



A FRAMEWORK FOR THE INTEGRITY OF MINDFULNESS-BASED PROGRAMS

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A Living Document

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Ethics for Teachers and Teacher Trainers

These criteria have been carefully selected to cover all the aspects of a secular mindfulness-based program (MBP) or MBP teacher training. They represent international best practice standards so any local adaptations that may dilute these guidelines need to be carefully considered, and not done solely for competitive reasons. It is recommended that local or regional organizations involved in reviewing the quality of local training organizations and teachers adopt these ethical standards, and set up processes to ensure consistency in practice.

In this section, “participant” refers to BOTH participants in an MBP class as well as those who are participating in a teacher training. It is the responsibility of the MBP teacher and the teacher trainer to convey and uphold the ethical standards listed here, which comes from inside one’s own mindfulness practice.

Domains of Ethics	Areas in each Domain	Description of the areas
Transparency and openness	Participants (in both MBP classes and teacher training programs) will be informed of all responsibilities and guidelines	Information includes content (learning objectives and other educational requirements), form, practice commitment, responsibilities (of both teacher or trainer and participant), duration and costs of the course. Participants in trainings are also informed about assignment commitment (including readings, presentations, teach backs, etc.) When there is difference of opinions, aiming to stay in connection and keep an open dialogue. Involvement in activities that are conflicting with law or propriety are to be avoided.
	Participant needs and expectations	Strong effort is made to clarify and acknowledge participants’ needs and expectations, allowing participant to make a well-informed choice. Courses are rigorous and demanding, requiring a high level of discipline, commitment, and maturity.
	Wellbeing of participant is more important than economic interests	Teachers are committed to delivering programs that are in line with economic realities in the geographic region they work in, and are encouraged to collaborate with other teachers in the area to develop networks that support trainee health and well-being over pure economic interest
Integrity	Personal integrity of teacher	The teacher/trainer demonstrates integrity in their profession, ensuring safety, to the best of one’s ability, and offering reliability, honesty, equality, inclusion, and openness in their actions, and acting with confidence, but with a modest attitude as appropriate

		to the culture in which they are teaching. This includes honesty regarding one's level of training and transparency in stating one's experience within these guidelines.
	Confidentiality	Handling personal information from or about participants with confidentiality and doing all one can to prevent any abuse or disclosure of participants' information or data, except when the participant is at risk of hurting self or others. Use of supervision as well as working within the boundaries of ethical codes from medicine, psychology or other relevant professional context are strongly advised for support.
	Attitudinal Foundations	Applying the attitudinal foundations of non-judging, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance/acknowledgement, letting go/letting be, along with the two recently added attitudes of gratitude and generosity--in relationship to one's work and life. (Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). <i>Full Catastrophe Living</i> .)
	Respecting ownership	Respecting copyright and ownership of ideas and products. Representing one's own work honestly, and not appropriating others' work as one's own or without permission. This applies to websites, recordings, logos, quotes and any written material.
	Integrity of the programs taught	Strong effort is expected to align and respect the integrity of the curricula of MBSR, MBCT or whatever particular course or program is offered (as published by the founders or institutions involved in curriculum development). While using those program names teachers will adhere to the published curricula without adding elements from other programs or subtracting elements to suit other objectives (See Crane et al, 2010)
Ongoing learning	Ongoing professional learning	In order to maintain teaching qualification and status, teachers and trainers are committed to ongoing training, supervision, and collaborative networks for reflection, dialogue and community. For trainers this includes continuing to teach MBPs to participants as well as training teachers, and engaging in ongoing learning and

		supervision through whatever mechanisms the particular MBP course or program authorizes.
	Open discussion of competence	As a minimum standard, teachers and trainers should engage in an open discussion about all aspects of their work with their mindfulness supervisor and professional co-trainers and colleagues to ensure they are teaching within their level of competence.
	Developments in field of MBP teaching/training	Commitment to staying current with developments in the science of mindfulness, the particular program or training one trains in, current methods of mindfulness-based teaching assessment and competency, and other areas deemed appropriate by certifying bodies or national and international standards committees (as they develop).
	Developments in field of research	Continued engagement with newly released research and developing evidence base for MBPs, with a particular emphasis on the training organization's area of expertise.
Primacy of the teacher/trainer's own mindfulness practice	Personal mindfulness practice	Ongoing personal formal and informal mindfulness practice is essential for teachers and trainers. Deepening practice with both formal and informal practices as they are unfolded in the particular program one offers teaching or training in is expected. Trainers are expected to do no less than what is asked of participants or trainees in relation to informal and formal mindfulness practice.
	Ongoing Residential Meditation Practice Intensives = RMPI engagement (retreats)	<p>Regular (and if possible, annual) attendance at silent, teacher-led Residential Meditation Practice Intensives is strongly recommended to support ongoing practice. RMPI support the deepening of a teacher's capacity to embody mindfulness within the classroom. This is an essential underpinning to competent teaching. Only in meeting ourselves consistently in the unique environment on a multi-day, silent retreat are teachers and trainers best prepared to meet participants and trainees in meeting the</p> <p>As the field develops, the parameters of what constitutes a Residential Meditation Practice Intensive (RMPI) will need to become more culturally specific and sensitive. This is an ongoing aspect of collective investigation for regional and international</p>

		<p>standards groups, including developing clarity regarding frequency, duration, teacher and content requirements, etc.</p> <p>It has to be acknowledged that bringing mindfulness into mainstream society also means that new ways of deepening practice, increasing insight and cultivating embodiment need to be investigated to keep expectations realistic. For example, frequency and duration of RMPI's should expand to take into account personal situation (family, money and time) as well as the opportunities available. For example, while the typical expectation (after having passed the training) is 5-7 days of RMPI's per year, family commitments may require a more realistic schedule of two weekend retreats be accepted. Some parameters, however, would need to be included. For instance, at least once every three years a 5-day RMPI is necessary</p>
	Contemplative Traditions	<p>It is recognized that wisdom is expressed and reflected in a range of meditation traditions and consciousness disciplines, and that retreats in any tradition may serve in profound and important ways to expand, enrich, supplement, and strengthen this basic foundation, and MBP teachers are encouraged to train regularly in their own meditation tradition.</p> <p>At the same time, it is beneficial to attend RMPI's in the Western Insight or in the Mindfulness tradition, since these traditions closely reflects and serve as a foundation for the spirit, practice and attitudes of MBSR, MBCT and other MBPs.</p> <p>Teachers practicing outside the Western Vipassana tradition should seek meditation guidance when unsure or conflict appears between their own tradition and mindfulness practice as it is taught in MBPs.</p> <p>Teachers commit to some kind of dialogue, "supervision," or dharma "exchange" around personal meditation practice on a regular basis in the same way as they commit to supervision of their teaching of MBIs. This may be with a teacher or in an ongoing sangha discussion or with one's MBSR, MBCT or MBP supervisor.</p>
	Relation to Dharma	<p>MBSR, MBCT or other MBP teachers agree to refrain from political, ideological or religious indoctrination. Every effort should be made to be honest, truthful when</p>

		<p>representing MBSR, MBCT or other MBPs. Teachers' personal experience with other paths may be shared outside the formal training program. In addition, it behooves all MBP teachers to maintain non-Buddhist language within their teaching. Teachers speak to the universal dharma using ordinary, non-specialized, accessible language.</p>
Limitations	<p>Limitations of the programs offered or of personal competency</p>	<p>Participation in MBSR, MBCT or other MBPs is not a substitute for any necessary medical treatment or psychotherapy.</p> <p>The teacher is aware of the limits of his or her qualifications and experience, and only offers services that they are competent and experienced enough as well as qualified to deliver.</p> <p>If the teacher feels they are not competent for a certain situation, they will inform the participant and refer them to a colleague.</p> <p>When in doubt, a teacher commits to consulting a medical or mental health professional to discuss the situation. Teachers who are not professionally trained in medical or mental health are particularly attentive to this and commit to erring on the side of caution.</p>
	<p>Ethical framework of other health professions</p>	<p>The teacher will work within the ethical framework of their profession or training and will seek guidance from a supervisor or outside organizational board (as such entities develop) if ethical questions arise.</p>
Responsibility for Relationships	<p>Relation to participants / trainees</p>	<p>The relationship between teacher/trainer and participant is asymmetrical. A teacher /trainer has more competence and experience in mindfulness and class facilitation and makes use of this competence and experience in order to facilitate the development of the participants' own mindfulness practice and self-efficacy. Thus, the teacher/trainer has ultimate responsibility in upholding the ethics and intentions involved in teaching/training, and recognizes the imbalanced nature of the teacher-student relationship in terms of power, mutuality, and trust.</p>

		Differential power dynamics operate strongly in educational and therapeutic situations and encounters, and it is solely the teacher/trainers's responsibility to provide participants with clarity and professional boundaries. Thus, it is the teacher/trainer's responsibility to recognize and refrain from improper boundary crossing. Should any such boundary crossing or violation of a participant or trainee occur, a formal grievance process should be in place to enable due process to be appropriately followed to address the issue.
	Relation to competitors in the field	Teachers and trainers should bring their mindfulness practice and the accompanying ethos to bear on their behavior towards other MBSR, MBCT, and other MBP teachers and trainers. This includes an appreciative attitude as well as addressing existing or potential conflicts directly in a constructive manner. Holding the ethical guidelines of wise speech, wise livelihood and other principles of conduct as foundational to one's life and work will support honesty, collaboration, and wisdom. This includes the intention to address and (help) solve any conflicts in the field, and to abstain from competitive strategies that might harm other people's interests.
Grievance process	Intention of formation of ethical committees and commitment to grievance process and code	Trust in mindfulness based programs, trainers and teachers will grow when these ethical standards build the basis of organizations of trainers or teachers and are not used for discrimination of competitors but for the benefit of everyone involved. Teacher/trainers commit to a grievance process and code, and will collaborate if there is a complaint against them.
	Disciplinary process	Teacher/trainers violating ethical code can be excluded from professional organizations, lose certification or be subject to other regulatory demands or censures, as they develop.