



MINDFULNESS TEACHER TRAINING

Mindfulness **O**nline **T**raining
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■ THE FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS;

-Developing awareness of body sensations; the body is always in the present moment, it is only the mind that wanders to the past and the future. Cultivating resting in present moment awareness and allowing everything to simply be as it is- without trying to fix, turn away, judge, want, like or dislike brings us in direct contact with the present moment and interrupts the incessant, often aimless wandering mind.

-Cultivating awareness of our emotions and feelings and the tendency to want more of the good, turn away from the perceived not good or simply ignore what is actually happening in the present moment. Putting the spotlight of attention of the continuous shifting states of our thoughts and feelings helps us uncover patterns where we get stuck and provides a tool to help us recognize these unhelpful behaviors. In addition, mindfulness provides a strategy to cultivate presence and accept whatever arises in our moment to moment experience, without judging it good or bad. This does not mean passive acceptance of circumstances that require action and change.

-Becoming aware of the emergence of natural states of kindness and compassion and self-nourishment when the mind is freed from anxious thinking patterns and behaviors.

-Developing a deeper awareness of our connection to nature, each other and the wonder and mystery of life itself. This cultivated awareness takes us out of the often isolated space of our own minds and reminds us we all experience similar states and conditions of being human.

- Developing the ability to observe all that happens inside of us and outside of us without being entangled and controlled by our thoughts and feelings.

■ WHAT IS IT?

Mindfulness is a state of awareness developed through using a set of practical skills involving:

Attention- watching, listening, being aware of what naturally exists

eg. breath, sounds, physical sensations.

Intention- purposefully noticing what is happening inside and outside of you. eg. thoughts, shifting moods.

Presence- being fully engaged in the moment to whatever is present.

Openness- being curious, non-judgmental and simply observing whatever is happening.

■ HOW DOES IT WORK?

There is a two-fold mechanism at work when practicing mindfulness; When you focus your attention it is thought this engages and enhances executive function which accounts for the increased mental clarity and inner spaciousness that arises from regular practice.

Focusing on physical sensations (breath, body sensations) reduces stress and anxious thinking.

Mindfulness doesn't happen overnight- it is a state of being that develops organically over time. You plant the seed (intention) of mindfulness, you water it (attention) and you do all this with a willingness (attitude) to develop a deeper understanding of who you are and how your mind works! Establishing a daily, on-going practice is important to developing a mindful way of being, with a raised awareness of your inner and outer life and strategies to assist when difficult thoughts and feelings threaten to overwhelm us.

Mindfulness is not new. All contemplative practices have some form of mindfulness as part of their training. In particular, mindfulness is a large part of Buddhist practices that have for centuries promoted the need to understand the fundamental workings (mechanism) of the human mind so that we are not controlled by our thoughts and feelings. Having been available for a couple of thousand years we have to ask ourselves; why has mindfulness finally reached mainstream western society and what has happened to help many people, from all walks of life become receptive to the idea that mindfulness might just be something useful and valuable- a strategy to deal with incessant worry and anxiety and unhelpful thinking and behaving patterns?

Here is a tool, a strategy (when practiced on a regular, on-going basis) to maintain mental, physical and emotional equilibrium in the face of increasing stressors, perceived or real. Mindfulness is an effective strategy to train attention and improve social and emotional intelligence. A proven method (empirical research) to train the attention away from worrying about future events, going over past events- to being fully present in the here and now and further, allowing whatever is present to simply be there without trying to avoid or fix it. Acceptance of what is (as opposed to struggling /not wanting/liking what is) underpins the success of mindfulness in creating a new way of being, free from constant tension, uncertainty, fear and perceived stress opening up a spaciousness previously crammed with incessant, often worrying thoughts and feelings.

We live in an age of science. We are trained to believe that unless something can be proven with empirical evidence, we dismiss it as unproven and therefore probably of no real value. Apart from the fact that it has become urgent a to find a solution to the increasing mental health issues that continue to rise (broad predictions of 20% of the population will be experiencing an identifiable mental illness by 2020), a solution to the increasing distraction, dissatisfaction and boredom that is all-pervasive in our technology- obsessed society is needed. Since the year 2000, research has been carried out on all aspects of mindfulness- 2,500 papers and daily rising, to try to pinpoint the reason mindfulness works and to attempt to understand the underlying mechanisms of the brain that are affected when mindfulness is adopted as a self-regulating, self-awareness practice. Being of an age of science, this is comforting to many people that might otherwise dismiss mindfulness as just another passing fad.

■ TEACHING POINTS

Mindfulness is **not** a magic bullet that will **solve** all learning and **behavior** problems in the classroom but it will provide a model within a learning community where students can flourish socially, emotionally and academically. The ultimate aim of classroom management is to teach students to **manage their own behavior**. Mindfulness fits very well with this, as the outcome from regular, daily practice is raised present moment awareness, increased self- awareness of our interconnectivity with others and the world around and transforming reactivity into responding.

It will **provide a model** (and practices) where attention, **self-awareness and kindness are cultivated on a daily basis** and these values become increasingly important to the students-worth and self-care. In addition, it becomes an **important part** of the daily **curriculum** and if introduced to all classes, establishes an across-the-school culture – a mindful school.

As with any subject, the **repeated, regular practicing** of Mindfulness will lead to the many well-documented benefits and for each student, becoming the default mode, especially when the pressures and challenges of life are greatest.

Students (and teachers) will have these additional skills to self-manage and self-regulate and recognize their emotions thoughts and feelings as passing mental events knowing they will pass on in a natural time span if **they don't attach meaning and stories to them and play them over and over** in their minds. They will develop the skill of recognizing and shifting their attention when they get 'stuck' on unhelpful thoughts or feelings.

Mindfulness is about training our attention, purposefully, to notice what is happening around us and inside of us; our thoughts, feelings, reactions and responses and to cultivate present moment awareness. Regular practice strengthens our resilience and emotional and social intelligence. It raises our awareness of ourselves and those around us further cultivating empathy, compassion and kindness. Essentially Mindfulness training is Attention training. If you are more comfortable calling this training Attention Training- do that because that is essentially what Mindfulness is.

■ NO RIGHT OR WRONG OUTCOME- JUST CULTIVATING AWARENESS IN THE PRESENT MOMENT.

Also good to remember that some days it's easier to concentrate on the breath and settle into the practice, some days it's harder to not get distracted by thoughts- especially worrying thoughts. Don't worry about this and frame all sessions of Mindfulness, no matter how short with ;

'there is no right or wrong in Mindfulness- everything that you notice and experience while we do these simple exercises is allowed because it's your experience at the moment.'

Over time we are learning to notice our thoughts and feelings and developing the skill to shift our attention- especially when we get stuck with worrisome thoughts and feelings.'

Remind students that the body is always in present moment it is only the mind that wanders over the past and into the future.

You as the teacher/guide assist the cultivation of Mindfulness by guiding the group and co-creating the conditions where each student can experience and come in contact with the mindful state- awareness and connectivity with self, others and the environment around us. This can be done in a number of ways. (See models for teaching Mindfulness)

Attention and awareness are dynamic and this means you can train in the same way you train for sports or music. Mindfulness is a mental training, quite simple to do but not necessarily easy as it does take some practice to re-wire the mind of old established patterns of reacting and behaving. It is the repeated paying attention (noticing) in a purposeful way (thoughts, feelings, sensations), that leads to establishing a continuous mindful way of being.

The rewards are enormous; greater mental clarity, less reactivity and more thoughtful response, improved memory, better listening skills and retaining information, increased social and emotional intelligence, self-acceptance and improved sense of self-worth, gratitude, kindness and empathy increase, better sleep.

■ TEACHER/FACILITATOR TIPS

In order to be able to successfully guide, teachers need to understand their own inner experience and purposefully develop their own attention and awareness through regular practice. A science teacher would not be given an Art class to teach.

The same is with Mindfulness training; the teacher/facilitator needs to come in direct contact with the mindful state in order to understand why we do the practices, experience the benefits and be motivated to make these practices part of every day life- to stay fully present, fully engaged with a calm, observant non-reactive state of being no matter what the situation is. (stop laughing!)

Of course, this sounds like a fairy-tale to many teachers, considering the wide range of human behaviors that are managed within any one classroom and the level of energy required from the teacher to 'hold' the energy of classrooms for 5 hours a day. Practicing and experiencing the benefits themselves, teachers come to understand the rewards for a few minutes of purposeful Mindfulness practice, be it breathing, listening, walking, any number of activities used to engage the attention in the moment. The sense of peace, calm and connectivity, even a fleeting sense of what is possible, is often enough for people to commit to these practices as part of their on-going self-care.

Keeping a **Reflection Diary** after each class is a great way to learn and improve Mindfulness facilitation. This helps you reflect on (and keep a record of) what works (or doesn't), record feedback and generally just keep track especially in the early days of facilitating. This is **an important aspect** of your own development. Sharing your experiences with an experienced trainer (**supervisor**) is also a valuable way to reflect and learn. Having a supervisor is very beneficial and a lot is learnt and shared in this way. You can ask questions of any difficulties that arise in the classroom, ask for guidance if there are obstacles to overcome in establishing a mindfulness model (for yourself or students) and generally have a sounding board for anything that comes up as you establish Mindfulness practices in your classroom (and for yourself personally) .

Always keep in mind; the group dynamic's willingness to co-create a space where mindfulness can 'happen' is the key

to successful facilitation along with your skilled guiding

techniques; authority, authenticity, language and your **commitment to your own personal mindfulness practice**

■ CLASS MANAGEMENT

Teaching Mindfulness in a classroom setting has particular challenges. A **definite positive** is the students are in an environment where they are familiar with instructions and in this sense are 'ready' to try this new thing called Mindfulness.

Mindfulness practiced early in the day is a great way to 'anchor' students into present moment awareness and self-awareness and set the day with positive intentions however anytime is a good time- the main thing it becomes a normal part of the everyday curriculum at school. Mindfulness is training the mind to be attentive, receptive and self-aware.

To experience the many benefits of these simple practices, it can't be said enough- they need to be repeated daily- even for short periods. **The younger the child the shorter the time span.**

You may choose to guide the session or play a pre-recorded audio.

As you build confidence, guiding is preferred but until then the audio is effective.

1. Using a bell to signal Mindfulness session commencing.
2. Asking students to 'get into Mindful body' also helpful way to alerting all to doing something different from normal classroom learning.
3. Arrange the seating or sitting on the floor.
4. Taking a few moments to settle classroom.
5. Reminding all to pay attention to instructions
6. Introducing the idea that as we practice we are all curious scientists, observing our breath, sound, sensations, thoughts etc
as if for the first time ever.
7. Always remind students if their attention has wandered from the task (awareness on breathing for example) and they have started to think this is OK and normal because that is what minds do. When they have noticed that, return the attention back to breath entering and leaving the body).
8. Bring the session to an end and allow a few quiet minutes for all to readjust to the room with eyes open.

EXTRA TIPS on time spans for practices; sometimes a group will settle into the practices and naturally want to extend the time but this is for the teacher/guide to decide how long and how to gently bring the attention –training session to a gentle close.

5-7 year olds ; 1-2 minutes 2-3 times daily.

8-10 year olds ;3-4 minutes 2-3 times daily.

Students over 11 years old from 4 – 15; 2-3 times daily minutes adding minutes as the students progress increase in age.

Some children will be naturally attuned to these practices and want to do more, some less and some not at all.

Remember to reinforce to students they can do a few minutes breathing practice anywhere throughout the day especially at **night before sleeping** when it is a good time to instill the daily

Practice of gratitude; **name three things to be grateful for today.** This can also be done at the end of the school day and have all leave school on a positive note.

If appropriate, age dependent, ask students to quietly share (never a demand- some students may not want to) anything they noticed during the practice, either all together as a group or in pairs. **Articulating inner experiences** is a useful practice to help all normalize and make sense of the often new awareness of the inner life.

As the teacher /guide, it is striking the balance and providing the opportunity to come in contact with the inner **resource of the mindful state of awareness** for all within the parameters of workability. The more you experience the benefits, the more motivated you will be to stay with the daily programme no matter how short it is.

Some days, changing the set Mindfulness times might be necessary due to time-table or class receptivity but that's OK.

You, as the teacher/guide will know when the right time is.

If possible, choose the same time(s) each day but if not- it's OK.

Remember it is in the **repetition** of these practices that the mind is learning this new skill of being present and aware of what is happening inside as well as outside that leads to each student automatically adopting these practices for self-management and self-care whether they recognize it in these terms or not. Humans have a great capacity for life intelligence and in a sense Mindfulness puts us more in contact with this inner resource purposefully cultivating this often hidden part of ourselves.

■ DIFFICULT STUDENTS

With Mindfulness we never want to force anyone to participate who isn't willing, instead we 'invite' all-students and adults- to explore the Mindful space and decide for themselves if the practices have personal value. There will always be challenges around the management of the reluctant students.

To 'manage' these situations always have on hand colouring books and pencils, even carry miniature lava lamps or mind jars they can shake and watch settle as a way of focusing

attention quietly (if obtainable- \$2 shops sometimes sell these sometimes) can assist to provide the students with an object that will focus their attention without them realizing that is really what they are doing. Sometimes it might be necessary to remove really disruptive students from the class to give the remaining students the opportunity to fully engage and fully become aware of the benefits of doing these practices

It would be an error to think Mindfulness in the classroom is intended to make students behave. It **is not a disciplinarian**

strategy however where Mindfulness classes become an established part of the school day, many teachers report a **marked change in behaviours** and especially **the increase of kindness and empathy amongst students who practice** regularly.

■ BEGINNING A CLASS

At the start of the classes, gently inform the students that there are some **ground rules** so that it will be possible for all who practice to experience the benefits. This might be a good time to ring a bell and the students become familiar with this sound associated with Mindfulness sessions. The bell is also useful in listening practices. Never force students to participate if they are determined to be disruptive but remember if you keep a lightness around the practices they might be more willing to 'try' the practices.

STUDENTS NEED TO BE;

Quiet and still

Listen carefully to the 'teacher/guide'

Follow teacher's instructions

Be able to share when the 'teacher/guide' instructs.

(if students do not want to share make that absolutely OK)

Know there is no required outcome, no competing.

Use of language is very important to getting the whole class cooperation- gentle suggestion as opposed to strict demands has a better chance of co-operation.

Beginning by **saying 'this is new, it's new for everyone so if it feels a bit silly to start with- that's OK- it's the same for everyone so let's try it before judging it'** is always a great ice-breaker and gives permission for all to approach the new with a bit of hesitation and curiosity.

Always reconfirm that it's best to try Mindfulness

before judging whether it's for you or not. Usually, many of the students understand quickly this is a calming technique and a way to self-manage.

Students are introduced to their thoughts and feelings through direct focus on breath or

sensations of the body (feelings, listening, tasting etc) and learning these are simply individual mental events of the mind.

The younger the child, it's better to discuss Mindful thinking in the context of listening, seeing, eating, walking. Too much focus on thoughts can be confusing but by focusing on breathing, for example draws their attention to thoughts in a roundabout way.

With older students (11 years and up) thinking progression is a good way to distinguish between noticing thoughts arising and thinking about thinking.

This can be taken a step further by differentiating between thoughts as mental events and attention as a quality of focus.

Developing Mindfulness of thought assists all to recognize each individual has their own thoughts (personal mental events, not objective reality)- this can lead to more acceptance and tolerance of each other's individuality.

■ WHEN PAINFUL MEMORIES OR FEELINGS SURFACE

Because we are putting the spotlight on thoughts and feelings as they arise during these practices, it may happen that a student has an unhappy or unpleasant memory arise and finds themselves overcome with emotion. This rarely happens but always a possibility. In this case, as the teacher/guide you can quietly speak to the child, addressing the issue, relying on your life experience to help guide the student out of the emotional state-by acknowledging the emotion, allowing it to be and turning the attention to deep breathing, in most cases this will re-engage the parasympathetic system and restore balance and inner calm.

Sometimes you might **meet a situation** that is out of your range of experience and in these cases you need to trust the process and have enough experience yourself of the Mindfulness process to know balance will be restored with continued focus on an object, usually the breath in this case. You will also have **adequate life experience** to know if the issue that has surfaced may need more professional intervention, say of a school counselor and arrange the necessary meeting to assist the students towards understanding and resolution.

■ BREATH AWARENESS PRACTICE

Remember to remind students that all we are doing is noticing our breath- we don't have to do anything special or try. Sometimes the quality of the breath will change and that's normal. It's helping children recognize the connection between different ways of breathing and what's happening in the body and mind.

■ SIMPLE EXERCISE LINKING BREATH BODY AND MIND

(this can be used with all age groups modifying language)

Sitting in your mindful body, take three deep breaths and then check how your body feels.

1. Take a long deep breath in and really notice what that feels like.
2. Now slowly exhale the breath and notice how that feels;
How does it feel? Where did you feel it in your body?
Is it fast? Is it cool? Does your body feel any different?
Where? Head, stomach?
3. Now breath naturally and notice the gap between breaths.
How does that feel?
4. Now continue breathing normally and notice how your legs
Feel, how your arm feels, shoulders, face? Are you cold, hungry, relaxed?
5. Now using your breath to help slow down and relax- breath in and let your muscles relax and breath out any tension you feel.

■ PRE-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

We often think children under 5 couldn't possibly respond or learn Mindfulness—they can! There are some very simple activities that can be done with very young children to help them cultivate a connection between breath, mind and body awareness.

■ TEDDY BEAR RIDE

Have the children choose (or bring a favourite) soft toy. Have children lie down flat on a mat and tell them it isn't sleep time... we are going to do the teddy Bear Ride.

Then, place the teddy on the child's stomach and ask them to watch the teddy move up and down as you breath in and out.

The teacher can then either guide children to keep watching teddy move as you breath in and out.

■ STARFISH BREATHING

Again, a very simple exercise but done repeatedly helps develop the link between breath, body and thoughts all the while bringing awareness into the present moment.

1. Raise the hand and spread the fingers.
2. Taking the opposite hand slowly trace around the finger as the teacher instructs, 'breath in (the finger traces up the first finger) and then breath out (tracing down the finger) and repeating till all fingers have been used and then switch hands.

With young children there is no need to introduce anything else, this is a beginning of cultivating connection between breath, mind and body awareness- anything more could confuse which is to be avoided. Remember; it is in the repetition daily of these short simple activities that begin the process of instilling mind-body and present moment awareness. Over time, children (and all who practice) hopefully become aware of their own process and inner awareness is slowly, organically cultivated.

With older students, carefully directed questions can help lead to their own process.

Questions such as;

1. How was your breath awareness practice?
2. Could you keep your mind on your breath?
3. Did your breath change as you practiced?
4. Acknowledge that our breath changes with different emotional states; fast when frightened, slow when calm etc

(Often just by noticing our breathing it changes...it can become slower and deeper just by observing it

Helping older students realize they can become aware of their thoughts has many beneficial in the classroom and in students personal life. Becoming aware that thoughts are simply passing mental events and not always necessarily true (not objective reality) can help them develop for others individuality and learn to recognize that people are not the sum total of their thoughts; this is but one aspect to the whole person.

We can't always change the circumstances outside of ourselves but we can change how we react or respond to any given situation and in time come to see over-reactivity such as anger, impatience and annoyance don't really achieve much except to make us feel uncomfortable, expend a lot of unnecessary emotional energy and generally say and do things we later regret. This is the great gift of Mindfulness that develops organically over time with regular practice-increased self- awareness, reflection on our thoughts and feelings and increased impulse -control.

Mindfulness can't be learnt by talking or reading about it. Mindfulness is **experiential**. To be able to teach mindfulness you need to understand how it works **from the inside out**. Teaching mindfulness is more about guiding people to their own mindfulness practice.

It's about **co-creating** an environment where mindfulness can 'happen'. That requires the **shared intention** of all present **to enquire** into their **own direct experience** arising from the practices. As the teacher/guide, you will use language to assist participants towards this enquiry and discovering the mindfulness process themselves. Eventually all come to realise the participants are their own best 'teachers' as they go deeper into mindful enquiry of their own direct experience as it is happening moment to moment.

This type of enquiry leads to increased self-awareness and trains our minds to become aware of where we may be holding onto thoughts or feelings that keep us stuck in patterns of behaving or thinking that are not encouraging inner balance, self-acceptance and general wellbeing and personal growth. It provides us with the skills to observe, without judgment, what is arising in the present moment and this increases our awareness of our thoughts and feelings and underlying patterns and beliefs.

Mindfulness is a **natural state** of being human yet in our increasingly distracting and fragmented world we now 'teach' mindfulness to re-empower people with their own natural ability **to restore the fragmented mind to a state of wholeness and presence** and to **come in contact with the calmness** and stillness beneath the often, over-burdened mind. Mindfulness is a way of being, a way of seeing and tapping into our deepest human resources.

To teach mindfulness, is to continually examine the continuing **challenges you face in your own life and** as a mindfulness teacher. One of the first challenges is to examine **your own motivation** which is an on-going and key factor in teaching as well as maintaining and **deepening one's practice**. The practice of mindfulness is a life-time engagement of personal growth and maturing into the 'process' is part of the process. Whereas silent retreats are an essential part of your on-going, deepening of mindfulness, it is living mindfully on a daily basis that is the greatest teacher and the greatest challenge.

Mindfulness has a long history in meditation and contemplative practices and has now become mainstream in western societies as the figures for mental health issues continue to rise as a result of our fast paced, distracted, demanding society and the need to find a workable solution has become urgent. Mindfulness is not taught in the traditional sense but you, the 'teacher/guide' bring your own embodied experience of meditation to the participants and guide the group, that is co-create a space, where mindfulness can happen. Most people who are led to teach mindfulness do so because of their own unique experience of freedom from unhappiness, improved mental and physical well-being, improved mental clarity and developing real presence to name a few of the well documented lasting benefits achieved through regular practice. Many people have had life-altering experiences where practicing mindfulness has been a life-saver.

Your willingness and ability to be fully present with each and every participant in a state of embodied awareness and presence will be the guiding light of the session.

■ 4 KEY POINTS OF TRAINING

1. PRACTICE
2. PRESENCE
3. TEACHING POINTS
4. PROTOCOLS- TRUST ISSUES, GROUP SAFETY, ENQUIRY, DIVERSITY (CULTURE, CLASS)

■ KEY POINTS

Authenticity, authority and friendship

Authenticity - it may be helpful to be able to trace and describe the journey that brought you to where you are now. This journey may include psychological work you have participated in, spiritual work in a particular tradition and will certainly include something of your mindfulness /meditation practices. In this role you are 'offering all that you are'. The key is to the development of some spiritual maturity not some 'idealised' enlightened position.

Ask yourself:

What brought me to this place where I am teaching mindfulness?

Bring to mind a teacher that inspired you. What qualities does this teacher embody that inspires you?

What truth about yourself did this teacher evoke inside of you?

Commitment to regular practice ; that can be a formal sitting meditation of 45 minutes a day or being in a 'mindful' state as you proceed throughout the day or preferably both. In addition a yearly retreat of 2 or more days or whole day sitting.

What is your daily practice? Body scan, Hatha yoga, sitting meditation, walking meditation, breathing, loving kindness, gratitude, interconnectedness, mountain or lake meditation.

Keeping a journal can be helpful in helping to increase awareness of what happens during meditation and tracking growth.

Occasional self-retreat days can be great for self-reflection and self-nurturing.

Authority is what you know about the world and it is your success in the world and in your personal development. It can suggest a form of power but in this case it is used to refer to 'knowing deeply'. This also includes your professional training. The one downside of authority is if people believe that there is something wrong with them and they need to be fixed- by you. Your authority may have led you to this work but now, your authenticity – your own mindfulness practice- shows you that people already have what is need inside of them and they just need to be gently guided to that space inside themselves to become more of what they are.

Friendship is genuinely caring for people- all people whether participants or not. 'It is meeting people 'where they are', of coming to an encounter without an agenda or intention to fix or improve the other and with a willingness to allow situations and relationships to unfold in a fresh way'. (Teaching Mindfulness; McCown, Riebel, Micozzi)

Being the teacher/guide means you are exposed every moment. There is a question of what you disclose /share with participants from your own experience. Being in constant contact with your own areas of growth and challenge is a necessary discipline and will help you discern when to share and not.

Sometimes as a mindfulness teacher/guide you will encounter others' suffering that is outside of your experience and this can feel overwhelming but in these cases you need to trust the practice and know the participant has what is needed to overcome these states. Having been through similar traumas, mindfully, puts you in a good position to guide participants to their own resolution. Remember, you are a guide, the participants always become their own best 'teacher' once they have enough experience of how mindfulness practices 'work' and have enough experience of the mindfulness process.

Another important point is that mindfulness practice can bring deeply buried emotions, memories, unresolved hurts to the surface. Again, you need to trust the practice and the person's ability to overcome these states as they arise by applying mindfulness principles of 'allowing', 'letting be' and 'observing the sensation'. Eventually these unhappy memories, thoughts and feelings settle and emotional balance is restored due to the nature of the practice. Additionally, you may be faced with a participant that has a deeply embedded mental problem that may 'surface' during a session. They may respond to mindfulness practice putting the spotlight of awareness on the embedded issue but they may also need directing towards professional psychological intervention. It will be obvious to you, from your life experience, when and if this situation arises. If not consult and discuss with a supervisor.

Four Key Qualities of Teaching/ Guiding Mindfulness sessions

1. **Leading**
2. **Making teaching points**
3. **Guidance**
4. **Enquiry**

■ LEADING

Working with mindfulness is a co-creation; you and the participants are working together to allow 'mindfulness' to happen. It is not teaching in the traditional sense. It is not psycho-therapy in any sense. Everyone involved shares the same human qualities of joy and sadness, suffering of the human condition. All share the same intention of exploring their inner state, with awareness and everyone agrees to support each other in this environment making it a safe space.

In this 'safe space' everyone has the ability to come into a deeper contact with who they really are by continually being offered the possibility of surrendering to the present moment, exactly as it is, without an agenda or expected outcome or any suggestion from the teacher or any teaching points may suggest; not some preconceived idea how they think it should be. In this environment, a deep trust between participants naturally arises and a sense of freedom and safety also.

This naturally leads to belonging and being part of a trusted group where participants are aware of their influence within the group with the associated offer of care and demand for restraint. Participants find ways to integrate freedom and belonging in themselves- a self-regulation that is integral to the co-created mindfulness of the group. (Teaching Mindfulness).

Prior experience leading groups can be an advantage in teaching mindfulness, equally, bring a quality of ‘unknowing’ and ‘unlearning’ can be helpful and freeing and allow the teacher/guide more flexibility using the mindfulness model of practice to succeed and help avoid the pitfalls of ‘being the one who knows’.

Using a circular seating arrangement in mindfulness sessions has proven to be effective to detract participants from placing undue authority on the ‘teacher/guide, opening the energy of the group to a more shared experience. The circle also sets boundaries and it is a timeless symbol of the present moment. Of course, if the number of participants begins to exceed thirty, a circle becomes difficult. In this case adding an extra inner circle, seated or sitting on the floor is one solution.

An additional plus is during enquiry, participants can turn towards each other easily and takes the spotlight away from the teacher as the ‘authority’ and spreads the ‘responsibility’ for the group more evenly amongst participants.

■ WORKING WITH REACTIVITY AND AGGRESSION

If there is a break in the groups’ resonance while practicing through an outside distraction or a person’s strong emotion or conflict, there are a number of things the teacher/guide can do to restore resonance and calm to the group. If it’s an outside distraction the teacher/guide can direct participants attention towards the distraction and use it as an example of ‘turning towards’ (and ultimately accepting) an aversive experience. You might ask them to ‘drop in’ to the experience and notice what is arising. In this way the distraction becomes part of the session and ‘normalises’ the distraction.

If the disturbance is emotional, the teacher/guide needs to ‘hold’ the group by naming what is happening- not just for the individual but for the whole group and embodying non-judgment towards the individual and confidence in the practice. A number of strategies can be employed; instructing the group and the reactive participant to take several deep belly breaths while making an audible sigh on the exhales. Continue enquiring into the experience with the participant and through this a shift from aversion to curiosity as the reaction can be set in motion. Equally, the other participants are on their own enquiry throughout this process and the teacher/guide skilfully checks in with the wider group, checking their own emotional responses and perhaps sharing them. This can lead to a re-connection and re-establishing resonance from this shared experience.

■ MODEL FOR GROUP DIALOGUE

The core model in mindfulness enquiry is listening mindfully not speaking. This involves watching one’s own reactivity, particularly urges to comment, contradict, ‘one-up’ the other or ‘fix’ the other with advice or consolation. Participants are asked to listen first then speak as much as possible from their own direct experience which provides the ideal environment for dialogue.

With mindfulness, the focus is on the practices themselves. The level of enquiry will depend on the teacher but the group tends to lose resonance with too much speaking but some

speaking and sharing of experiences helps internalise the mindfulness process and deepens participants understanding and insight into what is happening.

The main principals to remember when speaking are;

1. Speak about what is true in the moment, communicating your direct experience, as you feel it in the body.
2. When listening to another, see if is possible for you to connect with what is being said. If you have a similar experience in the moment you may choose to share that.
3. If you find your experience is different, simply notice that and hold what is true for you in the moment.
4. Speak from the heart; this is not speculating or trying to work anything out.
5. Listen from the heart; be 100% present for others speaking-not just ears but your whole being.
6. Keep it simple. Say what is true for you without explaining or attaching stories.

■ MAKING TEACHING POINTS

At the heart of mindfulness is co-creation. Most of the ‘material’ needed is in the group’s individual experience itself. The teacher’s skill should be directed to listening to the participant’s insights and examples of their own direct experience and this becomes the ‘material’ to work with. In addition reflection questions offer the participants a way of bringing their inner experience into language- see additional notes. References to quotes and texts may be useful to illustrate a certain point and this will be at the discretion (and understanding) of the teacher/guide.

Effective Mindfulness guidance requires the control of four interdependent dimensions;

1. Language – see below
2. Allowing- No right or wrong only unique response to personal experience
3. Orientating- directing attention to different senses eg. sound
4. Embodying- one of the most important aspects of successfully ‘teaching.’The guide/ teachers’ own practice and guidance assists the students to access the space of Mindfulness inside themselves.

■ LANGUAGE

When you begin to teach/guide Mindfulness, as the teacher/guide you are in a unique position to help participants to bring their own Mindfulness experience into consciousness through language. The focus of language helps participants to articulate their insights and experiences of Mindfulness practices. Questions such as; ‘What was it like for you?’ ‘Can you say a little more about that?’ ‘Is there more you’ve noticed?’... are all helpful for putting the spotlight of attention on our inner process. These questions require reflection and engagement that help students have a greater understanding. Word choice can have a profound effect on the participants. Using a particular style of language helps participants overcome resistance- especially to authority.

Four problems have been identified when teaching/guiding mindfulness sessions;

1. Striving- as in ‘if you did this long enough, you’d be better.’
2. Idealising-as in ‘I know this better and I’m going to teach you.
3. Fixing- as in the idea that something is wrong with you that needs fixing.
4. Dualism- as in there is an observer and an observed.

Most people don’t like commands, therefore making suggestions is preferable. Mindfulness research has shown using the gerund (...ing form) immediately minimises the teacher-participant hierarchy.

Instead of saying ‘Breathe in..’ change to ‘When you are ready, breathing in.’ This eliminates the subject-object distinction and emphasises the present moment experience.

Equally using the definite article...the...instead of the possessive pronoun has a similar effect.

‘Lifting the right leg...’ instead of ‘lift your right leg...’

Example script for Sitting Meditation with focus on use of the gerund and the definite article.

“Beginning by taking a seat...bringing the body to an upright position in a chair or on a cushion on the floor. Aware of the in a weight distributed and sensing the pull of gravity on the muscles, letting the earth hold you. Allowing the body to find a natural resting place, alert yet relaxed let’s begin by feeling a sense of the body sitting, noticing perhaps pressure, temperature, the sensation of air moving. Noticing the feeling of the hands. Bringing your attention to breathing, to the breath entering and leaving the body...aware of the sensations in the nostrils, the mouth and the throat. Noticing if different parts of the body are moving with the breathing... the shoulders rising and falling, the belly. You may be aware of other subtle sensations in the body. “Wherever the sensation of the breath is most vivid for you, focusing your attention there.”

In the field of sensory awareness, there are two essential elements; permissiveness and ques-

tioning. That there is a radical freedom to explore and discover whatever is in the sensory realm. Nothing is certain; anything might be discovered.

Using questioning is not meant to find answers but rather direct attention and catalyse curiosity into direct moment experience. For example, "can you feel the floor beneath your feet?" isn't meant to have participants looking to their feet for an answer!

'How is your breath responding to this moment' has an infinite number of answers as there are listeners.

■ GUIDING/ALLOWING

Everything is allowed. It's good to emphasise there is not right or wrong or specified way of doing mindfulness. There is no 'required' experience. Allowing is critical because it encompasses the paradox for the teacher/guides; bringing detail and specificity into moment by moment experience, participants connect well with the practice yet each if having their own unique experience. Again, use of language is a great way to offer suggestions. For example the teacher/guide may ask participants to focus on the forehead during the body scan.

'Noticing any tightness or softness in the muscles, perhaps there's a tingling or maybe there's no sensation at all...and that's OK; that's simply your experience in this moment...'

This way of speaking offers permission for whatever is arising, encouraging further, deeper, increasingly focused observations beyond habitual response and an unconditional acceptance of any outcome.

■ ORIENTATING

Here again is a paradox; the teacher/guide has the role of guiding participants towards their own direct experience, moment by moment and urges to 'drop any story' yet at the same time, especially in the early classes participants needs some sense of an organising principle to feel safe with the practice, to have coherence and direction because what they are experiencing is so very different to how they usually experience themselves in the world.

This means the teacher/guide needs to use some organising principles in particular practices such as the body scan. Sitting awareness has its own narrative arc. Other practices have no organising principals such as awareness on breath or expanded awareness.

It is an essential skill for the teacher to be able to create a purely verbal construction that provide as a secure base from which the participants can explore.

First is a simple refrain, a recurring structure that suggests some stability. For example, in expanded awareness, the repeated question, 'Where is your attention now?' will bring participants back to their direct experience.

Second is the on-going elaboration of a concept. For example, during a breathing exercise, the teacher/guide could introduce the principle of kindness towards oneself and then

elaborate the practice of cultivating a loving response to one's own distraction and gently redirecting attention back to the breathing exercises when the attention has wandered.

Third is incorporating moment to moment events arising in your immediate environment for example, an ambulance siren might be passing. The teacher/guide could ask, "What's happening within you as the siren sound gets nearer and nearer."

■ EMBODYING

The teacher is engaged with the practice moment by moment as he/she speaks- it is not a performance. The importance of embodying to effective guidance cannot be stressed enough. The language used is rooted in the teacher/guides own experience, the blossoming of a term or concept is a description of the teacher/guides own experience both immediate and remembered.

Word choice, tone of voice, confidence of expression all express authenticity when the teacher /guide is embodying the practice and all help to shape the participants experiences.

■ ENQUIRING; CURIOSITY ABOUT PARTICIPANTS EXPERIENCES

'It is recommended that a significant amount of time in each class be dedicated to an exploration of the participant's experiences of the practices and other weekly home assignments.' (Santorelli 2001)

Such a dialogue between participants and teacher/guide can assist in 'cultivating observation' and 'moving towards acceptance'. This is an enquiry into participant's subjective experience- his or her pre- semantic 'knowing' in the moment with the intention to make more conscious meanings that are then available for further investigation. The skill of the teacher is being available and genuinely interested in participant's responses and to deflect any sense they are in the 'hot seat' but rather adding understanding and insight to the groups shared experience of mindfulness. Also attention needs to on the inter-subjective resonance of the group while these sharing take place. For the teacher/guide, enquiry is the meeting of two subjectivities in which neither assumes an expert position and both are able to work from a 'not knowing' position to explore the fullness of possibilities for meaning. Remaining open to any outcome of the group is most helpful.

Enquiry is an invitation to connect with our innate wisdom, to be known in experience and language. Seeds may be planted during enquiry that flourish in later classes.

■ THE VOICE

Given the majority of a mindfulness session is done with eyes closed, the voice is a very important tool. Speaking from a place of embodied experience, with a gentle, clear, warm tone is important to reach participants in a way where they feel safe and secure in your ability to guide.

■ REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How well did you maintain your attention?

Were you able to follow the practices instructions?

How did your experience compare with your expectations?

What will you do differently next time?

The essence of mindfulness practice is familiarisation by repetition. Repeat each exercise until you can do from memory.

Remember;

One of the first signs of progress is to notice how chaotic the mind is once we begin to practice meditation or mindfulness.

Our minds are fragmented and jump between hyperactivity- excitation, agitation and distraction while attention deficit is characterised by dullness, laxity and lethargy.

We may believe in free will but we can hardly be called free when we can't direct our attention.

If you can't focus your attention, you can't do anything well. Few things affect our lives more than the faculty of attention.

The capacity to voluntarily bring back a wandering attention over and over is the root of judgment, character and will.

All suffering comes from the mind.

Practice of focused attention, mindfulness, is learning to channel the stream of awareness where we wish for as long as we wish without it becoming fragmented and thrown into disarray.

References:

Mindful Teaching : McCown, Riebel and Micozzi. (2010)

The Attention Revolution: B. Allen Wallace (2006)

DEVELOPING COMPETENCE AS A MINDFULNESS TEACHER

The following points need to be identified as key areas to be considered in the delivery of Mindfulness classes;

1. Coverage, pacing and organisation of teaching material.

Teacher adequately covers the knowledge based material while balancing the needs of the group. The teacher is well organised with teaching materials and aids readily available and room properly prepared for the group. The session is well 'time-managed', well paced with a sense of spaciousness, steadiness and lack of time pressure.

Digressions are skilfully managed retaining resonance of the group while being responsive and flexible, exploring important issues with sensitivity and focused way. Skilful teaching requires balance between staying with core intention of the group and responding to the spontaneity of the moment.

The phrases below may **help to build effective pace** of sessions;

'We may have strayed off our focus a little, shall we get back and focus on the key points of this session?'

'Let's pause there- the point you have raised is important and will be addressed'

'Do you mind stopping a moment, you've given me lots of information already. Just to make sure I understand completely, let's look together at what you are describing here.'

'Please summarise your experience in a few words or in a short sentence.'

■ RELATIONAL SKILLS

Mindfulness challenges us to develop a new relationship both with ourselves and our experience. The qualities the teacher brings to the teaching process and the group mirror the qualities the participants are learning to bring to themselves. Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention, in a particular way, to your experience moment by moment.

Authenticity- relating in a way that is genuine, honest and confident. There is a sense of ease, naturalness and presence and a confidence the teacher 'knows' what is being taught from a deep, personal experience.

Connection and acceptance- actively attending to and connecting with participants and their present moment experience and conveying back an accurate and empathetic understanding of this.

Compassion and warmth- conveying a deep awareness, sensitivity and appreciation and openness to the participants experience.

Curiosity and respect- conveying genuine interest in each participant and his/her experience whilst respecting each participants vulnerabilities, boundaries and need for privacy.

Mutuality- engaging with participants in a mutual, working relationship of collaboration and co-creation.

■ EMBODIMENT OF MINDFULNESS

Present moment focus- the expression through verbal and non-verbal communication of the teacher's present moment focus observed through posture, physical grounding, steadiness, physical sense of ease, calm and alertness, pitch of voice and tone.

Present moment responsiveness- to internal and external experience to teacher's own personal experience during teaching.

-to individuals in the group

- to the group (in the moment issues)

Calm and Vitality- communicating steadiness, ease, non-reactivity and alertness.

Person of the teacher - conveying mindfulness practice through way of being.

Attitudinal qualities in programme- participants are learning to learn in new ways through the modelling offered by the teacher of this way of being with experience.

-Non-judgment; teacher supports participants to open to an awareness of the stream of our inner and outer experience just as it is, without adding judgments, interpretations, labelling, wanting etc. All are developing the ability to observe rather than 'hook into' any events arising in inner or outer experience.

Patience: the teaching process works with whatever presents in the moment and allows an understanding that things can only emerge in their own time. No amount of pushing, trying, wanting will work but only interfere. Patience is wisdom.

Beginner's mind: the teacher communicates a willingness for all to see everything through fresh eyes as if for the first time, with curiosity.

Trust: the teacher encourages participants to develop trust and confidence in the process of bringing mindful attention to experience as it arises.

Non-striving: the teacher encourages a willingness to allow the present to be as it is and for each participant to be the way they are. The Mindfulness process is not trying to fix prob-

lems or reach a goal but the intention is to uncover an awareness of the actual experience and a willingness to be the way it is-without wanting to change it. Mindfulness offers us all an opportunity to step aside from the usual process of trying to 'improve ourselves' and 'trying' to reach a new place. The paradox here is that, although there are clear reasons for all of us to be engaged in exploring how to deal with pain in our lives there is nothing to be achieved that isn't already present in the moment. This is demonstrated by the teacher allowing the process to unfold without trying to explain or problem solve or conceptualise. Each participant comes to their own understanding of the process over time.

Acceptance: The teacher communicates a willingness to see things as they actually are in the present moment and offers a way of opening to and being with the reality of things without struggling to change them. The teacher models accepting self, others and experience with an attitude of friendliness.

Letting Go: Practicing Mindfulness regularly develops the ability to stay present and acknowledge arising and passing experiences such as thoughts and emotions without becoming entangled in the content of it. We develop an acute awareness of our conditioning to hold on to pleasant experiences, ignore neutral and reject unpleasant and to understand how these behaviours cause problems. The teacher works with letting go of expectations and of needing to guide the process towards a particular outcome having no agenda other than exploring and understanding the actuality of participants experience in the moment.

Teachers and participants alike bring to mindfulness practice as commitment, self-discipline and intentionality- the development of perseverance and resolve to stay with the process of investigation of personal experience.

■ INTENTIONALITY: IS A KEY AREA THE TEACHER IS EMBODYING WITHIN THE TEACHING PROCESS.

The teacher conveys a certain intention and purpose for this type of experiential learning by working in a non-striving ways while being focused, clear and directional. This seems to be paradox but is central to teaching mindfulness.

■ GROUND RULES FOR GROUPS;

Boundaries: The normal boundaries for individual privacy are observed. **Confidentiality:** participants may share sensitive, personal information which needs to be respected and not spoken of outside the group.

Vulnerability: participants need to feel safe and supported within the group to explore inner and outer experience and to take risks.

■ TALKING WITH THE GROUP

The teacher needs to develop a brief, clear and memorable presentation that engages the triangle of awareness; sensation, thought and emotions.

Participants

The **teacher** gently, with warmth, invites the participants to consider the following points when speaking within the group circle;

Speaking from the heart about the truth of the present moment experience, that you are noticing at the moment; body sensations, thoughts, emotions- not speculating or trying to figure anything out but reporting how it is for you right now.

Listening from the heart; being fully present for what is spoken by others. Listening with not just with ears but with your whole being.

Being 'lean of expression'- share what is true without telling a story or trying to analyse.

Trusting spontaneity- you may rehearse what you are going to say when it is your turn to speak- especially as the talking gets closer to you. If you just listen from your heart you will speak from your heart.

GUIDING MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness practice guiding offers an opportunity to integrate teaching on the cultivation of mindfulness and a space for participants to experience and experiment with the process themselves. Given the subtlety of messages being conveyed and the paradox inherent in these, great sensitivity and delicateness is needed when guiding.

The teacher should demonstrate familiarity with the key intentions of mindfulness practice and also specific intentions of each practice.

■ GENERAL POINTS

-Using everyday language and avoiding jargon

-using **language that supports** the range of different experiences eg. **'feeling,'**

'in the mind's eye,' 'listening to the messages from...', general words such as **'noticing,' 'experiencing,' 'sensing'**.

All practices need to include the following three points;

1. Instructions on where to place attention- clearly explain what the participants are invited to do eg. 'Placing your attention on the small area beneath the nostrils and the upper lip.'
2. Working with mind wandering- be clear that mind wandering is part of the process, eg. our intention is not to keep the attention one pointedly on for example the breath but to become aware of the activities of our mind as we repeatedly shift the attention back to a particular place. So our 'job' is not to stop the mind wandering but to work in a particular way when we become aware that it has wandered.
Eg; 'notice that the attention has wandered and to bring attention back to the object of awareness with emphasis on not judging yourself wrong but be kind and gentle but firm in re-directing attention back to the task.
3. Offering spaces of silence with periodical reminders. The length of the silence can increase with the experience of the group.

■ GUIDANCE ON ATTITUDINAL QUALITIES TO CULTIVATE AND LANGUAGE USE.

Be attentive to the presence/absence within practical guidance of:

- The **'spirit'** of the practice; inviting **'gentleness, lightness of touch,' 'curiosity'** about the **'experiences unfolding,' 'balancing.'** gentleness with **'firmness of intention, taking care of self, letting go of judgment and self-criticism.**

- Encouraging **non-striving** of reminding participants about **letting go of needing/ wanting to 'do' anything.**
- Eg. **'Allowing experience to be as it is'**
- **'Simply seeing if the breath breathes itself and simply bringing awareness to the experience of this.'**
- **Avoiding language** which may create **a sense of striving** such as; **'trying', 'working', 'seeing if you can'** can be **unhelpful** and create a pressure.
- **Spaciousness-** balancing silence with guidance and using language economically.
- Using the **...ing form –present participle** (attending, bringing awareness to') to **convey a feeling of guiding/inviting** rather than ordering or **commanding reduces resistance.**
- Sometimes using 'the' instead of 'your' eg 'the breath' to encourage participants **to be less identified with the body.**

■ KEY LEARNING

1. Awareness; recognising and acknowledging all of one's present moment experience (thoughts, emotions, sensations)
2. Gathering; bringing the attention to the sensations in particular parts of the body
3. Expanding awareness into the body using particular sensations such as the breath as an anchor while opening to the range of experience being perceived.

■ PURPOSE OF PRACTICES

- **To anchor to the present moment through body sensations**
- Dealing **skilfully** with mind wandering
- Learning gentleness, encouraging curiosity, learning acceptance
- Mindfulness of 'feel of things' (pleasant /unpleasant/neutral)
- Noticing **aversion.**
- Learning to **consciously** widen and narrow the focus of attention.
- Mindfulness of the natural flux of experience (the natural cycle of the breath, thoughts and emotion.)
- **Cultivating** being fully with experience AND having an observer stance simultaneously.

Learning to receive experience as it is without attaching stories, labelling etc.

Learning to see recurring patterns in the mind and how they play out, develop.

Seeing more deeply into the nature of human and experience and how the mind and emotions work.

■ POINTS TO CONSIDER IN GUIDING

1. Guidance on posture- asking participants to become aware of their posture then gently making helpful suggestions; ‘back upright but not stiff, feeling the spine against the back of the chair, shoulders back.’
2. Being precise with the instructions from key learning intention and helping participants recognise what they are.

■ BREATHING PRACTICES

- Using the breath to anchor in present moment awareness.
- Experiencing direct experience of physical sensations.
- Relating skilfully to mind wandering **by re-directing attention back** to object of focus.
- Guidance to notice different qualities of breath; cool, warm, smooth.
- Experiencing the **difference between awareness and being on automatic pilot**.
- Experiencing how bringing attention to a focus point while opening to a range of experiences being perceived.

■ SITTING MINDFULNESS

- Giving practical support on posture; chair, stool, cushion. A clear focus on posture at the beginning of the practice establish the intention of the practice and assists the transition from ‘doing’ to ‘being’ mode of mind.
- Breath **anchoring** - in the present moment; reconnecting with a specific aspect of experience **in the here and now**.
- Guidance on where in the body to pay attention to the breath.
- **Transition** from breath- expanding the sensations of breathing to an awareness of the body as a whole.
- Offering explicit guidance on how to **place attention**.
- Offering guidance on how to **sit with discomfit** and identifying if it is physical or emotional in origin-(‘sitting with the discomfit, breathing into the tension, avoiding the urge to turn away from discomfit...’)
- **Receiving sounds as they come and go**; noticing loudness, tone , length, seeing sounds

as events and noticing any meaning added to direct experience of sound. (memories, associations).

- **Relating to thoughts in a similar way as sound;** seeing them arising and passing away like clouds in the sky, seeing recurring patterns develop and play out in the mind.
- **Acknowledging the challenge** of all this.
- **Using the breath as an anchor** when the mind becomes unsettled in **observing**.
- **Expanding the attention** to include emotions, naming these, seeing how they play out in body sensations.

■ CHOICELESS AWARENESS

- Being with and bringing attention to **whatever is arising** in each moment-the breath, body, thoughts, sounds, emotions etc.
- Noticing **recurring patterns** in the body and mind.

Coming back to the breath as an anchor as often as is needed.

■ MINDFUL MOVEMENT

Key learning;

Building on the foundation of the body scan in learning how we can bring awareness to and inhabit bodily experience/sensation.

Relating to the body with friendliness and increasing enjoyment of body's capacities.

Movement and posture offer an embodiment of life experiences and process'.

Working with physical boundaries offers a parallel to working with emotional experience. Experiencing that physical movement can change emotional experience.

Learning and working with present moment acceptance, including physical limitations and learning to relate in new ways to pain.

Learning new ways of taking care of ourselves.

Elements to consider:

1. Giving **clear instructions** on what is being offered to do.
2. Periodically reminding participants to **work within safe limits** for your body at this moment.
3. Reminder to **hold posture for the amount of time that is right for each participant regardless of how long the teacher or others hold a posture.**
4. Remind participants that it is Ok **to not do posture** but to sit/lie and **visualise**

5. Always **encourage** students **to listen to the wisdom of their own bodies** and allow this **to override any guidance being given.**
6. Reminding students **not to be competitive** with themselves or others.
7. Guiding participants to **breathe in as they form the intention to move** and then **move with the out breath.**
8. Encourage participants to breathe fully and freely in whatever way feels natural as they move.
9. Guidance on relaxing into postures and breathing with or into areas of greatest intensity.
10. Stay with the posture long enough to let go into them.
11. Encourage participants to explore and discover; investigating, exploring, discovering and accepting, letting be, being with.

■ BODY SCAN

Key Learning:

- Direct experiential knowing of physical sensations.
- Learning to be intentional about how we pay attention.
- Relating skilfully to mind wandering (acknowledging, bringing back) and to difficulties plus guidance how to handle difficulties (sleepiness, discomfort)
- Guidance on allowing things to be as they are: no goals to be achieved, no special state, no right way for the body to be.
- Guidance on beginning to notice and relate differently to our sensations and mental states including boredom, irritation, impulses etc.

Elements to Guide

- Bring attention to the whole body sitting or lying on the floor
- Feel gravity pulling you down
- Pay particular attention to body sensations; cold, tingling, numbness
- Allow absence of any feeling to be as important as any present.
- As you move awareness through each part of the body instruct to let go of that part before moving on.
- Vary attention on small areas and larger areas.eg fingertips, the whole hand.
- Offer instructions on distraction; 'if you lose your focus, gently return to the task.'
- Skilful guidance of breath throughout body scan, 'continuing to breath normally and

naturally,'letting the body breathe itself at it's own rhythm.'

- Balance guidance which gives contact with being with allowing and accepting with exploration, curiosity, aliveness and adventure.

■ CONVEYING THEMES THROUGH INTERACTIVE ENQUIRY.

The teacher/guide repeatedly leads the participants back to the participants direct experiences during practices, drawing out the experiences during and after group practices. This exploratory way of approaching experience highlights the habitual tendencies and patterns of the human mind and offers an embodiment of a potential way of being when the course ends.

The teacher/guide supports the participants to notice and describe the different elements of their direct experience and their interaction with each other. This is an experiential process and when the dialogue moves to conceptualisations the teacher quickly moves the group back to the immediate experience.

Participants are given the opportunity to become aware of and discriminate the difference of direct experience- sensations, thoughts, emotions- retrospectively tracking these as they arose in a mindfulness practice and tracking them now as they arise in the moment.

■ STYLE OF QUESTIONING/DIALOGUING IN MINDFULNESS TEACHING.

- Use of open rather than closed questions which require a yes or no answer.
- Questions/statements that open space- 'Would you be willing to tell me more?', 'how' and 'what' rather than 'why'.
- Avoiding questions/statements that close/fill spaces-yes/no, fixing/ solutions, self- stories.
- Attentive and positive non-verbal.
- Alternative questions and statement.
- Opening the space- recognising and creating possibilities.
- Sensing when enquiry is appropriate; sometimes a questions needs an answer, sometimes enquiry, sometimes nothing but 'thank you' sometimes a smile.
- Humility- the other person is an expert in their own experience.

NOTICING SENSATIONS, THOUGHTS FEELINGS (direct experience within self)

Areas of exploration/questioning include;

- What did you notice? (physical sensations, including sounds, feelings, movement)

- How did it feel?
- Where were these occurring (specific location or through whole body)
- Did the sensations change or were they constant?
- What emotions/feelings/thoughts were connected to them?
- Thoughts about the past/present/future?

Thoughts? Memories, worries, planning, time, food.

Sensations ? Restlessness, pain, hot/cold.

Emotions? Sad, angry, fearful, happy, secure, loving

DIALOGUING ABOUT THEM (placing a direct noticing in a personal context of understanding)

- How did you feel when your mind wandered?
- What did you do when your mind wandered?
- What were the sensations of reactions/responses? Gentleness, guilt, pushing away, holding on, opening to, etc.
- How did bringing awareness to this experience affect it?
- Is this pattern of experience familiar? In what way?

LINKING mindfulness experiences and insights- placing the learning in a wider context of understanding.

Encouraging participants to come naturally to a process of making links in relation to their experiences/insights during practice and applying to their lives. Eg noticing recurring negative self –talk (stop engaging in it)

This linking helps participants to see;

-ways they have become stuck through a particular way of relating to experience.

-the ways learning mindfulness has relevance to the different areas of their lives

-the ways that learning mindfulness has relevance to a particular vulnerability they are working with.(susceptibility to depression, chronic fatigue, constant worry, aimless thinking)

■ THE THREE LAYERS OF ENQUIRY

1. Noticing- direct experiential.
2. Dialogue- exploring the effects of bringing awareness to direct experience.
3. Linking Exploring how this learning relates to ways of being with inner and outer experiences in daily life.

‘Learn your theories as best you can, but put aside when you touch the miracle of the living soul.’ Jung

Teaching themes conveys understanding of underpinning principles.

Mindfulness based process is designed to convey the themes implicitly (through and experiential process of personal discovery) rather than explicitly (through a conceptual process of understanding principles and rationales).

The challenge for the mindfulness teacher/guide is to understand the underpinning principles so they can inform direction and emphasis within this implicit teaching/guiding approach.

The majority of the material is generated by the participants themselves.

The teacher/guide keeps an environment of playfulness, aliveness and responsiveness in the sessions as all are engaged in in creative exploration of ‘the material’ as it emerges. The teacher/guide also assists participants when they are getting stuck in their own stories.

Ultimately the teacher has confidence in the mindfulness process and the participants inherent ability and willingness and discipline (returning again and again to focus on the sensations of the body for example) to uncover the deeper knowledge of the human condition that resides beneath the busy, often troublesome patterns of mind and emotions bringing a sense of inner freedom and insight previously unknown.

■ HOLDING THE GROUP’S LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The teacher works with and responds to group development process with appropriate management of beginnings (including ground rules), turning towards and working towards difficulty in appropriate ways within the group. The teacher takes opportunities to normalise experience within the group.

An individual question might be, ‘What is happening in your body right now?’ A group question, ‘What do you all notice in your experience when...’

Teacher demonstrates leadership style of ‘holding the group energy’ without imposing teacher’s views on participants.

The teachers conveys confidence although doesn’t always need to know the answers. This is a co-creation, a mutual exploration- the teacher and participants are relating to each other based on what they learn and share.

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