experienced in the mind and body, and how they manifest as often unconcious behaviors in one's relationships.

Review Home Practice

- Continue alternating the guided sitting practice with the mindful yoga (lying down or standing) as in Week Five.
- Prepare for the all-day session: As much as possible, let your family or co-workers know you'll be unavailable during this time; prepare a lunch, and consider giving yourself some extra time at the end of the day for being with yourself and whatever might be present from the day, with particular attention to the transition from a day of silence to speaking again as you return home to family, friends, pets, and other activities. This kind of latitude is not always possible to create, but it is helpful to at least suggest it as a possibility, and how helpful it could be if at all possible to arrange even for a few hours for relative quiet and non-doing after returning home.
- Bring awareness to those moments when you find yourself in communication with others, the whole domain of interpersonal relating. What, if anything, have you been learning from your meditation practice that might be germane to the interpersonal sphere – about listening?; about tacit assumptions?; about jumping to conclusions?; about judging others?; about wanting people to be different?; about wanting circumstances to be different? — i.e., other than what they are?; about jumping to conclusions?; about judging others?; about wanting people to be different?; about wanting circumstances to be different — i.e., other than what they are?; about switching off/disconnecting from others in the midst of conversations?
- Pay attention to what you take into your body in the form of food and drink; bring the same kind of attention to what you are taking in through devices of all kinds, especially your smart phone, laptops, etc.: i.e., notifications, texts, e-mail, social media, television, radio, podcasts, websites, newspapers, etc. In all these arenas, notice your choices and preferences, and the degree to which you may be addicted to them and to the constant stream of input and engagement they require and, in many cases, are designed to induce in

us. Notice what the effects are of what you are taking in on your body and how it feels, even the postures it adopts; on your mind; on your ways of perceiving; on your memory, your emotions, your relationship with your body, with other people, etc. What is being gained? What is being lost? What is your degree of attachment? Addiction? How much are you being entrained into the haze of auto-pilot mode? Are you getting what you want from a steady diet of news, or from binging on social media? What might be being lost? What happens when you bring mindfulness — i.e., non-judgmental awareness — to these "inputs?" What do you notice? How does it feel? What, if anything, shifts?

All-Day Preparation

- Include information about the all-day session so participants are able to prepare.

Close with Brief Sitting Meditation

ALL-DAY CLASS

OVERVIEW & THEMES

Photo: All-Day Meditation Session, Center for Mindfulness, UMass, 2016

The all-day class (7.5 hours) is a marvelous occasion for participants to engage in an extended period of both formal and informal mindfulness practices over the course of a day. The day provides ongoing opportunities keeping up (and seeing how hard it is to keep up) a continuity of awareness over the course of a morning and afternoon. It is a powerful opportunity to give oneself over, moment by moment, to the domain of being, as we cultivate an attitude of non-doing. Since by design, nothing else is happening during this time, the retreat becomes a container within which we can befriend all our moments as they unfold. Every moment of *now* is equally available for each of us to simply stop all the outer and inner doing and intentionally "drop" into the body and into the present moment over and over again, as best one can, and throughout the day — all without forcing anything or berating oneself when we discover how unruly the mind can be. Such a day of formal practice or retreat is very different from the way we usually spend a weekend day, filled as it can be with the responsibilities and demands of family life, of work, of getting things done or pursuing "leisure." By design, the all-day class is completely ordinary, an opportunity to simply experience one's own *being* over the course of a number of hours, in a supportive environment. The retreat is a container in which there is no agenda other than to intentionally practice being present for this moment of one's life; giving oneself over to the domain of being, and experiencing life unfolding moment by moment throughout the course of a day, just as we've been exploring in shorter blocks of time in class since the beginning of the program.

Within the container of silence, and with the support of clear guidelines for the day offered at the start of the morning, the possibility of according moment-to-moment continuity to the practice is highlighted and encouraged, not only during periods of formal practice, but also during moments of transition, and the "ordinary" moments of eating, walking, having time to rest, going to

the bathroom, etc., as the day unfolds. The guiding principle is maintaining, as best one can, a seamless continuity of awareness throughout the day, no matter what is being engaged in, and no matter what is coming up in the mind or the body.

Without the usual distractions and demands, participants have an opportunity to drop beneath, or at least *become aware* of, the discursive mind, the running narrative, the "business as usual" automaticity that so often drives our lives. Slowing down, appreciating things as they are in this moment, however they are, not trying to get anywhere or become anything over a stretch of hours offers space to see and feel things more clearly. This amplifies the possibility of meeting whatever is being experienced—whether it is being evaluated as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral—as an opportunity to embrace life as it is and as it is unfolding moment by moment by moment, with full awareness. Practicing in this way affords many opportunities to inhabit and therefore reclaim one's moments and for clear seeing and acceptance, abiding in some degree of equanimity with whatever arises, as best one can, and thereby perhaps, coming to better know oneself and what is unfolding in one's life and in one's mind and one's body moment by moment by moment. It also affords an opportunity for seeing that the stories we may be telling ourselves about our lives [i.e., "the story of me, starring me"] may be far too limiting, inaccurate in many ways, and perhaps diminishing of our own unique value and beauty, and of our potential to contribute to the larger world in ways both little and big, but always significant. It also offers the opportunity to practice bringing kindness to oneself and to whatever shows up during the day, whether pleasant, unpleasant or neither, and to be aware of the impact that meeting the moment with kindness may have on the unfolding of experience.

Times and practice placements are suggestions. As with a typical meditation retreat, some balance between moving and stillness is essential in promoting wakefulness and honoring the body. Unlike retreats in more traditional settings (i.e., Zen/Chan, Vispassana/Insight, or Vajrayana/ Dzogchen), the day features the various formal meditation practices we have been engaging in during the MBSR program (sitting with breath and full body awareness, mindful walking, body scan, and mindful hatha yoga/movement), along with several possible important additions—namely the Mountain or Lake meditation, and most importantly, a loving-kindness meditation.

As the day unfolds, we purposefully extend the stretches of silence during the guidance as people settle into the flow of the day. Most important is to emphasize a seamless continuity of practice, no matter what is unfolding at any particular moment, and especially during transitions. That would include bringing awareness to going to the bathroom, drinking water, putting on a sweater, lying down to rest, etc. Note that noble silence is maintained at all times, even during various transitions.

Note that establishing the noble silence takes place only after all participants arrive, store their belongings, take their seats, are welcomed by the teachers, and hear the presentation of the guidelines for the day.

All-Day Class
Flow and Elements

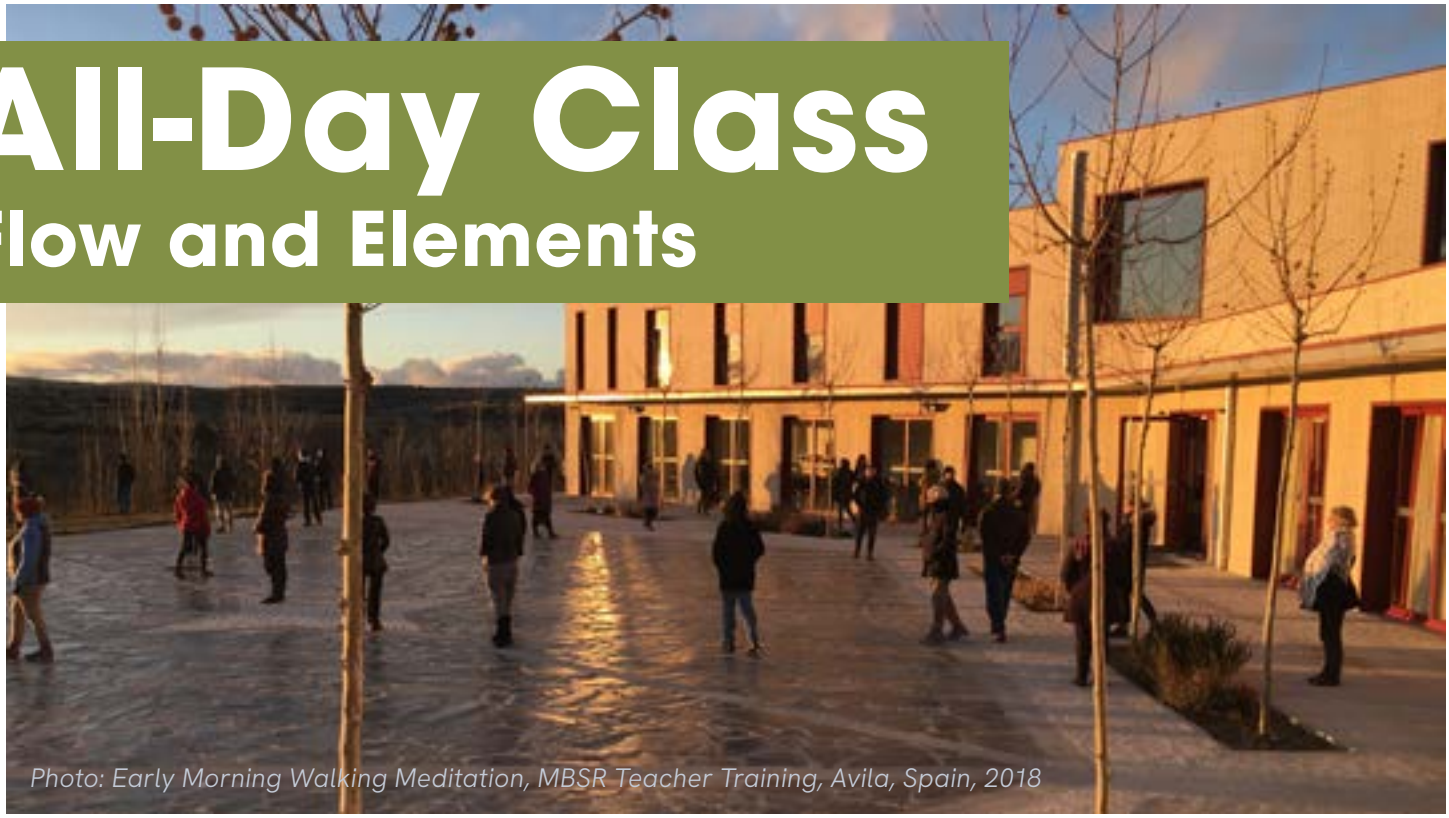


Photo: Early Morning Walking Meditation, MBSR Teacher Training, Avila, Spain, 2018

Class Elements

1. Brief Sitting Meditation in Silence
2. Welcome, Teacher Intro
3. Guidelines for the Day
4. Opening Sitting Meditation
5. Guided Lying Down Yoga
6. Sitting Meditation
7. Walking Meditation
8. Mountain or Lake Meditation
9. All-Day Talk / Inspirational Offering
10. Lunch Instructions
11. Silent Lunch
12. Standing Yoga / Other Mindful Movement
13. Loving-Kindness Meditation
14. Walking Meditation
15. Final Silent Sitting
16. Dissolving the Silence
17. Large Group Dialogue
18. Transitioning Guidance
19. Sitting Meditation
20. Closing Circle / Goodbyes

5 min.

Brief Sitting Meditation in Silence

5 min.

Welcoming Remarks, Introduce Teacher(s)

This welcome is extremely important, and sets the tone for the entire day. Elements might include (1) that the all-day session is an integral part of the MBSR program. Participation is expected, just as attendance at all classes is expected, barring extraordinary circumstances. We recognize and honor the commitment it takes to devote a weekend day to oneself in this way, and appreciate the support you may be receiving from family and friends to make it possible; (2) that the all-day session is an opportunity to extend over an entire day the mindfulness practices we have been cultivating in class and at home for the past five weeks; (3) that as we embark on this day of mindfulness, you do not have to worry about what is to come, or make a big deal of any of what might unfold—the invitation is to simply stay in the present moment as best you can with whatever arises, and be guided by the teachers and what you already know about the various practices we will be engaging in; (4) that you do not have to be "good" at any of this, or be a "good meditator," and that it is OK if you find the day stressful in some regards. That is not a problem either. The whole day, just like the entire eight weeks, is a laboratory for developing new ways of being in relationship with our minds and bodies and whatever arises, moment by moment by moment as this day in your life (actually only ~ 7 hours) unfolds; (5) Know that we (the teachers) are right here practicing along with you every step of the way. We are also available if you need to check in with one of us at any time. But before you do, ask yourself what you think we might say in response to your concerns, given everything you have learned from the past five or six weeks of being in the MBSR program. Because, in all likelihood, you already know.

5 min.

Guidelines for the Day

Need to include: a few pointers on how to work with any challenges that might arise; teacher availability; maintaining silence throughout the day—even in the bathrooms! There are no "breaks" in the schedule, just as there are no

breaks in life, no in-between moments. “This is it.” Every moment is an opportunity for practicing being present and cultivating some degree of patience, equanimity, friendliness, and acceptance, no matter what is unfolding. Speak about inner and outer silence, establishing that today there will be no use of devices (except for emergencies). That means: no checking phones; no texting; no email; no social media; no reading, note taking, or writing of any kind, including journaling, taking photographs, etc.

It may be skillful to acknowledge that this is not meant to be the “silent treatment” that some participants many experienced as punishment as a child. Nor is it a muzzling of your true voice or views, even if such a thought arises. The invitation is to simply note whatever feelings and impulses you might be having, including around the restricted use of digital devices during the day, and allow whatever arises in your mind to be seen as objects of attention in their own right, without acting on any of it. Addressing the value and intention behind the noble silence, emphasizing that the teachers are available at all times, and that it is OK, if needed, to approach whichever teacher is not teaching and talk (perhaps in a whisper).

This can all be said at the outset, with a light touch that can be both reassuring and supportive. The day is a rare opportunity to be with ourselves without the usual distractions, and in the process, befriend ourselves in perhaps new ways. There is no one way to experience the all-day: everyone will have the day that they have. For some, it may be stressful at times; for others, a day of being in one’s own good company, as well as in the company of so many others who are learning to reclaim the fullness of their lives and embrace the challenges life presents, including whatever our original reasons were for taking the MBSR program. As with all the practices experienced up to this point, there is no place to go, nothing to do or to become, and no “special” experience you are supposed to have. But you might stay open to the notion that every moment is special, and every experience—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, moving, thinking—is unbelievably special and can be recognized as such, welcomed, accepted, and held in awareness, like a mirror reflecting whatever comes before it, but without pursuing, clinging

to, or rejecting anything. As with every other day in which we have been cultivating mindfulness, this day is simply an extended opportunity to explore the possibility of being fully present with ourselves as we are, and perhaps appreciate the gift of that opportunity today, and in this very moment.

20-30 min.

Opening Sitting Meditation

Focusing on awareness of the body sitting and breathing, and bringing the attention back to rest in awareness of the body sitting and breathing each time you notice that the mind has wandered off someplace else. Another anchor for attention can be chosen if needed. Remind people of posture, whether on a chair or on a *zafu*—encouraging people to try sitting on the floor if they care to, just as an experiment, and going back to the chair when it feels appropriate. Talk about "the carriage of the body" in the sitting posture, whether on the floor or on a chair, emphasizing sitting in a posture that embodies wakefulness and dignity. Do not idealize or privilege sitting on the floor. Sitting on a chair is fine. So is lying down for the entire day. It is the inner attitude and posture that is most important.

45-60 min.

Guided Lying Down Yoga

Usually ending with a brief body scan

30-40 min.

Sitting Meditation

Begin with awareness of the body sitting and breathing; then open up the field of awareness to sounds, then thoughts and emotions, ending in choiceless awareness. While a certain degree of talking is important in guiding such an elaborate meditation, make sure to include extended periods of silence throughout.

20-30 min.

Walking Meditation

Guided; people practice on their yoga mats, going back and forth from one end of their mat to the other = their "lane." Emphasis on feeling the body as a whole standing, then walking, with intrinsic presence, nobility, groundedness, the feet mindfully "kissing" the floor/ground with

each step. Explicitly feature the elements of lifting, moving, placing, and shifting with each step, and giving a continuity of attention as best one can to the entire cycle of walking. Awareness of what the mind is up to during the walking, moment by moment. It is important to emphasize not looking at one's feet. They already know what to do, and we already know how to walk. Some participants may need to sit during the walking meditation, and imagine themselves walking. Some may be walking with crutches, or wheeling in a wheelchair. Give options for ways of workingwith the body as it is today.

Mountain or Lake Meditation

25-30 min.

Guidance for these meditations are offered as a way for participants to connect with inner resources that reflect stability, receptivity, majesty, dignity, solidity, groundedness, and more. Care should be taken to offer sufficient guidance to evoke the image, without going overboard with words or imagery that take listeners away from their present moment experience and leave too little time for silent wakefulness.

Photo: Mountain Meditation, IONS Earthrise Retreat Center, Petaluma, CA (now closed), 2017

Time	Activity	Teaching Notes

10-15 min.

All-Day Talk / Inspirational Offering

Feature a theme that gives encouragement/inspiration, while staying grounded. Use of poetry, stories, or a brief reading that supports participants may be offered, with remarks that elucidate any of the various themes of the program. The teacher can also address any particular themes arising in the class.

5 min.

Lunch Instructions: Mindful Eating

Awareness of the sensory dimensions of eating including seeing, smelling, tasting, lingering in the aftermath of swallowing, feeling the whole body, awareness of being in the community of others sharing a core human experience. Not a break in the day, but a seamless continuity with all the other meditation practices.

45-60 min.

Silent Lunch

Is included as part of the practice as the group is encouraged to eat together. Time afterwards for mindfully walking, resting, yoga, sitting, and maintaining silence. Reminders about refraining from technology, reading, writing, knitting, and other activities, in order to stay close to the primary intentions of the day.

30-40 min.

Standing Yoga or Other Mindful Movement

Postures from the Standing Yoga sequence can be offered here. If a teacher has experience with another contemplative movement practice (Chi gong, or Tai Chi, for example), this may be offered.

25-35 min.

Loving-Kindness Meditation

See Appendix C for suggestions

15-20 min.

Walking Meditation

May be outdoors, weather permitting

Depending on the weather and the environment, this period of walking can move outside. Additionally, participants may be offered a choice to keep the focus “narrow”

(on the feet or legs, for example) or to widen the focus to the entire body walking, including what is seen and heard, with the reminder that standing mountain pose, coming to stillness, can be used to reconnect, to re-collect one's attention when it wanders. In essence, at this time, it can be helpful to invite participants to explore what might be maximally supportive for each of them at this point in the day, with the emphasis on continuing to stay in the present moment, whatever is arising, while taking care of oneself and recognizing one's own agency and intentionality.

Other walking or visual meditations may be offered as opportunities to widen awareness in support of integrating the loving-kindness practice with the natural world, especially if one is walking outside.

20-30 min.

Final Silent Sitting

10 min.

Dissolving the Silence

Note: not "breaking" the silence!

Invite connecting through eye contact throughout the room and with one's neighbors first. Then finding a partner and talking quietly together about one's experience of the day. (*This can best be done by sitting next to your partner, facing in opposite directions, with your shoulders close. This allows soft speaking or whispering close to each other's ear*). Instructions are to stay close to direct experience; this may include what's present right now, how challenges were worked with during the day, surprises, preferences and whatever else showed up. Remind participants to bring awareness even to this transition, and that there is no particular way to feel—including liking or not liking the day. What does it mean to have had a "good day" or a "bad day?" *It may be helpful to move from dyads to groups of four to ease the transition before moving to the larger group, depending on the number of people at the retreat.*

25 min.

Large Group Dialogue

Invite speakers to stay close to what actually was seen, felt, experienced *in the immediacy of the practice* over

the course of the day; acknowledge that the day likely had pleasant and unpleasant moments. How did you work with them? Was it OK to put out the welcome mat for all experiences, whether they were pleasant, unpleasant, or neither? Teachers may comment or inquire as appropriate, responding to a participants direct experience, but recognize the sensitivity/vulnerability that participants may be feeling at the end of such an intense day. It is best to avoid a question & answer format; indicate there will be time in class in the coming week for continued sharing, including questions.

Offer Some Guidance for Transitioning from the Day

5 min.

The importance of taking care of yourself as you leave and transition to the next event in your unfolding day; aware of any feelings regarding what this day of mindfulness has left you with right now, staying close to what is emergent, even if it is unclear or confusing, especially in terms of being with people, or being alone with yourself. Recognize that all feelings are welcome: they are just feelings, and will change. Know that there will be ample time to speak about the day in class.

Sitting Meditation

5 min.

End with a brief sitting. May end with bells, or not.

Closing Circle (Optional)

5-10 min.

One possible way to close the day: clearing the room, standing in a circle, invite what might feel right for individuals whether that is making eye contact, or having an opportunity to offer a word or two spoken into the circle expressing what's here right now, knowing it will change, but marking this moment. It is important that *any and all* responses are welcome, including feelings that may be negative or challenging. There is no particular way one should feel at the end of the all-day class. It can be helpful to remind participants they may reach out to their teacher if the need arises.

Good-byes and Clean Up of the Space

CLASS SEVEN

OVERVIEW & THEMES

Themes for class 7 include how mindfulness practice is being integrated into one's daily life, and how to continue bringing greater awareness to all of one's moments. Participants are invited to purposefully reflect on life-style choices that are adaptive and self-nourishing, as well as recognizing those that may be maladaptive and self-limiting (from week 6 home practice). The theme, "what we take in," can be explored especially as it relates to the daily pressures of time, technology, and the speed by which most of us live and process information. It is important to emphasize their newfound and very much growing capacity to care for themselves in wholesome and realistic ways.

As we enter week 7, there is often a sense of growing engagement in the process of the MBSR course and in the practice itself, especially after the all-day session. From here on, it is important to encourage participants to continue to invest the necessary time and energy in the program through honing and even stepping up their commitment to themselves and to the discipline required to practice, as well as experimenting with ways to personalize practice as is offered in class 7 home practice. The end is in sight, and yet, the program is far from over. And so, encouragement to keep up the commitment to one's health and wellbeing by engaging in both the formal and informal practices in all the ways they have already been doing so far is extremely important.

This can include how we might be and act in and with the world for the benefit of ourselves, others and the natural world in the spirit of *engaged mindfulness*. Note that all mindfulness is "engaged mindfulness" in the sense that, recognized or not, every action we take or do not take (by commission or omission) has downstream consequences in the larger world that can be brought into awareness. What might be the manifestations and downstream conse-

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quences of living one's life from an appreciation of the deep interconnectedness of the universe, and from recognizing and perhaps embodying an appreciation for the interconnectedness of all life, what the Vietnamese Zen teacher, Buddhist monk, peace activist, prolific author, poet and teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, called interbeing? What happens when we see our own wellbeing as contributing to the wellbeing of others and the larger world? What happens when we act from a place of generosity, inclusion, and connection? It is important that this theme be anchored in what has been arising in conversation in the class itself, rather than as a political agenda. Engagement arises naturally out of seeing and experiencing the interconnectedness of all things.

"The challenge, of course, is how we are to live.... Given world stress... work stress and role stress, people stress, ... time stress and our own fears and pain, what are we going to do this morning when we wake up? How will we conduct ourselves today? Can we be a center of peace, santiy, and well-being right now? Can we live in harmony with our own minds and hearts and bodies right now? Can we put our multiple intelligences to work for us in our inner lives and in the outer world, which have never really been separate?"

Full Catastrophe Living, p. 559

A theme of class 7 could be called "Engaged Mindfulness," exploring the ways in which the practices, both at home and in class together, along with our conversations and deep listening to each other, may have shone a light on and deepened our capacity to recognize, feel, and hold the pain of racism, sexism, and other forms of inequity. It is important to acknowledge both sides of this: recognizing how easy it is for those of us who are privileged to perhaps not be subject to them in major ways, to not see the pain and suffering at all; and for those who have not benefited from certain privileges to also speak about the impact of this–and to notice perhaps a new willingness to act to change the world through mindfulness-based social action of one kind or another, even in what may seem like very small ways. But small does not mean insignificant. Even tiny shifts in awareness and compassion, and the acts that flow from them matter.

Of course, great care must be taken not to push the teacher's personal agenda or opinions. What we are talking about is a sensitivity to what is in the room, whether voiced or unvoiced, and making sure that the space is being held in ways that might feel safe enough for everybody to voice these kinds of issues as they pertain to their particular lives and experiences, and the stress that they experience every day, which may very well be deeply influenced by skin color, ethnicity, accents, poverty, etc. These themes may have arisen earlier in the course. It is critical to take great care not to fall into ideology, new-speak, self-righteousness, or political correctness when these issues surface or are invited into greater awareness in the room, as appropriate.

The conversation about the all-day should be open and welcoming of all experiences, inviting, naming, and exploring any and all moments that were perceived and recognized as unpleasant, pleasant, or neutral; this applies as well to any likes, dislikes,

neutral moments, and preferences—and how one worked with all of it, tying these experiences during the retreat to how one might work with similar arisings in everyday life.

It is also important to acknowledge that at this point in the program, there will inevitably be emotions of various kinds arising around the impending ending of the program. It is important to affirm that the course has not ended yet, and in many ways is still far from over in terms of moments, if not weeks. This affords an opportunity to explore one's own habitual ways of handling endings in general, and bringing awareness to how we might approach the anticipated ending of the MBSR program appropriately in the context of awareness itself. That might include offering a suggestion in Class 7 that participants bring an object of particular meaning and personal relevance to share during Class 8 as an expression of the shared learning that has unfolded in the group. It could be something that exemplifies and personalizes one aspect of what one might have learned or experienced during the program, something that may hold particular meaning for you, such as a poem, a quote, music, a photograph, a book, or any other personally meaningful object. If this suggestion is included, it's important to emphasize that it is not mandatory, and that one's presence in class 8 is more than enough.

The curriculum for class seven can be approached in a number of different ways. Teachers can choose from a range of possible approaches and practices, depending on what feels most appropriate in terms of the class's unique composition, collective experience, and unique experiences of practice among the participants. Time constraints and the size of the class will also shape how things unfold and what choices are most appropriate.

Class 7 - Timing for Practices and Activities

The sitting practice for class 7 can be offered with progressively more silence, and should be about 40-45 minutes in length. This may include a few minutes of guided loving-kindness meditation at the close. Changing where everyone is sitting in the room, including the teacher, or engaging in slow/fast walking can take about 20-25 minutes. Discussion of the all-day should be comprehensive (if the all-day came after class 6), and may take up to 30 minutes or longer if it is a larger class (over 20 participants).

Class Seven
Flow and Elements

Photo: MBSR Teacher Training, Japan Mindfulness Collaborative, May 2025

Class Elements

1. Welcome
2. Opening Practice
3. Movement Practice
4. Other Practice Experience
5. Sitting Meditation
6. Option
7. Review Home Practice
8. Brief Sitting Meditation

Time	Activity	Teaching Notes

Welcome

Opening Practice

Brief, with options for foci/anchors

Movement Practice

One option is to lead a brief body scan (sitting or standing), asking participants to identify an area of the body that feels like it would benefit from some direct attention or movement. Participants are then invited to share a movement or a pose that they have found supportive, inviting the class members to follow along. It could be a movement from the MBSR sequence, or another movement they find helpful. Encourage simplicity and exploration, while also reminding everyone to take care around physical limitations. The teacher can offer supportive guidance / modifications as needed.

Changing Seats, Fast/Slow Walking, or Other Practice Experience

Where participants are invited to explore perspective, habitual views, likes and dislikes, in a playful and embodied way. Guiding comments or observations from the teacher can be skillfully interspersed within the silence. This activity invites participants to experience and articulate what it is involved in *"taking one's seat in one's life,"* not just in one's meditation practice. This exercise highlights the possibility of being fully present wherever one finds oneself, independent of one's particular (and often idiosyncratic) preferences. It "echos" a similar intention in one's formal meditation practice when one takes one's seat, as well as within one's life — with all the uncertainty and opportunity each moment holds, whatever the circumstances.

Sitting Meditation

Options include a more open, silent practice; one possibility is offering participants to choose for themselves the object they will attend to (or choiceless awareness). The mountain or lake meditations are also options that can

be invited, and loving-kindness may also be included skillfully towards the end of the practice session. Emphasis is on allowing more silence, building on the extended practice and the extended silence cultivated during the all-day class. Emphasize from the beginning that taking your seat can be seen as a radical act of love, and of sanity. It may also be helpful to underscore the possibility of *recognizing* our interconnectedness and common humanity, so often reflected in the pain and suffering we all experience at times, even if the particulars are different. This may be more evident this week in the class discussion after the all-day.

Reflecting on the all-day session. Make sure participants understand that reports of all experiences, pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral are all welcome. Invite comments about what has arisen in people's lives in the intervening time, since the daylong session. Were there any particular insights, or lessons that might be worth noting and remembering? Was there any sense of disorientation or confusion either during or following the all day?

Include here any reports on how the home practice went this week, including challenges to engaging in it, as well as any questions arising, inviting the deep listening of *dialogue* and *inquiry* rather than framing it as a "discussion."

There is also the possibility of including and/or continuing with the themes of mindfulness in the domain of communication and interpersonal experiences.

Optional: Relationship with Technology

As an extension of the topic of mindfulness of relationships, relationality, and communication from Class 6, if appropriate, our relationship to technology, devices, the news, and social media and all forms of entertainment can be explored, especially mindfulness of how addicting they can be. Invite conversation around the participants' awareness of these issues: the attention economy, "continual partial attention," perpetual distraction, the algorithms behind social media as featured in the movie *The Social Dilemma*: the downstream effects of addiction,

hidden costs and the price we pay in terms of privacy, time wasted, etc., and the costs highlighted by the work of Sherry Turkle at MIT and her books (See: Turkle (2016), *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*).

Photo: International Mindfulness Conference, Chester, UK, 2015

Can we bring greater mindfulness and intentionality to the choices we make moment by moment and the short and long-term effects of these choices? This topic can be more fully developed now if it was part of the homework assignment for Week 6. The conversation might include the pros and cons of digital access, what's gained—and what's lost? (consider adding current research on technology addiction and the unintended consequences of technology use), including the challenges of limiting screen time, and going against the current culture of technology. The increasing use of AI and power of AI and the dangers might also be brought up. This can also be connected to the overall effects that digital technology, now and in the future are having on our lives, both for good and for ill. Also, as "consumers," what we take in the form of food, media, entertainment and more. What elements are nurturing, and helpful? What is actually nourishing, feeding us in perhaps important ways, even supporting our ongoing meditation practice and integrating it increasingly into everyday life? There is the possibility of tying this topic back to the raisin-eating meditation from Class one and the whole question

of the health effects (emotional, cognitive, physical, social, planetary) of consumption, of how and what we usually eat or take in different ways influences our both our individual lives and the larger world on so many different, perhaps small but not insignificant levels. Home practice might include experimenting with making one intentional change in one's media/digital consumption for an entire week (or even for a day) and see what unfolds—doing so in the spirit of what we have been learning through our cultivation of an experimental orientation, and from intentionally bringing greater awareness to all aspects of our lives.

Review Home Practice

- Experiment with practicing this week *without* the guided meditations. The total time devoted to daily practice should still be 45 minutes or more, but the participants are invited to experiment with dividing up the time for formal practice each day, experimenting with what feels most valuable and supportive as everyone moves further, each in their own way, into making the practice one's own—hopefully for life. As an example: 10 minutes of mindful yoga followed by 35 minutes of sitting. Or 10 minutes of mindful yoga, 10 minutes of body scan, 25 minutes of sitting meditation. OR, the full 45 minutes for sitting or yoga or walking or body scan. If practicing without recordings is too difficult, alternate recordings every other day. You can also divide the 45 minutes of total formal practice time into several different blocks. It does not have to be a contiguous 45 minutes.
- Continue with cultivating mindfulness in everyday life through capturing your moments whenever and wherever you remember to, whatever the circumstances you find yourself in. Allow this on-going adventuring to be playful, welcoming, and generous with regard to your moment-by-moment experience, recognizing and acknowledging to yourself as you go along that wakefulness is potentially present in each moment of life unfolding, and can be revealed and embodied if you remember to pay attention and be fully present with no agenda other than to be with things exactly as they are, and, as best you can, to respond mindfully

and in a fully embodied way, as appropriate, to whatever circumstances are arising. That responding might include doing nothing, simply being fully present.

- Continue to work with "what you take in," perhaps choosing one new action or domain to bring awareness to, investigating what might be supportive and nourishing in your life in whatever specific area you are featuring in awareness.
- Remind everyone that next week, Week 8, may run longer than usual to allow for everyone to have a chance to share their experiences, and for the formal ending of the program. It is helpful to remind participants again that, if they wish, they can bring something to share that represents some aspect of their learning or their experience.

Close with Brief Sitting Meditation

CLASS EIGHT

OVERVIEW & THEMES

The final, eighth class of the MBSR program begins with a body scan—just as in Class 1. It may be appropriate to devote an hour or even more to this final opportunity to practice the body scan together, coupled perhaps with transitioning at the end to a period of sitting meditation. You might also include some mindful yoga, perhaps inviting a brief period of self-guided practice, where each participant chooses postures for themselves, everyone in the room working in their own way, at their own pace, in silence.

The major theme for Class 8 is *Keeping Up the Momentum* developed over the past seven weeks in both the formal and informal mindfulness practices as the MBSR program comes to a formal end. Hopefully, the practice of mindfulness will continue for the rest of your life in some way or other, especially if, at this point, you have a sense that the MBSR program has been beneficial in your life to one degree or another, even if at times, that benefit may seem small. However small you may think it is, it is hardly insignificant. In fact, even a relatively small shift toward greater health and wellbeing, if you feel that has happened in any way, shape, or form over the past weeks, is huge! It is momentous, in every meaning of the term.

Another theme of Class 8 is that, since it comes at the *beginning* of the eighth week, the last "week" of the program is really the rest of one's life. So each participant can ask themself: *Is it possible to keep up the momentum of practice now on my own, drawing on whatever inner and outer resources I've developed over the course of the program?* It is important to recognize and appreciate how much individual discipline, commitment and energy it has taken to engage in the MBSR curriculum over the course of these eight weeks. And it can be equally important for you, in the service of your overall health and wellbeing, now and in the future, to sustain that momentum for the rest of your life. Teachers can offer this self-reflection: *What will it take to continue the practice and make it your own, even as we give up for now at least, the support of being in a class of people who are practicing and sharing their experiences of practice together?* Just as we did at the very beginning, we go around the room and give each person an opportunity to speak openly and candidly to the group, as they did in Class One—not looking for "testimonials;" just expressing some of what you experienced during the program, with all responses welcome, whatever it may be.

You might invite a reflection on the participants' original intentions, hopes, and expectations, and a recounting of what actually

"...once you are cultivating mindfulness systematically in your life, it is virtually impossible to stop. Even not practicing is practicing in a way, if you are aware of how you feel compared with when you do or did practice regularly, and how it affects your ability to handle stress and pain.... The most important part of the work of mindfulness is to keep your practice alive." ***- Full Catastrophe Living, p. 559***

happened. Reflections may include: *What's been learned or discovered—if anything? What sacrifices did you make and were they worth it? What were the challenges you faced—and how did you overcome them (if you did)? Were your expectations for the program met? How, if at all, do you plan to keep up the momentum and further your practice?*

It is important to welcome everything—even unpleasant and difficult experiences. What was it that kept you in the program? Especially when encountering the unexpected, the unplanned for, or the unwanted? The purpose of the final circle is not to end in any particular way, but to make space for speaking authentically and from the heart about what these past eight weeks have meant, and what wants to be expressed, if anything, about how things are right in this moment. It is important to leave enough space for participants to connect deeply to the fact that this is the last time this group of people will be together. What have we learned from being with ourselves in this new way through the everyday disciple of the meditation practices, as well as being together, practicing together, and listening to each other? Might it be possible going forward to be with the not-knowing, reminding ourselves of the law of impermanence, that everything changes, that the only constant is change itself, and that the only moment we are ever alive in is this one; and that any and all impediments to practice and seeming obstacles in our path are as much a part of the curriculum as anything else, and so can be incorporated into one's commitment to default to mindfulness as best one can, without turning it into an ideal or a burden that just makes one feel inadequate?

Other Optional Activity (for week 7 or 8): *Writing Letter to One's Future Self*

Invite participants to reflect on their experience over the 8-week course and write a letter to their future selves. Prompts could include: What was most memorable—in class and in life? What insights do you want to remember? What aspects of yourself have you discovered or re-discovered? What has your mindfulness practice revealed about yourself, others, or the world? Any reminders or advice you'd like to revisit later?

This can be done in-person—where participants write physical letters, seal and address them, and (if materials are provided) the instructor may collect and mail them back in 6–12 months—or online/self-guided, where participants write a digital letter using a "schedule send" feature or tuck a paper version somewhere they'll rediscover it in the future.

Class 8 - Timing for Practices and Activities

There should be at least an hour of formal practice, and enough time allotted for a full go-round. It is best to keep the sharing of resources relatively brief, and send a follow-up email with more information when the class is over. Pointing people toward specific resources and programs in support of keeping up the momentum of these eight weeks of practice can be very supportive. At the same time, it can also take the conversation into a more future-oriented, and therefore "heady" and problem-solving direction. This should be avoided or minimized to whatever degree possible.

Note: Even with a small class, adding at least an extra half-hour and extending the class time to three hours is wise. This allows for more practice and sufficient time for an unhurried group sharing. Often, with larger classes, it is best to extend the class by a full hour.

Class Eight
Flow and Elements

Photo: Korea Center for Mindfulness, Songrisan, Korea, 2018.

Class Elements

1. Welcome
2. Body Scan
3. Sitting Meditation
4. Exploration of Home Practice
5. Letter to Future Self
6. Home Practice
7. Keeping Up the Momentum
8. Final Sharing Circle
9. Goodbyes

Welcome

As in the very first class, the specific welcoming remarks might include the recognition that this is the last class, and explicitly acknowledging the strong and healthy commitment and discipline it has taken to show up each, week for class, and also to have engaged day by day and moment by moment with the practice of mindfulness for one's own wellbeing and health and ongoing life.

Body Scan

(30 min. suggested)

More silence.

Sitting Meditation

(30-40 min. suggested)

Mostly silent, suggested 30-40 min.; breath/anchor and body awareness; resting in awareness.

Exploration of Home Practice

And what it was like to not use the recordings for guidance

Inquire into how it was to plan and carry out your intentions for formal practice on your own.

Discuss accountability, intentionality, discipline and experimentation with practice—both formally and informally. What have you found best supports your own embodied presence and wellbeing? And that of others? What does this tell you about what might you might need as you leave the support of the MBSR classes and are more on your own?

A brief review of the course might be valuable. This should be very brief and interactive, eliciting comments, reflections and memories from the participants as a way to recognize the depth and breadth of what has occurred in these 8 weeks.

Optional: Writing a Letter to One's Future Self

Guided reflection on experience of the program. Suggested/optional reflections (choose one or two): What

do you most want to remember about these eight weeks of MBSR–either in the class itself, during home practice, or in your life during the program, outside of the class? What do you most want to remind your future self about this experience? What is this practice of mindfulness teaching you or revealing/uncovering in you? *Were there one or two moments during the course that may have given you a feeling of how deep or relevant the practice of mindfulness might be for your life going forward? Participants can write a letter to their future self. Alternatively, this reflection could be implemented in dyads for a brief period of time, and then discussed in the larger group. In addition, participants might write a letter to future humankind or their grandchildren, supporting and articulating the theme of "bigger-than-one's-small-self mindfulness," an opportunity to acknowledge one's interconnectedness and aspirations for the future of humanity, all life forms, and the future of the planet.*

Home Practice

Resources for keeping up the momentum

Since this is the beginning of the eighth week of the program, we can emphasize that the homework for week eight applies for your entire life going forward—the rest of your life—to whatever degree you want to continue to live more mindfully in the face of life's challenges and joys. None of those challenges goes away just because the program is coming to an end in a conventional sense. In a very real way, the work of mindfulness is neverending, a lifetime's engagement, a love affair with living our lives as if it really, really mattered, drawing on our innate resources for learning, growing, healing, and transformation across the lifespan. These eight weeks of MBSR have just been the launching platform for prioritizing and fine-tuning your own reliable *access* to awareness, and elevating your capacity to be present — as best you can, and as frequently as you can remember to be for all your moments, and thus, for the rest of your life.

Given that there is an overwhelming amount of material and resources available online when one searches for "mindfulness" or MBSR, emphasize the importance of using discernment in selecting where to put one's ener-

gies in terms of external resources that might support and deepen your ongoing practice. These might include in-person and online mindfulness practice groups; retreat centers; talks by respected mindfulness teachers; mindfulness podcasts; YouTube videos; "graduate" classes offered by mindfulness centers; books; mindfulness apps; guided meditation audio recordings; mindfulness websites; etc.

Practical Next Steps for Keeping Up the Momentum

Most important: practice every day, even if for a relatively brief period of time by the clock; practice in bed if you have to; it is OK. Remember that the real meditation practice is life itself. So every moment can be a moment of embodied wakefulness, no matter what the circumstances, including when things are pleasant, unpleasant, and neither pleasant nor unpleasant. It might be appropriate to devote some time to reflect in the large group on some of the following questions: *"What do I need to continue the practice?* Or *"What will support my ongoing commitment to practice?"* Emphasize practicality and simplicity. It may be buying a meditation cushion, or reclaiming space in one's house for yoga practice, or downloading a timer app on one's phone, or moving the guided meditations from one's computer to one's phone so the practices become more portable. It might mean finding someone to share with about practice and to help support accountability. Give a variety of examples.

Final Sharing Circle

As in the first class, this is a time when each person (including the teacher who should go last and thus, have the last word and set the final tone of closure for our time together), has an opportunity to share with the group. Reflecting on what has transpired since week one, participants are invited to share about their learning and experience of the class and the practice.

Final Brief Sitting Meditation and Good-byes

Photo: MBSR Teacher Training, Tokyo Mindfulness Center, Tokyo, Japan, 2023

ENDNOTE

There is no ideal or perfect class, nor is there an ideal "result" you are trying to attain by the end. MBSR is a laboratory course, designed to honor and learn from one's experience, moment by moment by moment, and find new and creative ways to be in wise relationship to what is. As instructors, of course we are happy when people have liberating insights, or experience moments of less pain and suffering. But we need to guard against measuring our "success" by such reports, either their numbers in the class or their depth. The eight weeks is intended to be a first exposure, and a launching platform into mindfulness practice for the rest of one's life; as well as an encouragement that there is a skillful way, in fact, an infinite number of skillful ways — with the help of others and one's own full engagement — to be in wise relationship to the unwanted and the difficult, to trust in emergence in the timeless present moment and one's relationship to it and to everything else. And that there is a global community of mindfulness practitioners that can be found online and in real life that can support your efforts and provide a sense of connection and belonging to what is now a very mainstream and global community of practice *(a sangha)*.

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p. 118 — Tazuko Shibusawa & Yosuke Hasegawa, MBSR Teacher Training, Tokyo Mindfulness Center, Tokyo, Japan, 2023

p. A-1 — Lynn Koerbel & Jeffrey Proulx, First IndigenousMIND training summit, Trinidad, CA, 2018

p. B-1 — Lynn Koerbel, Flower in vase, Providence, RI, 2023

APPENDIX A

MEETING THE WORLD IN THE MBSR CLASSROOM: KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF THE TEACHER

Turning Towards: Mindfulness as Skillful Means in Trauma Healing

Photo: First IndigenousMIND training summit, Trinidad, CA, 2018.

The universal applicability of MBSR rests on a robust recognition of the intrinsic wholeness of every human being—no matter what their current health, life challenges, or stage of life. Likewise, there is a recognition of the genius of that human being, ripe with inborn and multiple intelligences, and embodying an innate capacity for learning, insight, and wisdom that cannot be measured or fully described.

A human being has inherent resources of agency, sovereignty, dignity, and belonging that are always expressed in one's own unique fashion. Mindfulness meditation as a discipline and as a way of being, supports the capacity to access deep inner resources for ongoing learning, growing, healing, and transformation across the life span. When mindfulness is introduced and practiced in an environment steeped in respect, friendliness, kindness, openness, and trust, all participants can feel welcome in the MBSR classroom. And in that sense of welcome and safety that is established in so many different ways through the embodiment of presence and inclusivity of all participants in the room on the part of the teacher, the participants are more likely to feel that they belong, or at least, might come to feel that way, suspend judgment over the eight weeks of the program, and engage wholeheartedly in developing attitudes of openness, curiosity, courage, and embodied presence. These attitudes can in turn support a wise befriending of whatever conditions the person might be faced with and is attempting to heal from, including traumatic stress and its ongoing reverberations. We can emphasize the possibility of *post-traumatic growth* (PTG) as a way of moving toward healing and recognition of inherent wholeness, even in the face of extreme challenge. Mindfulness can be a huge part of that.

From the beginning, MBSR has been in tune with the ubiquity of trauma as a tragic element of the human condition (the "full catastrophe" in the words of Zorba, the Greek), and the need to be appropriately

sensitive to how to work with trauma survivors, many of whom may not know at first that trauma may lie beneath the condition or reason that brought them to MBSR. Over the past forty-five plus years, more and more has become known about PTSD and how widespread it is in society. Thus, a trauma-sensitive approach to MBSR is essential, and can be integrated both implicitly and explicitly, when appropriate, into the teaching of the MBSR curriculum.

With breaking news available 24/7 and literally at our fingertips the range of cataclysmic events we are exposed to, if only second-hand, is enormous: natural disasters; violence; war; online bullying; immigrant and refugee crises; lay-offs due to cost-cutting and restructuring; racism and sexism in work environments; the possibility that people will present to the MBSR program with both primary and secondary trauma (bystander trauma) is very real and ever-present in our lives and in our world.

David Treleaven (2018) expresses the sweeping tide of trauma and its aftermath, and of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), in citing peer-reviewed research from the field of psychology on the national estimates of current trauma exposure: "An estimated 90% of the population has been exposed to a traumatic event, and 8-20% of these people will develop post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD." (pp. xvii)[1]

Treleaven goes on to conclude that in any setting "where mindfulness is being taught, there's a high probability that someone in the room has a history of trauma." (Treleaven, 2018, pg xvii).

From our combined, years-long experience teaching MBSR, as well as training and mentoring MBSR teachers, we know this is true. In fact, it is our experience that there is not just some "one'' in the room with a history of trauma, but ones. In addition, we must take into account the real possibility that the teacher, too, has experienced trauma, recognized or not, on one level or another.

Trauma-sensitive yoga, which arose in 2002 in response to the rapid increase in trauma awareness, expresses what MBSR yoga has always offered: Invitational language, returning power and agency to the practitioner—rather than as "housed" in the teacher—and the active and continuous encouragement of the participants' capacity to know and trust their own wisdom and operate out of it.

At the same time—especially in the current milieu we find ourselves—this general stance toward the participants is not enough. While an excellent foundation to start from, teachers need to equip themselves with a more extensive knowledge base regarding trauma, traumatic stress, and its expressions, especially as it relates to mindfulness meditation practices and approaches. This means recognizing subtle cues, including body language, speech patterns, and illogical or disordered thinking, and then knowing how and when to follow up, trust the process, or support a participant in changing or stopping their current practice. These skills are best learned from experts and honed through supervision/mentoring and dialogue with other teachers (see Trauma Resources, this document).

Finding the balance between recognizing and trusting in the intrinsic wholeness and wisdom of each participant, on the one hand, and also recognizing and honoring the stress, the suffering, and the possible intensity that individuals may be carrying

[1] Elliot (1997) and Kilpatrick, et al. (2013) as cited in Treleaven (2018), *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness*.

which means that may need mental health support, medication, and/or some other treatment, is an ongoing and dynamic challenge of teaching MBSR.

In addition, as part of the ongoing personal inquiry and development supporting one's own meditation practice and teaching, MBSR teachers are encouraged to seek out and make use of resources to support their own clinical care, growth, and healing. Given that the nature of this work is personal, intimate, intense, and potentially emotionally challenging—ongoing caring for ourselves is paramount.

Recognizing and Responding to Trauma in the MBSR Classroom

Some participants enter the MBSR classroom knowing they have a trauma history and disclose this. If this happens in a one-on-one conversation with the teacher, it can highlight directly how the teacher can support the participant, first by asking the participant what they feel they might need as the course unfolds. This opens the door to connection and reduces tacit and unwarranted assumptions.

Support may take a variety of forms, which are highly dependent on the instructor's training and the context of the class. There is a whole range of options which may or may not be appropriate or possible given where the class is being held and who is teaching.

Some possibilities include: Encouraging the participant to speak with a therapist and/ or other mental health professional; and / or consider medication and/ or specialist therapy such as EMDR if needed (and if they have access to this support); checking-in on an agreed upon regular basis via email or phone about how the class and practice is going; as well as offering specific options or adaptations to any of the practices, whether in class or for home practice. It is important for MBSR teachers to stay within our scope of knowledge and training, and refer clinical advising to those who are authorized, trained, and licensed to provide it.

Other prospective participants may come to MBSR either without knowing that they have a trauma history or choose not to share this information. Recognizing behaviors in the classroom during practice or group dialogue that might suggest the presence of underlying trauma and should be followed up by checking in gently with the person privately. Such indicators might include unusual restlessness or agitation during practice, or an unusually strong or telling response to practice during class sharing. The word "trauma" itself may not arise in the classroom or even in individual dialogue with a participant. Additionally, if the class is offered online, it may not be possible to read such indicators from the screen.

Even during in-person classes, picking up on subtle cues is not always realistic in a class of 30 or more. However, instructors can and should offer general and regular guidance for participants to listen and respond to their own wisdom, and to make themselves available for questions or concerns.

Additionally, it is important to normalize that even without experiencing a "capital T trauma," there are times when all of us become dysregulated. Dysregulation itself can be a powerful teacher of mindfulness. Normalizing the full range of our nervous system capacity, and recognizing when we are out of balance or need support is part of how we care for ourselves. Virtually everybody shares some degree of "small t trauma."

The Orientation and Individual Meeting

The required Orientation including the one-on-one individual meeting offers both the teacher and potential participant an important personalized and experience-based opportunity to explore the nature of the class and the various mindfulness practices involved in MBSR before making the commitment/investment in the full eight weeks. This opportunity goes far in supporting a participant to consider how and when they will make time for the formal practice, and gives the instructor a sense of the participant's life, strengths, and stressors.

This meeting also provides an opportunity when a participant may share about traumatic stress events and explore it *before* the class begins. If this occurs, it may allow the instructor to encourage the participant to connect with their healthcare provider to more finely assess the participant's readiness and ability to take on the intensity and commitment to engage in the 8-week program. It also affords both instructor and participant a brief time to explore how a mutual, if tentative, trust in this personal relationship and connection might serve as a basis for ongoing support in engaging in the program and deriving maximal benefit.

A caveat to this is that in some contexts, asking questions about a participant's mental health history is outside the bounds of an organization's policies. This may be true in businesses or institutions of higher education. Care must be included in training programs to operate well within the limits of the sponsoring organizations for the program.

Some examples of support (depending on the course context) might include a brief exchange/check-in after class, or a follow up phone call with the participant in relation to how practice is going, especially if something particularly sensitive has come up. Weekly, hour-long check-ins would not be appropriate, and it is important for instructors to be clear and explicit that their role as MBSR teacher is not that of therapist.

Adapting the Curriculum

Below are some ways to adapt, more explicitly, guidance and presentational elements of the MBSR curriculum. Please note that class themes and practices are not altered. Rather, the approaches and "entry points" to practice are widened and deepened to provide as much permission and sovereignty as possible.

Focused attention (vs. awareness of breathing or awareness of breath)

The breath is used as a primary focus of attention in many different kinds of meditations, including mindfulness. However, the ubiquity of the use of breath in meditation instructions does not necessarily mean it is the most accessible or even wisest choice for everyone. For example, people with asthma may find focusing on the breath to be anxiety-producing, or fire-fighters who have experienced anoxia or people living with panic disorder and/or other anxiety disorders.

In addition, breathing may be a subtle yet powerful place where trauma surfaces, and focusing on the sensations of breathing can activate the sympathetic nervous system and triggers a fight-flight-freeze reaction. For some people, whether they have experienced trauma or not, the mere suggestion to attend to the breath can trigger a reaction that makes it almost impossible to breathe naturally. The explicit focus by itself is triggering. For these and other reasons, it is

useful to offer a range of alternatives when it comes to finding a conducive primary object of attention (recalling that it is never the *object* of attention that is primary in mindfulness, but rather, the *attending itself*. For this reason, if awareness of breathing is not a skillful focus for one's attention in the beginning, perhaps focusing on another region of the body on or an object in the visual field makes more sense, and should be explored in a spirit of investigation and non-attachment to any specific door into the room of moment to moment awareness.

It is important for the instructor to keep in mind that while MBSR starts out by introducing *focused attention* [a dualistic practice, in that it tends to separate an observer (the subject, me, the meditator) from what is being observed, (the object, whatever it is), the seeds of non-dual practice (choiceless awareness, or open presence), in which there is no method, no "observer," simply *observing*, a resting in the boundless spaciousness of awareness) are also present from the very beginning. This means that any object can skillfully be deployed as a starting point for focused attention practice. To support an entire class, it is possible—and skillful—to offer a range of options to participants right from the beginning. This allows the participants to try out various options and experiment with what might feel most congenial to incorporate into their nascent mindfulness meditation practice. This should be done in the orientation session or in Class One, and then, week by week as the program unfolds, the instructor an encourage an ongoing exploration into what the most skillful glidepath into deeper practice might entail for each individual, particularly those with a trauma history, perhaps collaboratively identifying one or two objects to serve as anchors for one's attention that feel safe and that the participant can feel most aligned and comfortable with.

For example: Someone for whom the breath is either too subtle or is not an emotionally neutral object of attention may find bringing attention to the feet or to the body's touch-points in sitting, lying, or standing to be more grounding and thus, more congenial and more easily accessed. For someone who has experienced trauma, keeping the eyes open and focusing on a particular object in the room or—with eyes open or closed—focusing on sound, may be a more present-centered practice than focusing on breath or body sensations. From the beginning, the teacher should keep in mind the principle of *"many doors, one room." Again, the objects of attention are of only secondary importance. It is the attending itself that is primary.*

Including options from the beginning, with enough guidance to support a sustained attention (rather than constantly shifting from one object to another) is empowering and non-shaming to anyone for whom the breath as an object of attention is either challenging, inaccessible, or re-traumatizing. Very often, people who start out having trouble using the breath sensations in the body as the primary object of attention find that after a few weeks in the program, it is no longer the issue it was at the beginning. It is helpful if the instructor keeps checking in with the participant over the weeks to see how this experimenting with a range of objects of attention, including the breath sensations in the body, is going.

It is also helpful to review the intention for each practice, class by class. For instance, each week there is an opening practice as the class begins. This practice serves as a way to transition from whatever was happening prior to class—driving, being at work or with family—and now, arriving at

this new present moment when the group is gathering, shifting deliberately into practice time, more silence and stillness, and a more interior frame. While not lengthy (anywhere from 5 to 15 minutes), it should offer enough choice for participants to come into greater contact with their own moment-by-moment experience—including what is happening in the body, in the mind (thoughts), and in the heart (emotions).

The intention for this opening practice is for the participants, many of whom may never have had an experience of formal meditation practice, to taste what it feels like to intentionally drop in on one's own moment by moment experience by focusing on a particular object and seeing if it is possible to maintain the focus over time, and restore the focus when it gets distracted or wanders away, if necessary (and it will be) over and over again, reminding participants that it is always *this* moment, so we do not have to perseverate about the past. We are tuning in and paying attention using the entire range of sense doors we have at our disposal: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, as well as awareness itself, which can be thought of as another sense. Awareness "senses" and immediately recognizes body sensations, perceptions, thoughts, emotions, moods, attitudes, and whatever else the inner landscape offers up.

The focused attention practice zeros in on a single object as a way to settle deeply into the present moment. Any object of attention might be skillful under different circumstances and for different people. Nevertheless, everybody in the room is breathing, so it is good to find a middle way to neither privilege the breath nor avoid it categorically. Skillful teaching can emphasize befriending all aspects of present moment experience while not privileging the breath sensations. Again, it is an occasion for emphasizing that **it is not the object of attention that is most important, but the attending itself.** This can be helpful in eliminating any sense that an object of attention other than the breath sensations might be less valued or valuable.

Many meditation teachers offer awareness of the breath sensations in the body as an "anchor" practice, as in "anchoring the attention." Anchors may also be referred to as *touchstones, a resting place, or home base.* The suggestion is that the anchor be familiar, easy to locate, accessible, simple and with a neutral tone (i.e., neither strongly pleasant nor unpleasant).

Crane et al. (2021, pp. 19-20) and Treleaven (2018, pp. 120-22), lay out various options for stabilizing anchors which include:

- The contact points of the body (weight and pressure at the meeting place of the body where it meets the chair or the floor)
- The feet or hands (areas of the body further away from potentially charged areas and usually rather neutral)
- The breath sensations in the body at the various locations—nostrils, chest, belly—or wherever it may be felt most vividly and congenially.
- Sounds (while this is an external anchor—it relates to the body, i.e., hearing through the ears)

In addition, the visual field may also be offered as a domain for placing one's attention: For instance, opening the eyes and focusing on a fixed point in the environment can serve to anchor and stabilize one's attention in the present moment and lead to a sense of security and calm.

These options can and should be introduced from the very beginning, in Class One, and

then all subsequent classes. It may also be skillful to practice this—giving several minutes to each area: breath (wherever the sensation is most vivid or alive or available, and directing attention to the nostrils, the throat, the chest and belly as a way to orient and ground), sound, hands or feet, and body contact points so that participants can try each possibility out to see what is most accessible. Teachers can encourage participants to explore what feels most congenial or stabilizing in this moment. For instance, while the breath sensations in the body may usually be a helpful object of attention, if a person has a bad cold, sounds near and far might be a more approachable focus on that particular day. These options should be offered in the spirit of exploration and discovery, rather than as "lesser" objects of attention than the breath. Again, the overriding message is that ***there is no one right way to practice, and no privileged object of attention, only skillful means to support embodied attending from moment to moment to whatever arises, as best one can, and without judging any judging that might arise.***

A main tenet in trauma-sensitive practice is to reduce any shame that may be present. If all the objects of focus are equally valuable, with sound no greater or lesser than the breath—the practice becomes about attention itself, awareness itself—rather than the object of attention. This allows all participants to feel included and emotionally safe, thus bringing a wider and more invitational and inclusive perspective to the practice, or put differently, another doorway into the room of awareness itself, and thus, of the practice.

To repeat, the overall principle here, which the instructor should always keep in mind and share with the participants from the very beginning of MBSR is that *it is not the objects of attention that are most important, but the attending itself. In other words, awareness itself is the key. While it is tempting to fall into saying things like "your" awareness, or "one's" awareness, this is a mistake, as it reifies a self and self-identification that is best avoided by the instructor when recognized. However, recognizing that for participants struggling with conditions like depersonalization, allowing flexibility in the languaging can be both compassionate and skillful, and thus, of major benefit in lowering the barriers to engaging in the practice as an adventure in recognizing one's own wholeness, beauty, and worthiness. This orientation can be furthered for some people by bringing forward the notion of decentering from cognitive therapy, that is, taking a step back from our thoughts, emotions and physical sensations. However, some participants may have already taken a step back, and, perhaps on occasion, a little too far back, resulting in depersonalization, which in turn can lead to feelings of alienation, detachment, and distress. Even naming this can open the door for someone with conditions like depersonalization or dissociation to not feel pushed to do something that may not be called for given their particular lived experience.*

Learning to self-regulate

Bringing mindfulness directly to one's bodily sensations, emotions, and thoughts is a primary practice within MBSR. Recognizing signs of stress and stress reactivity is the signature theme of Class 4. However, as a theme, it can and should be evoked from the very beginning, and serve as a skillful way of introducing a range of options for recognizing when one is overwhelmed, and for developing healthy strategies for taking care of oneself in the present moment.

Treleaven describes the "Window of Toler-

ance," (2018, pp. 87-111) as a very useful framework for supporting participants in attending with kindness to their own biological, cognitive and emotional patterns, seeing them as indicators of distress and threat. Keeping this framework in mind may be especially relevant at the beginning of the MBSR program as participants begin to engage directly with meditation practice. Rather than forcing, pushing or "muscling through" a practice session, however long or short, guidance can be offered about how to recognize signs of feeling overwhelmed and make judicious choices about how to best take care of oneself within the practice itself. Because there is nothing that cannot be skillfully included in the embrace of awareness, with kindness.

As an option to the Window of Tolerance, a variation is provided below.[2] Either framework can be included in the first session.

[2] Adapted from Yerkes & Dodson's original research (1908), and attributed to the field of Performance Management, more generally, it is an accessible and easy-to-understand tool for self-monitoring physiological states.

The various circles extending from the "comfort" or "resource zone," which delineates what we experience when we are comfortable, feeling at home in our lives and in our bodies, when we are resting within or drawing on our resources for optimal wellbeing, for "recharging our batteries," nurturing/cultivating our capacity for resilience and emotional balance, how we are when we are feeling a healthy kind of challenge—something we feel up to, to which we can bring some degree of genuine interest and curiosity, and sense our growing capacity to default to our intrinsic resilience in the face of the inevitable challenges of living, and to exercise that capacity as best we can over and over again. Resilience should be framed in terms of its counterpart— feeling entirely overwhelmed—what that feels like, including somatic, emotional, and cognitive disequilibrium, agitation, catastrophizing, panic, and more (depicted in the outer circle: "overwhelm"). If we live in the "overwhelm" too long, we can end up in the innermost circle–the "zoned out" zone. This is the zone in which depersonalization, dissociation, or disconnection can arise. In this graphic, the arrows denote the ways that mindfulness can "grow" the boundaries of these zones. They are not fixed; depending on various factors ranging on how much sleep we've had or the range of stressors we might be handling–these boundaries can be quite fluid and dynamic. This graphic, as well as the window of tolerance concept, can normalize for participants the ways our nervous systems can be regulated, are "tunable," and responsive to that tuning and to "tuning in;" that we can be more intentional and deliberate in taking care of ourselves; and that MBSR and the cultivation of mindfulness is a skillful way to promote that kind of wise self-regulation.

Alternatively, a complementary terminology might be introduced later in the course, when "eustress" and "distress," terms coined by Hans Selye (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, pp. 303-4), are introduced. If appropriate, and if the instructor is knowledgeable about the latest research, new findings can be introduced. The participants' life experiences, whatever they are, can be directly related to with the most up-to-date science of stress and how it affects the body, the mind, and our lives on a whole range of levels, from the biological (brain pathways, epigenetic changes, telomere shortening) to the psychological, to the social, economic, and environmental, but at the same time and importantly, articulated in lay language. (see Kabat-Zinn, 2013, Introduction to new edition, especially pp xli-xlvi). Also the study of Hoge et al, 2023 (in JAMA Psychiatry) [https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2798510] showing that MBSR was as effective in reducing anxiety as the top drug treatment in a randomized trial. This study is on a par in terms of rigor, with the kind of evidence base for the effectiveness of MBCT for major depression.

It may be relevant to point out that any and all mind-states might arise during the development of a robust and reliable meditation practice. These might include sleepiness, a feeling of dullness or being "zoned out," or even a sense of dissociating from ourselves. This can range from a vague sense of being "somewhere else," or day-dreaming, to more extreme, such as losing time or becoming disoriented. This might be graphically represented by a very small circle inside the "comfort zone."

By acknowledging the natural range of human experience and how such experiences might show up during meditation practice, we introduce the practice of attending to whatever arises, whether it be pleasant, unpleasant, or neither as a critical

and central part of the practice. All human beings experience these different mind-states: from dreamy, "spacey," and "not with it" (the *sloth and torpor* hindrance in the Buddhist formulation) to settling into a more alert and equanimous, if also transient and changeable, condition. [NB please try to avoid using the word "*state*," as it then becomes really easy for mindfulness itself to be framed as "a state," which it is not, and which can lead to all sorts of misunderstandings about the meditation practice, including that there is a "mindful state" that you can get to if you try hard enough. There is no one "mindfulness state." Better to describe it as a way of being in relationship to experience, inwardly and outwardly.] And we can approach it sensibly, just putting one's toe in the water, so to speak, to whatever degree one feels comfortable. And then perhaps, staying a little longer with any discomfort over time, again, to whatever degree one feels comfortable.

Trauma survivors may experience heightened arousal when triggered, but everyone can benefit from becoming more familiar with the range of what might arise during practice and to intentionally experiment with responding more intentionally and effectively. That is practice too, and it can be experimental, and playful to whatever degree one might be motivated to engage with what is arising.

For instance, if a sense of disorientation, spaciness, or lethargy arises, opening the eyes or standing up can help ground oneself in the body, orienting to the immediate environment, and restore some degree of both intentionality and clarity. If a wave of fear or panic comes up, it may be helpful to open the eyes, and actively use the visual field as the object of attention to bring stability and energy to the moment. It might also be skillful to name, explicitly, what is arising in experience (i.e., "this is fear," "this is panic"). To do so can be both illuminating and empowering. The awareness function is operating; the knowing of experience as it is unfolding. You are not the fear. You are the knowing of the fear, as it is. And investigating whether the awareness of the fear is afraid.

More deliberate movement, perhaps a slow stretch, can also be very skillful at times in supporting the body, releasing any tension. Pointing out the availability and utility of such options, should disorientation arise, highlights the range of experiences of both hypo- and hyper-arousal and how they can be skillfully worked with. Individual participants may also experience a range of other responses to the practice, including tightening in the gut in response to a particular memory, or an out-of-body experience arising out of fear.

Once the participants are apprised of the context and content of the practice within the framework of MBSR, they usually comprehend what is being asked of them and often see it as an adventure in living their lives more fully, and reclaiming a sense of autonomy and agency. They often and readily come up with their own wise responses to these kinds of challenging mental states. You can support them in this process by reminding them that **"whatever arises is the curriculum"** and that they have the interior resources for learning from and freeing themselves from some of these core forms of suffering. The more you increase your own professional familiarity and knowledge base in this area (see especially Treleaven, pp. 87-111), the more you will be able to effectively connect with the participants and inspire a realistic sense of both agency, stability, and intrinsic well-being, both during guided practices, and more generally during the unfolding of the

classes, and during times of individual interactions, both private and in the classes.

By naming and exploring the potential variety of responses to formal mindfulness practice right from the start, we can maximally support participants in making wise choices for themselves to get the most out of the MBSR program: namely staying with and valuing their own experience, agency, and some degree of success in engaging on a daily basis with the formal meditation practices of MBSR, no matter what arises. Rather than thinking that their agitation or restlessness means they aren't doing it "right," or that meditation simply doesn't work for them, they can recognize that these kinds of arisings in the body and mind are entirely normal, everybody experiences them, and that they can be used as prompts or reminders to bring a degree of lovingkindness and open-hearted investigation to their unwanted experiences –putting out the welcome mat in the spirit of Rumi's Guest House— welcoming and entertaining them all, even if they are a crowd of sorrows. Of course, if the intensity is too great, they also have the option to shift to mindful walking practice in a particularly uncomfortable moment—rather than simply abandoning the practice altogether. If the experience becomes overwhelming and perhaps starts turning into a panic attack, the wisest response would be to turn away from the experience and to distract by deliberately thinking about something else. It is important for MBSR teachers not to assume that 'turning towards' is always the appropriate response, especially if the participant does not currently have the inner resources to do so.

Over the course of the MBSR program, these themes of choice, curiosity and interest, kindness and permission giving can and should be woven into all the class conversations and teaching moments. Trauma responses often serve as protective armor, and are experienced as the truth by the experiencer. Over time, if met skillfully and welcomed, the repeated invitation to trust in one's own wholeness and intrinsic well- being and beauty can help dissolve such self-protective yet dysfunctional and harmful defenses. When authentically lived and thus, embodied, by the MBSR teacher, this stance in relationship to unwanted experience is usually felt by the participants and can support those who may be most vulnerable due to trauma to explore the curve of learning, growing, healing, and transformation that is intrinsic to MBSR at their own pace, in their own way, and in their own time. It conveys a sense that they belong in the class *as they are*. MBSR is not about *catalyzing* change, even though it can look that way. It can be thought of more as catalyzing, through ongoing practice, a recognition of one's own unbroken wholeness, that is never not here, even in people who have been severely traumatized. The instructor may need to hold this realization for the participant for quite some time before the participant may come to recognize it within themself.

Body Scan

Given that the body scan is the first practice introduced in MBSR, adding a few guidelines to support participants in relation to trauma and this practice makes good sense. For some, the body may not be a place of refuge, comfort, or security. Engaging in this practice can take a good deal of courage and internal fortitude. Thus, it is essential to be particularly mindful of how we introduce the body scan, using clear and neutral language, and giving a range of options for body posture and attitude, including not doing it lying down. Even recognizing that in some cultures, it is not considered appro-

priate for men and women to lie beside each other in a classroom setting. Naming that and offering allowances for it if needed can create a more inclusive environment where participants from any background feel they belong.

Typical positions for practicing the body scan include lying flat on one's back, with the feet uncrossed and the body as symmetrical and at ease as possible (with pillows or props under knees and or head if needed), or in the so-called "astronaut position," lying on the floor on one's back, with one's upper legs at right angles to the hips, the lower legs flat on the seat of a chair. However, lying on one's side (a more protected position), sitting—either on the floor or a chair—or standing are all acceptable alternatives and can be offered as viable options. Suggesting that there is only one "correct posture" for cultivating mindfulness in any formal practice is a form of ignorance and can be harmful. There is no room for this kind of parochialism in MBSR. By the same token, it is not essential to keep the body absolutely still during formal practice. Forcing strict stillness upon oneself, especially if it feels imposed by others (which it is not), or out of a deluded notion of its importance, can activate trauma. It is also totally contradictory to the spirit and cultivation of non-doing. Thus, it is skillful to provide a range of options in how to approach, enter into, and dwell in the various formal practices, and to emphasize *agency* and *experimentation* when it comes to what feels most congenial to each participant and, over time, "making the practice one's own." This welcoming and highly flexible approach is a hallmark of MBSR, emphasizing in individual participant's own agency at all times, in alignment with the overriding themes that (1) "there is more right with you than "wrong" with you, no matter what is "wrong;" (2) all the practices are different doors into the very same room—the door of your own heart, your own awareness, your own intrinsic wholeness, your own beauty; and (3) you are not your scars, but rather, what holds the scars, which is always larger and intrinsically healthy and whole.

Mindful Hatha Yoga

As with the body scan, moving the body, especially in ways that may give rise to feelings of vulnerability, self-consciousness, or feeling exposed to the gaze of others, may not be easy or comfortable for some. While instruction on attending to one's own limits is always a part of the guided mindful yoga in MBSR, it might be important to specifically include language that speaks to and welcomes not just our physical limitations—but that equally honors and respects whatever emotional limits we might be feeling and wish to protect.

In some cases, such feelings may be a response to trauma, but they can also stem from specific cultural or social norms. For instance, in some cultures, it may not be comfortable to find oneself lying down next to a person of the opposite sex, especially when the practices involve raising one's legs, or moving one's hips. So encouraging a felt sense of safety across the board through how the mindful yoga is introduced and guided is critical to its effectiveness for all participants who might benefit from it. D. Whyshogrod's chapter, "Teaching in Israel" in McCown, Reibel, and Micozzi (eds.), *Resources for Teaching Mindfulness*, (pg 183), offers one very doable option. In fact, the McCown, Reibel, Micozzi text contains excellent information on meeting various cultures and cultural dynamics in skillful and supportive ways.

Using language from the very beginning that is inclusive, permission-giving,

and respectful of boundaries and limits, however expressed, can contribute to creating an environment where everyone can feel secure in engaging in the practices in the most comfortable and potentially beneficial ways.

Class 5 Sitting Meditation

For the meditation in Class 5, when attention is directed to move through a range of objects of attention—including the body, sounds, thoughts and emotions—before coming to choiceless awareness, it may be skillful to revisit the use of the anchoring practices mentioned in prior classes. For instance, the practice can begin with stabilizing attention using the anchor (whatever that might be for each individual), and then moving to the breath, if that is available, then the body, and on to sound. It can be acknowledged that any of these may be quite familiar as an anchor—and so exploring it freshly... i.e., what is here now, in *this* moment? The Class 5 practice period specifically invites a closer investigation of thoughts and emotions as mental events, and then the possibility of expanding the field of awareness so that no particular object of attention is being featured, but rather, the invitation is to rest in choiceless awareness / open presence, without privileging any object of attention. The awareness is always the same, whether we are attending to a particular object (body sensations, sounds, thoughts, emotions, or group of objects) or taking the more inclusive stance of open presence, akin to a four-dimensional mirror-like space, where whatever arises in the boundless spaciousness of awareness is momentarily seen and known in and by awareness itself. Seung Sahn called it *"Just like this mind,"* or *"Before thinking mind."* These specific guidelines can be highlighted, encouraging everyone to try out these options, noting whatever arises in each case, with gentle interest, investigation, and kindness. The object one has chosen as one's favorite (or "go to" object) is always available and can serve to anchor and stabilize one's attention in those moments when one is experiencing disorientation or simply an over-active wandering mind.

Choices for Practice

As the MBSR curriculum progresses over the weeks, and as longer sitting practices are introduced in class, a range of options for practice can be integrated into the configuration of the room itself from the beginning, with the open invitation to use them as needed during periods of formal guidance. For example, a designated "mindful walking lane" in the room can be set up early on in the eight weeks, as an explicit option for participants if sitting in stillness is not optimal or congenial in any particular meditation session or class.

For teachers whose personal practice experience and history has included a more constrained instructional set, this more inclusive approach, providing a range of alternative practices, may be challenging to include and support. The "different doors, same room" principle will be of considerable help in this regard. Of course, you are the teacher, and your compassionate agency in the classroom is primary and crucial. There is no benefit and potentially some harm in defaulting, usually unwittingly, to what is sometimes referred to as "idiot compassion," which is not compassion at all, but more of a facile, performative, and clichéd political correctness or blanket quality of "niceness." This can be its own serious form of delusion and suffering, and so very important to be aware of if it arises in oneself. Your authenticity is key here, and crucial. Offering choice with clarity and

nuance is critical to conveying both guidance based on the teacher's depth of experience and trusting in the participant's own wisdom and sovereignty.

So all MBSR instructors are invited to keep these teaching challenges in mind and to dive deeply into and trust their own training and intuition, to ask themselves "What feels right in this moment?" With this person or people? in this class? based on your own values and motivation for being a mindfulness teacher? Presumably this will naturally include seeing every person as a living buddha; as equally valid by virtue of being human; being aware of the ways that implicit bias, racism, sexism, genderism, and overall othering of any kind might be present to some degree within yourself, and unrecognized. The challenges inherent in guiding a large and diverse class of individuals in mindfulness as a meditative discipline and as a way of being are many, and how it unfolds depends a great deal on the wisdom and authenticity of the instructor — their experience with and understandings of what the real work of MBSR is and how to skillfully transmit it under the conditions one finds oneself in, which will always be an unknown variable depending on who is in the class and what the community is that is being served. And to do so without attachment to outcome.

Here, we are invited to work with any attachment we might have to perhaps our too-small concepts about what meditation practice is or should look or feel like, or how to offer it so that everybody, in the best-case scenario, might derive some benefit over the eight weeks. As teachers, we too, just like the participants, are invited to learn directly from our own feelings and preferences regarding these options, and experiment with optimizing the conditions for everybody to feel met and seen, heard, and valued. The stakes are quite high, because one foundational intention of MBSR is for the eight weeks of the program to act like a launching platform into the rest of one's life, regarding an ongoing and reliable embodiment of mindfulness as both a formal meditation practice that one can be dedicated to for life, and also as a way of being, in which every moment we are alive is part of the meditation practice. Yet even here, we can't be attached to our own aspirations or intentions. We can only embody them as best we can and be as present, as openhearted, and as creative as possible within the parameters of the curriculum itself.

Systematic Active Monitoring of the Climate of the Class

Monitoring is the act of deliberately and mindfully tracking, as much as possible, participants' reactions and responses to the meditation practices and to their lived experience, specifically for deleterious adverse reactions (Baer et al., 2019). Systematic monitoring begins with the Orientation and individual meeting, but should continue throughout the program: recognizing signs of dysregulation (See Treleaven's Checklist, Signs of Hyperarousal and Dissociation), knowing how to approach a participant who might be having difficulty, respecting each participant's dignity and self-authority while also caring for the container of the whole group—are just some of the skills MBSR teachers need to develop and deploy as a part of their own ongoing growth and development as human beings, their own meditation practice and experience, and their understanding of their professional and dharmic responsibilities to the participants in their class, both individually and collectively. It is recommended that teachers take an active monitoring stance (versus passive,

or waiting for participants to approach with challenges), since the shame that may be associated with the negative effects of practice can be confusing and overwhelming. Active monitoring may include a range of actions and relational skills that support each person's engagement with the MBSR program and its practices. It doesn't have to involve anything particularly special, aside from being fully present oneself and remembering why you are doing this work in the first place. So it is commonsensical to take responsibility for engaging individuals as they come into the class, or when they leave at the end, checking in with them, and inquiring about how they are doing from time to time. It is also important to be aware of non-verbal signs of discomfort or alienation, as part of the instructor's own practice and professional responsibility. There is nothing more powerful than the instructor's embodied presence and caring, as long as it is authentic, and not performative or contrived.

Meeting the World in the MBSR Classroom

Inclusion, Diversity, Belonging, and World Events

Coupled with trauma and in some cases interfacing with it, issues of race, difference, equity, justice, and identity are at the forefront of many people's minds and hearts. There is a global cry in the present moment due to political, social and environmental crises across the planet. Violence and a sense of division, polarization, and othering is heightened, only compounded in our era by social media.

Whatever currents are in the society will inevitably find their way into the MBSR classroom. It is the responsibility of the MBSR teacher to be attuned to what may be present in the room, depending on local or regional politics, election cycles, conflicts, and the general state of the world. As the internet and social media bring the world to our minds on a 24/7 basis, whether we like it or not, both the MBSR instructor and class participants may be touched deeply and dramatically affected by unfolding events both near and far.

As with trauma, it is the teacher's responsibility to stay abreast of what is going on in the world, of current affairs, and to be sensitive to the many different points of view that may be in the room, and how this may influence the tenor of the class. For instance, when the discussion of stressors comes up in Class 4, local and world events may be named as major factors amplifying people's sense of stress, fear, alienation, and also hope. Even if what is unfolding in the larger world outside the classroom—in the neighborhood or the community, or in the country or the larger world— isn't named by participants, it may be skillful for the teacher to acknowledge these tensions in society and the larger world from time to time, as appropriate, with the cautionary note that it has to be done skillfully or it may simply compound at least some participants' anxiety.

It is also critical to realize that practicing mindfulness or meditation does not necessarily define one's political or social viewpoints. To establish and maintain a safe, trusting, open-hearted, and welcoming environment in the MBSR classroom requires care and reflection on the teacher's part. It is essential for us to keep in the forefront of our awareness our own hard-to-recognize implicit biases and blindnesses. This means consciously acknowledging all that we do not know, and cultivating an ongoing willingness to be *undone* in moments, if warranted.

Engaging with groups around undoing

racism, challenging ourselves with difficult conversations, especially if we ourselves are part of the dominant culture, and a willingness to recognize the ways in which our own tacit assumptions, body language, or teaching style may itself be subtly or overtly biased is an essential element of waking up to our own blindnesses, and how they imprison us and harm others. A willingness to examine our own values and perspectives with fresh eyes is a path to inner and outer freedom.

"Until we are all free, we are none of us free."

~ Emma Lazarus

In this spirit, our commitment to the practice of waking up offers a possibility beyond the individual— moving into a collective hope for the planet: acknowledging our interconnectedness, our reliance and interdependence on each other, and the need for our species to care for each other and the whole biosphere of which we are a part. We do this incrementally, step by step, breath by breath, sound by sound. We do this together, acknowledging our differences—not discounting or overriding them—but letting whatever pain, be it individual, historical or generational, have its space to breathe and move and heal.

Trauma and DEIB Resources

1. Brach, T. (2019). ***Tara Brach: Talks: audio and video.*** Part 1: Freedom from othering, 1/17/2018; Part 2: Freedom from othering, 1/24/2018; Part 3: Freedom from othering, 1/31/2018; Part 4: Evolving beyond unreal othering, 6/27/2018) Retrieved from: https://www.tarabrach.com/talks-audio-video/page/3/?myvar=2018

2. Britton, W. (2019) ***Meditation safety toolbox,*** v 2.13.19. Retrieved from: https://www.brown.edu/research/labs/britton/resources/meditation-safety-toolbox

3. Crane, R. S., Callen-Davies, R., Francis, A., Francis, D., Gibbs, P., Mulligan, B., O'Neill, B., Pierce Williams, N. K., Waupoose, M., & Vallejo, Z. (2023). Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Our Time: A Curriculum that is up to the Task. ***Global advances in integrative medicine and health,*** 12, 27536130231162604. https://doi.org/10.1177/27536130231162604

4. Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). Some reflections on the origins of MBSR and the trouble with maps. In J. Williams & Kabat-Zinn, J. (Eds.), ***Mindfulness: diverse perspectives on its meaning, origins and applications.*** London and NY: Routledge.

5. Maygari, T. Teaching individuals with traumatic stress. In D. McCowan, D Reibel, and M. Micozzi (Eds), ***Resources for teaching mindfulness.*** Switzerland: Springer Publishing.

6. Menakem, R. (2017). ***My grandmother's hands.*** Las Vegas, NV: Central Recovery Pwress.

7. Treleaven, D. (2018). ***Trauma-sensitive mindfulness.*** New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co. **Note:** Treleaven also has a website: https://davidtreleaven.com/ with excellent, accessible resources including free monthly zoom meetings, podcasts, and a TSM "Starter Kit."

8. Yang, L. (2017). ***Awakening together: the spiritual practice of inclusivity and community.*** Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.

APPENDIX B

THE ORIENTATION SESSION, INDIVIDUAL MEETING, AND CAUTIONARY CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPATION

Orientation Session

The Orientation is a critical component of the MBSR program, and sets the stage for what follows in the next eight weeks. It offers a potential participant a reliable taste of what the course involves and what will be expected of the participants. To that end, if possible, it is best to have the Orientation mirror the actual MBSR class in as many ways as possible. This includes having the teacher who will be teaching the class conduct the orientation session (whenever possible); meeting in the same room as the class; and even meeting on the same day as the class will meet, and at the same time. This helps orient potential participants on many levels: From the car or bus route they'll take to get there, to finding parking, to negotiating elevators or complex directions, to where the bathrooms are. If someone is dealing with illness, trauma, health or psychological challenges— navigating these elements is not simple. The orientation also affords the MBSR teacher a face-to-face encounter with each participant, and the participants the same opportunity regarding their potential instructor. This is the case for both in the group orientation and the individual meetings.

The Orientation may be, and in all likelihood is, the potential participants' first exposure to MBSR and to mindfulness. It includes:

1) a brief description of MBSR, its format, purpose, and promise, as well as its high demand characteristics (including coming to all the classes and the immediate lifestyle change of carving out at least 60 minutes per day, six days per week during one's day for formal meditation practice over the course of the eight weeks of the program. This includes 45 minutes of guided practice per day and 15-20 minutes of unguided practice per day, six days a week.

2) going over the practical details of participating in the program: attendance, class dates and times including the all-day, and what to expect, risks and benefits, and, again, emphasis on the commitment to regular daily home practice, and the time that is required.

3) Additionally, it can be helpful to mention the broad topics that the program includes such as perception, the different ways that automaticity and stress reactivity show up for each person, how mindfulness offers a way to be in wiser relationship with those circumstances and people in our lives that are most challenging. The Orientation session can catalyze both implicit and explicit group support: prospective participants may realize that they are not alone, and begin to resonate with others who might also be finding it hard to make the commitment—but are nevertheless willing to take up the challenge because the stakes couldn't be higher.

Throughout the Orientation the teacher should be mindful of what is unfolding in the room, some of which may be visible, some not. Visual cues might include:

- body language especially recognizing signs of dysregulation and sympathetic nervous system activation;
- low affect or mood and/or withdrawn, or, conversely nervous tension and agitatation;
- how participants choose to engage and participate: a quiet or reserved participant is just as welcome as an outgoing one. There is no pressure to participate in large group dialogues. But that said, MBSR is conducted in a class setting, sometimes with large numbers of participants. If someone has severe social anxiety, some close monitoring and checking in from time to time might be necessary.

Individual Meeting

After the formal Orientation session, the teacher makes arrangements to speak with each potential participant for a brief meeting. This can be done immediately after the Orientation session, or soon after—in-person, by phone or videoconference. During the individual meeting, any indications on the intake form or behaviors noted during the main session can and should be brought up in the conversation.

It is also important to ask the participant if they have any questions about the cautionary criteria or any other aspect of the class and if they have any questions about what unfolded in the Orientation.

This meeting may be 5-15 minutes in length, and is another opportunity to—as suggested in the Orientation Overview—truly meet the person, to be fully present with them, and to encourage authentic dialogue about what may be bringing them to the class. In addition, if the teacher noticed discomfort, holding back, or, conversely, speaking a great deal or any other behaviors that suggested anxiety or panic, it is important to specifically check in about the experience of being in the group, practice, and any other aspect of the Orientation that might have been challenging, and what support, if any, the person might be receiving for any potential mental health difficulty.

Cautionary Criteria for Participation in MBSR

During the formal group Orientation, the teacher should clearly note cautionary criteria recommended for MBSR. This can be stated matter-of-factly and neutrally, encouraging participants to discuss any challenges they may be currently dealing with in the individual meeting with the teacher.

The information below (in italics — written in the second person) provides a general overview of the salient features to be aware of and convey to potential participants:

Because meditation involves coming more intentionally aware of our thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations, the practice may bring up experiences in these domains that are uncomfortable. As we remind participants, meditation does not mean we will always be peaceful or comfortable. A major element of the practice is to learn how to be with whatever is present—even discomfort — and to explore wise ways of responding to it.

If you have a history of mental health challenges, such as experiences of trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicidality, psychotic disorder, depression, anxiety disorder, depersonalization, bipolar disorder, or addiction, you may be at risk for experiencing unwanted thoughts and emotions, or bodily reactions when going through mindfulness and medita-

tion training. These are not necessarily a problem, and can even be an opportunity, if approached with gentleness and self-honoring, to use the meditation practices to welcome and take a peek at whatever unwanted experiences, thoughts, or emotions arise, but only to the degree that you care to. There is evidence showing that mindfulness training can help with a wide range of mental health challenges to one degree or another, especially if there is adequate emotional support. Certainly, the program can be flexibly adapted for the specific condition and person (see, for example, Treleaven: Trauma Sensitive Mindfulness, 2018; Treleaven: The Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness Workbook — A Comprehensive Guide for Mindfulness Teachers, 2025; Kuyken et al. JAMA Psychiatry. 2016; de Vibe et al. Campbell Review. 2017; Gaudiano et al. J Cogn Psychother. 2020); it can also be helpful in parallel, if called for, to consult with a clinician who has expertise regarding further suggestions for adaptive practices for these specific conditions.

If you are wondering if this is the right course for you–or if this is the right time to engage with mindfulness and meditation–you are encouraged to talk with your doctor or mental health provider to see if now is an appropriate time to engage in mindfulness meditation and training, and if so, if they have suggestions or recommendations for you. You are also encouraged to speak openly with your MBSR teacher so they are aware of your needs and any potential challenges you might be concerned about, recognizing that clinicians and not MBSR instructors need to be one's source of advice for clinical conditions.

All participants are encouraged to draw upon their own wisdom; to be reminded not to push or go beyond what feels wise; and that there is no one right way to engage with the meditation practice. You should know that there are many options for going through MBSR in a good way that works for you — and that you can always speak privately with your teacher if concerns arise.

As you go through the MBSR course, you are encouraged to notice how the various formal and informal mindfulness practices, including the mindful hatha yoga, feel to you. If the practices are helpful, then keep using them. If the practices are associated with unwanted experiences, then you are welcome to pause them, and reach out to your teacher and/or therapist if you feel that could be of benefit.

Finally, you need to know that some mindful movement as well as gentle mindful yoga postures are part of the MBSR program. If you have any physical limitations that may affect your ability to do any of this, you are welcome to talk with your health professional to get advice on which postures you may want to avoid or modify. The mindful movements are also an awareness practice–and as such, can be explored and engaged in to whatever degree you care to in the present moment. Listening closely to your own body should always take precedence over the guidance the instructor is offering.

While the text above cites many conditions that MBSR instructors should approach with cautionary notes, under the right circumstances, a participant with one of those conditions may still engage successfully in the MBSR program. This engagement is supported by having a strong network of providers, family and/or friends, and/or community, having a clear comprehension of the rigor of the program, having a strong motivation to engage with the meditation practices, perhaps having some prior expe-

rience of mindfulness meditation practices, and being willing to stay in touch with the MBSR teacher throughout the program and talk about any adverse reactions to the guided meditations that may arise.

Given the range of instructors' own background and professional training, and the possible constraints that can arise in specific contexts in which MBSR may be offered, instructors will need to consider what is reasonable and skillful for their situation. Some options may include a general consent form which offers evidence, cautionaries, and caveats, as well as a list of local professionals to whom to refer particular class members for additional support (i.e. coaches, clergy, therapists, counselors, etc.)

All teachers are encouraged to proactively arrange for backup consultation with a psychiatrist or clinician who is familiar with mindfulness, MBSR, and how the program may impact various psychological conditions, to discuss specific challenges or concerns with specific participants as they arise.

All instructors will do well to consider and include regular supervision, mentoring, and peer-supervision during the entire process of teaching. This may be particularly helpful at the Orientation phase of the program to address questions about the appropriateness of particular individuals for class. There may be a pressure to fill a class, to accept someone who is strongly advocating for their participation, or some other circumstance. When there is any doubt or reason for concern, it is a good idea to pause, and to get expert input and/or perspective from colleagues and/or a mentor or supervisor. Having this kind of professional support is key to creating a safe and welcoming learning environment for everyone in the classroom.

There are occasionally times when, after the Orientation and individual meeting, it becomes clear to the interviewer/instructor that it is counter-indicated for the participant to take the MBSR course at that particular time. The resources below can be helpful for participants who feel that, while the course may be too much to engage with at a particular time, nevertheless want to learn more and begin, in small ways, to incorporate mindfulness practices into their lives.

A variety of resources can be suggested, including:

- *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook*, by Bob Stahl and Elisha Goldstein
- *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook for Anxiety*, by Bob Stahl, Florence Meleo-Meyer, and Lynn Koerbel
- *Mindfulness for Beginners*, by Jon Kabat-Zinn
- *Mindfulness: An 8-Week Program for Finding Peace in a Frantic World*, by Mark Williams, Danny Penman, et al.
- For someone who may be ready and interested, David Treleaven's *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness* may also be recommended.

Local resources such as MBCT, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) or other therapies specifically designed for people with mental health difficulties that include mindfulness in their protocol can be encouraged as well.

Finally, there may be some criteria that present challenges that are more practical in nature. This includes:

Geography

While in the past, local access, transportation, adverse weather conditions, and other factors were significant challenges for both participants and teachers alike. Since the advent of Zoom and online MBSR options, this is much less of a concern. Online classes can have other barriers, including technology access. However, in the present era, there are many options for prospective participants in both in-person and online classes around the world.

Language needs

If a participant is not fluent in the language the class is offered in, comprehension and participation will obviously be severely limited. Ideally, having a resource list of classes offered in other languages would be best. Accessing interpretation or translation services, including ASL, will depend on state requirements, a participant's service availability, and other resource-management issues.

Given the intimacy of the MBSR classroom and the responsibility of maintaining a safe environment, all decisions regarding individuals' participation in the MBSR class are at the discretion of the MBSR teacher, with the understanding that all relevant concerns, cautionary notes, and motivation will be taken into account when deciding who is appropriate to enroll.

Accessibility Challenges (hearing, vision, physical disabilities, neurodiversity, mental health difficulties, etc).

Securing a classroom that is wheelchair accessible, and taking into consideration those who may be impacted by challenges such as vision impairment or hearing impairment may be necessary for widespread accessibility. Deciding what is possible in terms of reasonable accommodations or adjustments to be able to include specific individuals is critical. At the same time, it may not be possible to arrange appropriate, never mind ideal, access. For this reason, it is important in such cases to be clear from the outset as to what kind of accommodations for a particular person might be possible. Be willing to learn from participants in what they need at minimum, and to research possible accommodations via apps and other technologies. If teaching within an institution, there may be factors from the American Disabilities Act (ADA) to consider regarding an organization's legal requirement to provide reasonable accommodations.

Recommendations for Teachers

Prior to teaching:

- Understand the limits of your professional capacity and boundaries (i.e., if you are a therapist, physician, or other healthcare provider, know your state, local and professional codes regarding reporting or other limits of practice). Additionally, teachers are encouraged to make regular use of supervision and/or mentoring with skilled, senior teachers, as well as engage with peers for collegial support and space to talk about what is arising in the class–and in oneself. This can be sporadic or semi-regular, as an ongoing commitment to self-care, self-investigation, and reflection.
- Create a referral list of therapists and mental health care providers who know and understand MBSR and mindfulness, who you can refer potential participants to, should they need. If this is not possible due to conflicts of interest, having a list of "mindfulness-adjacent"

or “mindfulness-friendly” therapies (ACT, DBT, Somatic Experiencing, EMDR, etc.) is advised.

- Ongoing connection and engagement with a mentor, supervisor or with peers (peer-vision), is recommended as a support for all instructors. This may be augmented with professional clinical advisors or consultants when appropriate.
- Create an intake form that elicits appropriate information to assess a person’s readiness for MBSR, given the demand characteristics of the program. Note that some organizations will need to assess the appropriateness of any intake form or gathering of personal information. It is the responsibility of the instructor to know the parameters of what information can be requested.

During teaching:

- Remind participants that you are available to check in with, as needed. These should be brief--email, or possibly 10-15 min. over phone or video conferencing if something is coming up. If strong reactions are surfacing, be open to re-evaluating if this is the best time.
- Limit the size of online classes so you are able to monitor the group effectively.
- Consider your own skillset and competency realistically, and consider co-teaching as a way to strengthen the experience of the participants and/or the holding environment of the classroom.
- Seek out supervision, mentoring, or consultation as needed.

APPENDIX C

THE PRACTICE OF MINDFULNESS EQUALS THE CULTIVATION OF HEARTFULNESS

OPENING TO WHATEVER ARISES WITH LOVINGKINDNESS AND COMPASSION

For the purposes of teaching in the context of MBSR, I (JKZ) see the cultivation of loving-kindness as not separate from the practice of mindfulness. The very act of taking one's seat can be seen as a radical act of sanity and of a non-self-centered love of life and of the potential in all of us for embodied wakefulness — not in some imagined future, but in the only moment any of us ever get, namely this one. In this way *mindfulness* is not separate from *heartfulness*, as per the expression *Two Wings, One Bird*, and their cultivation unfolds seamlessly together in the degree of intentionality around kindness that one brings to the practice in any and every moment.

What is more, the MBSR instructor in some very real sense has the potential to embody the essence of lovingkindness in their mere presence (even on the phone or remotely) in relating to prospective participants in the program, in how one relates to every individual and circumstance in their classes — not through contrivance, pretense, or falsity — but by simply by being one's authentic embodied self. So lovingkindness is embedded in the MBSR curriculum from the very beginning in every encounter, on line or in-person. We bring open-hearted awareness to every moment in the practice, as best we can, so that kindness and self-compassion are present in every aspect of the unfolding in the classroom. Any formal instruction in lovingkindness is built on and is in addition to this baseline of embodied presence throughout the eight weeks of the program.

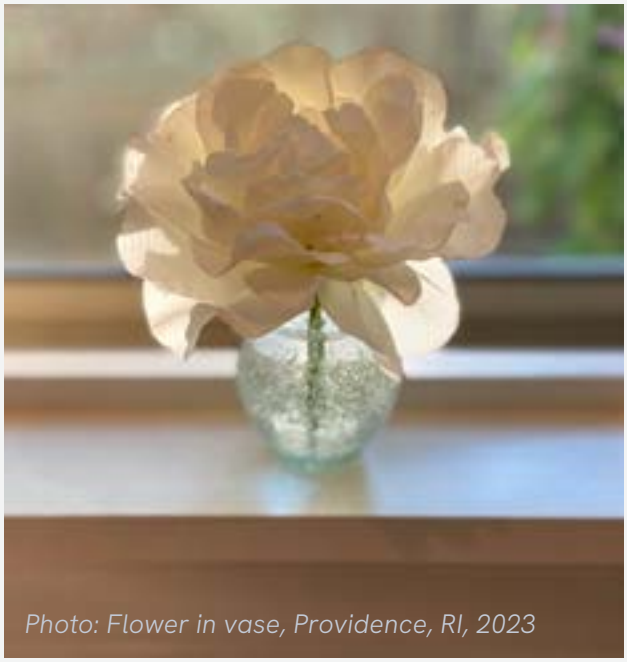

Photo: Flower in vase, Providence, RI, 2023

In essence, MBSR extends an invitation to all participants who enroll to experiment with the possibility of sooner or later coming to terms with the actuality of things, however challenging or stressful — often (hopefully, but certainly not in all cases) with an extensive circle of professional and family support. This means putting out the welcome mat, so to speak, for life as it is, for whatever presents itself in that very moment (which is always now) in the

mind, in the heart, in the body, in the larger world. This is not easy, which is exactly why it is worth doing. As MBSR has emphasized from the very beginning, it is simple, but not always easy to live an embodied, awakened, and compassionate life, especially in the face of the full catastrophe of the human condition when it arises for us in whatever particular ways it does. In such moments, it is no longer an abstraction, or a generalizable principle, but an immediate arising, demanding and deserving an immediate response from our own authentic practice in the moment. This often means *turning toward* what we most want to turn away from. It means staying with our experience as best we can), however unpleasant or rending it might be, moment by moment by moment, and embracing it with patience and with enormous kindness and compassion extended toward both ourself, the others who are immediately involved in the event, and the larger human condition. A willingness to find a way to come to terms with things as they are is the ground of healing. But this domain of possibility cannot be approached merely via the instrumental in such moments. We need to open to the domain of the non-instrumental, of not trying to get anywhere, solve any problem, teach ourselves a lesson, or get a specific result. And as instructors, we need to remember this when the participants in an MBSR class are going through what they are going through and hoping to use the practice for healing and transformation, as well as working with (but not trying to get rid of) their stress and emotional pain.

For MBSR teachers, attentive listening, respect, gentleness, and curiosity are expressions of embodied kindness when engaging with the participants in an MBSR class, many of whom may be going through some aspect of what is described above. The teacher's personal presence, practice experience from both teacher-led retreats and in everyday life, coupled with an openhearted, affectionate, attention to present moment experience and the person/people in the class, can serve to anchor the invitation to *"put out the welcome mat"* for whatever arises in one's life, however challenging and stressful it might be, at least for a moment, for one inbreath perhaps, and one outbreath. The invitation is to meet one's experience as an opportunity for investigation and learning — often lessons we might not have ever wanted to have to take on, ever. But that learning, hard as it may be to enter into — which is what the MBSR class is meant to offer and hold in a safe and supportive learning environment — inevitably leads to growing, which in turn leads to healing, in the sense of coming to terms with things as they are. And that coming to terms can itself, over time, lead to transformation and a reclaiming or a realizing of the full dimensionality of one's being, and to recognizing the poignancy of the human condition and what it means to be alive for the brief span of years we call a lifetime. All this can unfold or be realized in no time and, equally, over an entire lifetime. If the teacher hopes to live and teach in such a space, they need to cultivate such embodiment within themselves and their own daily practice of meditation, as well as in everyday living.

The embodied and authentic welcome with which a new participant is met from the first inquiry about the program to their course completion is an opportunity for the instructor to remember their own potential for uncontrived openhearted presence, respect for every individual who presents themself, and a commitment to be of some help in facilitating the participant's trajectory through MBSR as a potentially

new element of a larger healing process. This invites an embodiment of authentic hospitality, a cognate of the word hospital and hospice. It is never not appropriate. But again, it has to be authentic. Hospitality's "near enemies" are a saccharine fawning, faux concern, and too much talk about compassion or kindness. Less talk about compassion and kindness and more embodied compassion and kindness is always called for, and this principle should always be kept in mind by the instructor.

In terms of exposing participants in an MBSR class to the formal practice of lovingkindness, formal lovingkindness (*metta*) practice is usually introduced during the all-day session which takes place between Class 5 and 6, or between Class 6 and Class 7. This is in large part because, unless taught from the non-dual perspective that we bring to the entire arc of the MBSR meditative curriculum, it can be a source of confusion for the MBSR participants, because it often can seem to be asking them to produce specific "desirable" or positive feelings, attitudes, or experiences, as opposed to non-judgmentally resting in awareness with whatever is arising in any moment. MBSR teachers-in-training sometimes ask why the practice is not introduced earlier. Here is the primary reason: We do not want to offer anything in the earliest weeks of a person's learning curve with formal practice to undermine the extremely challenging non-dual invitation to be with things exactly as they are, without pushing away the unwanted or pursuing the pleasant or desirable.

That said, lovingkindness is an integral part of MBSR and always has been. It is best transmitted, as stated above, by being loving and kind yourself, and that includes toward yourself and how you approach and bring forth the various meditation practices of MBSR. In other words, what is being encouraged is the embodying of love, the *embodying* of kindness, the *embodying* of compassion in the way you, the instructor, carry yourself in every encounter with the prospective participants. Authentic, embodied presence cannot be contrived or feigned. It has to come from your intrinsic caring nature. The teacher has every opportunity to embody concern for the wellbeing of participants, and kindness, in presenting the course guidelines and in the establishing of collective ethical agreements, including both dimensions of confidentiality; and in establishing and inviting a wholesome and emotionally safe environment in which participants can take risks, be themselves, and learn. In this way, a sense of trustworthy lovingkindness and embodied compassion is established in the classroom from the very beginning, and embedded in how all the guided mindfulness meditation and mindful hatha yoga practices of MBSR are delivered. By the advent of the all-day session in Week 5 or 6, a field of embodied lovingkindness has been established and normalized, upon which the formal and skillful guiding of a non-dual lovingkindness practice can be offered without creating confusion.

Lovingkindness Meditation

Early Buddhist teachings on lovingkindness meditation suggested radiating friendly wishes unconditionally and boundlessly in all directions right from the start. Lovingkindness has also been taught using a sequence of offering it first to oneself; then one or more people we love; then a benefactor; then someone we might encounter as a "neutral person" such as people working in the service industries that we use and benefit from; to a mildly difficult person; to a very difficult person, who may have caused us harm; to larger and larger communities, such as the afflicted, all those imprisoned or

oppressed; to all beings; and ultimately, to the planet itself, and the universe.[1]

Balancing the amount of direction and guidance with space to practice on one's own in silence can support a seamless radiating of love and kindness inwardly and outwardly as a natural emanation of mindfulness meditation and dropping in on the present moment, as a way of being and way to bring to mind and heart the boundless nature of awareness and the interconnectedness of all things. "With boundless friendliness for the whole world should one cultivate a boundless heart, in all directions...". (Feldman, p 11). As a practice, lovingkindness supports a process of release from automatic, habitual reactivity of fear and separation while strengthening a response that is spacious, courageous, kind, and curious, and reinforces the notion that meditation itself is a radical act of sanity and love, revealing an intrinsic relationality and interconnectedness that is never not here.

When guiding a lovingkindness meditation, it is important to remember that lovingkindness is not an emotion or technique to stimulate change, but an intention and an invitation to abide — to establish a dwelling place for mind, body, heart, and world — classically called a *"divine abode."* If understood and embodied, metta or loving-kindness is itself a dwelling place, a refuge within one's own heart, from inner and outer turbulence, from storms in the mind and the storms in life. To whatever degree possible, the teacher embodies these characteristics in their own practice, and offers the guidance as an act of generosity and compassion.

It is important to keep in mind how easily one is at risk of falling into trying to generate a particular feeling or positive response in the practitioners. *There is no particular way one is supposed to feel as a result of practicing the lovingkindness meditation.* Indeed some people may feel unkindness in the practice, and it is important to emphasize here that the intention to cultivate greater kindness is enough by itself. Some people react strongly to any hint of a "pious" or prayer-like attitude within the guidance. Others may have difficulty offering kind wishes to themselves or others. Encouragement to persevere and playfully experiment with this practice with a light touch and without any attachment to outcome or interior feelings can be helpful to overcome potential initial barriers. Sadness, tenderness, ease and expansiveness are not uncommon responses to the lovingkindness practice. Acknowledge the potential for resistance — and give full permission for participants to "dive beneath the guidance" to rest with whatever focus of attention may be stabilizing and generous. *This* itself is an act of lovingkindness to oneself. The practice is a vehicle for watering seeds of kindness that are already within each person.

One possible sequence: The formal loving-kindness practice begins with the body, inviting ease with any posture that is supportive and relatively comfortable. It is skillful to include mention of whatever anchor a person might be using as a support in general during the lovingkindness practice. An allowing, curious attitude is invited, welcoming all responses to the practice on the part of the participants. It may be skillful to begin by asking people to recall or visualize a moment when they felt completely seen and accepted by another, whenever that might have been in one's life (if one can recall such an experience — if not, it can be imagined). Perhaps visualizing the scene as

[1] Analayo, 2015: Compassion and Emptiness in Early Buddhist Meditation, Windhorse, UK; Buddhaghosa Himi. The Path of Purification: Visuddhimaga/ Buddhaghosa Himi; tr. by Nyanamoli Himi.- Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2010

best one can recall it. How did that feel to you, to be unequivocally seen and accepted for who you are? In the body? In the mind? In the heart? What feelings are arising now as you bring this memory to mind?[2]

Now seeing if you can find this feeling of love and acceptance and being seen and accepted unequivocally and unconditionally in the body right now, and allow it to embrace you yourself. How does that feel? Where is it strongest? What are the felt qualities?

Now, if you like, calling to mind someone or some sentient being (a pet, for example) who you love and cherish. It may be a person who is alive now, or someone who is deceased. Holding that being in your heart with these same feeling of lovingkindness that you have yourself received, wishing that person well, discovering authentic feelings for that person/being to know peace, kindness, love, safety, health, strength, ease and joy. Traditionally, one sends wishes (to self and others) for safety, happiness, mental and physical health, a kind and open heart, and ease (e.g., May you be safe; May you be happy; may you be healthy; may your heart by kind and open; may you live with ease). However, the feelings themselves, the warmth, the energy of this inclining is enough. Phrases can be useful–but they are not absolutely necessary.

It can also be supportive to begin with this person–rather than oneself–which can often be quite challenging. The experience of opening to another, someone who you love and cherish, can soften and open the heart in a way where it is then easier to turn towards ourselves with the same kind of acceptance and tenderness.

You are free to continue with the sequence, or to simply let lovingkindness radiate out in all directions from your own heart. We are only ever able to authentically share that which we ourselves have experienced. Consider how you might choose to immerse yourself in the practice of lovingkindness. Finding your way to express goodwill, you might experiment with practicing several different loving-kindness meditations and inquire into how you attune with the attitude and phrasing. By inhabiting the essence of mindfulness as heartfulness, lovingkindness becomes a way of being. It also becomes commonsensical and intuitive. To deepen your appreciation of this practice, see the various books of Sharon Salzberg.

There are also considerations to keep in mind. For instance Rebecca Crane, PhD, Emeritus Director of the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice at Bangor University, UK, highlights information in Chapter 8 of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression (Segal, et al., 2012). This chapter points to some of the cautions that teachers should be aware of–including that invitations towards care and kindness can create a rebound effect of triggering waves of self-criticism/judgment. Furthermore, there is evidence from research at Oxford University that this was one of the factors causing participants to drop out (Barnhofer, et al., 2010). Even with this caveat, including a guided loving kindness meditation during the all-day session, if framed well, and done cognizant of all the pitfalls, is possible, even skillful. Teacher discretion, as well as sensitivity to the range of different possible responses to the practice–along with ample time for inquiry in the next classes, is necessary.

[1] Kabat-Zinn, 2005, Being Seen, in *Coming to Our Senses*, Hachette, New York, 2005, pp. 198-201.

APPENDIX D

SELECTED PAPERS AND BOOK CHAPTERS ON MBSR BY JON KABAT-ZINN

1. Foreword: Seeds of a Necessary Global Renaissance in the Making: The Refining of Psychology's Understanding of the Nature of Mind, Self, and Embodiment Through the Lens of Mindfulness and its Origins at a Key Inflection Point for the Species. ***Current Opinion in Psychology***, 2019.

2. Too Early to Tell. The Potential Impact and Challenges — Ethical and Otherwise — Inherent in the Mainstreaming of Dharma in an increasingly Dystopian World. ***Mindfulness***, October 2017. DOI 10.1007/s12671-017-0758-2.

3. Some Reflections on the Origins of MBSR, Skillful Means, and the Trouble with Maps. ***Contemporary Buddhism***, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2011.

4. Foreword to ***Teaching Mindfulness: A Practical Guide for Clinicians and Educators***, McCown, D. Reibel, D. and Micozzi, M.S, Springer, New York, (2010).

5. Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Context: Past, Present, and Future. ***Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice▪V10 N2***, Summer 2003.

6. Indra's Net at Work: The Mainstream of Dharma Practice in Society. From ***The Psychology of Awakening*** -- Watson, Batchelor, and Claxon. Samuel Weiser, Maine, 2000.

7. Kabat-Zinn, J. An out-patient program in Behavioral Medicine for chronic pain patients based on the practice of mindfulness meditation: Theoretical considerations and preliminary results. ***Gen. Hosp. Psychiatry*** (1982) 4:33-47.

8. Kabat-Zinn, J., Lipworth, L. and Burney, R. The clinical use of mindfulness meditation for the self-regulation of chronic pain. ***J. Behav. Med.*** (1985) 8:163-190.

9. Kabat-Zinn, J., Lipworth, L., Burney, R. and Sellers, W. Four year follow-up of a meditation-based program for the self-regulation of chronic pain: Treatment outcomes and compliance. ***Clin.J.Pain*** (1986) 2:159-173.

10. Kabat-Zinn, J. and Chapman-Waldrop, A. Compliance with an outpatient stress reduction program: rates and predictors of completion. ***J.Behav. Med.*** (1988) 11:333-352.

11. Kabat-Zinn, J., Massion, A.O., Kristeller, J., Peterson, L.G., Fletcher, K., Pbert, L., Linderking, W., Santorelli, S.F. Effectiveness of a meditation-based stress reduction program in the treatment of anxiety disorders. ***Am. J Psychiatry*** (1992) 149:936-943.

12. Miller, J., Fletcher, K. and Kabat-Zinn, J. Three-year follow-up and clinical implications of a mindfulness-based stress reduction intervention in the treatment of anxiety disorders. ***Gen. Hosp.Psychiatry*** (1995) 17:192-200.

13. Kabat-Zinn, J. Participatory Medicine. ***Jnl of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology*** (2000) 14:239-240.

14. Davidson, R.J., Kabat-Zinn, J., Schumacher, J. et al. Alterations in brain and immune function produced by mindfulness meditation, ***Psychosom Med*** (2003) 65:564-570.

15. Kabat-Zinn, J. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). ***Constructivism in the Human Sciences*** (2003) 8:73-83

APPENDIX E

MBSR CALENDARS AND 9-DOT FOR PRINT

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Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
Awareness of Pleasant Experiences Calendar

Instructions: This week, be aware of one pleasant experience or occurrence each day while it is happening. At a later time, on a calendar such as the one provided here, record in detail what it was and your experience of it.

	What was the experience?	Were you aware of the pleasant feelings while it was happening?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience? Describe the sensations you felt.	What moods, feelings and thoughts accompanied this experience at the time?	What sensations, thoughts or emotions are in your mind now as you recall this and write it down?
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					

From "Full Catastrophe Living: Revised and Updated Edition," 2013. Jon Kabat-Zinn

Pleasant Experiences Calendar - *Cont.*

	What was the experience?	Were you aware of the pleasant feelings while it was happening?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience? Describe the sensations you felt.	What moods, feelings and thoughts accompanied this experience at the time?	What sensations, thoughts or emotions are in your mind now as you recall this and write it down?
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
Awareness of Unpleasant Experiences Calendar

Instructions: This week, be aware of one unpleasant experience or occurrence each day while it is happening. At a later time, on a calendar such as the one provided here, record in detail what it was and your experience of it. You're encouraged to choose something mild or moderately unpleasant. It's not necessary to choose the most challenging experience of your day, and in fact avoid this if possible.

	What was the experience?	Were you aware of the unpleasant feelings while it was happening?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience? Describe the sensations you felt.	What moods, feelings and thoughts accompanied this experience at the time?	What sensations, thoughts or emotions are present now as you recall the experience & write it down?
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					

From "Full Catastrophe Living: Revised and Updated Edition", 2013. Jon Kabat-Zinn

Unpleasant Experiences Calendar - *Cont.*

	What was the experience?	Were you aware of the unpleasant feelings while it was happening?	How did your body feel, in detail, during this experience? Describe the sensations you felt.	What moods, feelings and thoughts accompanied this experience at the time?	What sensations, thoughts or emotions are present now as you recall the experience & write it down?
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					

From "Full Catastrophe Living: Revised and Updated Edition", 2013. Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
Awareness of a Difficult or Stressful Communication Calendar

Instructions: This week, be aware of one difficult or stressful communication each day *while it is happening*. At a later time, record the details of your experience on the calendar. Like with the Unpleasant Experiences calendar, choose something mildly or moderately challenging, and avoid, if possible the most challenging interactions. Even if the dialogue is part of a longer, ongoing exchange, choose just **one** interaction, email, text, phone call or meeting.

	Describe the exchange, giving as much context as you'd like: The person, the communication channel, the details of the actual event, including what you really wanted from the exchange.	**What did you notice in body sensations, thoughts and emotions *during* the communication? What was pleasant, unpleasant or neutral?**	**Were you aware of any stress reactivity *and/or* of a more mindful stress response during this experience? Please give details.**	**What new learning or insights have you gained by attending to your experience in this way? (e.g., patterns of protection, defensiveness, striving, passivity, aggression, etc.) ?**
Mon				
Tues				
Wed				

Adapted from Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). *Full Catastrophe Living.*

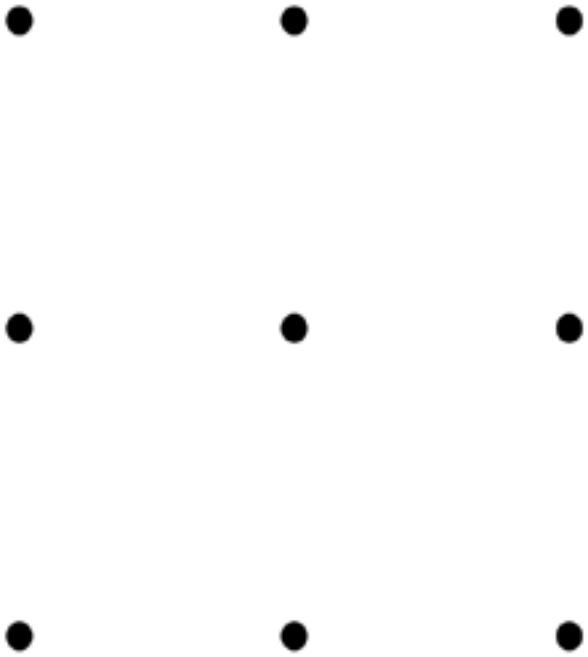
Difficult Communications Calendar - *Cont.*

	Describe the exchange, giving as much context as you'd like: The person, the communication channel, the details of the actual event, including what you really wanted from the exchange.	What did you notice in body sensations, thoughts and emotions *during* the communication? What was pleasant, unpleasant or neutral?	Were you aware of any stress reactivity *and/or* of a more mindful stress response during this experience? Please give details.	What new learning or insights have you gained by attending to your experience in this way? (e.g., patterns of protection, defensiveness, striving, passivity, aggression, etc.) ?
Thur				
Fri				
Sat				
Sun				

Adapted from Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). *Full Catastrophe Living*.

9-DOT EXERCISE

DIRECTIONS: Connect up all nine dots with four straight lines without lifting the pencil off the page and without retracing over any of the lines.



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