

University of Massachusetts Medical School

**Stress Reduction Clinic
Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)
Curriculum Guide©
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Overview

This 8-week, 9-session MBSR curriculum is based on systematic and intensive training in mindfulness meditation and mindful hatha yoga. The curriculum, developed in the Stress Reduction Clinic over the course of three decades, is designed to teach program participants how to integrate and apply mindfulness in their everyday lives and to the range of challenges arising from medical and psychological conditions and life stresses.

Embedded within the context of Mind/Body and Integrative Medicine, the MBSR curriculum focuses on the experiential cultivation of both "formal" and "informal" mindfulness practices as a foundation for the cultivation of positive health behaviors and psychological and emotional resilience that can be effectively utilized across the adult life span. The approach supports the learning, strengthening and integration of a range of mindfulness-based self-regulatory skills through the development and refinement of inherent internal resources. A primary aim is to cultivate ways of learning and being that can be utilized far beyond the completion of the program.

Class One

Overview: This 3 hour session includes a review of the intervention and the establishment of a learning contract with the patient/participant. The theoretical underpinnings of Mind-Body Medicine and the application of self-regulatory skills as related to the patient's individual referring diagnosis are also established. The patient is experientially introduced to mindful eating, mindfulness of breathing and the body scan home practice is assigned using the first guided recording (body scan meditation) as a means of beginning to learn to become familiar with mindful awareness of the body.

Theme: From our point of view, there is more right with you than wrong with you, no matter what challenges you are facing. Challenges and difficulties are workable. Mindful awareness, defined as paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally, is fundamental to this work since the present moment is the only time anyone ever has to perceive, learn, grow or change.

Typical Class Sequence:

Welcome and brief introduction of program by the instructor.

Opening meditation: becoming attentive to and aware of thoughts, emotions, and sensations in the present moment.

Class responses to opening meditation.

Review of guidelines for participation: confidentiality, self-care, communication with instructor, no advice-giving, etc.

Guided individual internal reflection: What has brought you here? What is your intention? What do you really want? (Option: small group or dyad sharing about guided reflection.)

Group go around: Go around the room and give people the opportunity to introduce themselves, what they are here for, and their expectations for the program. The instructor may make instructive comments, observations, and welcoming remarks from time to time in response to individuals.

Yoga: introduction to standing Mountain Pose and other standing poses.

Raisin-eating exercise: introduction to mindfulness meditation. Discussion of the experience. Focus on direct sensory observation - what can be seen, felt, smelled, tasted, heard. Instructor is attentive to observations that become deductions, opinions and theories removed from immediate experience. Observing and then slowly eating one raisin, with

guidance from instructor, stopping for observations from participants. Then, eating a second raisin in silence.

Abdominal breathing: tie the moment-to-moment awareness of eating exercise to experiencing the breath in the same way. Introduce various comfortable postures for lying down: corpse pose, astronaut pose, comfortable sitting in chairs if necessary. Focus on the feeling of the abdomen rising and falling with the inbreath and the outbreath, mindfully "tasting" the breath in the same way that the group tasted the raisin. Non-judgmentally observing one's own breathing from moment to moment; and bringing one's attention back to the breath and the present moment when it wanders.

From mindfulness of breathing, move into guided body scan with people continuing to lie on floor or sitting in comfortable position.

Finish with discussion of people's experiences with the body scan and assign daily home practice. Give instructions for use of the 45 minute Body Scan recording for home practice during week 1. Take attendance. (Note: attendance can be used as another form of mindfulness practice throughout the 9 sessions.)

Home Practice Assignment:

- Body Scan recording ≥ 6 days this week
- Home Practice Manual: 9 dots exercise
- Eat one meal this week mindfully
- (Optional assignment - read "Upstream/Downstream" by Donald Ardell)

Class Two

Overview: This 2.5 hour session includes one hour of experiential mindfulness training and skill development, one hour of focused dialogue and reflection concerning the role of perception and conditioning in the appraisal and assessment of stress. The pivotal role of self-responsibility in the positive development of short and long-term changes in health and health-enhancing behaviors is introduced. Home practice is assigned with an emphasis on the regular daily practice of the body scan for a second week, plus introduction of short periods of sitting meditation, and the application and integration of mindfulness in the everyday life of the participant.

Theme: Perception and creative responding: how you see things (or don't see them) will determine in large measure how you will respond to them. This ties in with how people see their participation in the program; how they see their pain, their illness; the stress and pressures in their lives; the level of commitment they will bring to the program and to the personal discipline it requires. Make the connection to stress reactivity and recovery from acute stressors, and the principle that "It's not the stressors per se, but how you handle them" which influences the short and long-term health effects they may have on your mind and your body.

Typical Class Sequence:

Guided body scan

Standing yoga

Take attendance.

Large Group Discussion: Discuss the body scan experience of this session as well as the home practice, with particular attention to how successful they were at making the time for it; problems and obstacles they encountered, sleepiness, boredom; how they worked with them or not; experiences and what participants are learning (seeing) about themselves from it, if anything.

(Option: dyad or small groups to discuss body scan experiences.)

Establish the universality of the wandering mind and the notion of working with it with acceptance and repeated re-focusing of attention; the coming back is as much a part of the meditation as the staying on the object of attention; noting where the mind goes and what is on one's mind; emphasize the importance of desisting from repressing and suppressing thoughts or feelings or forcing things to be a certain way. Best way to get

somewhere is to not try to get anywhere...letting go. A new way of learning. The body has its own language and its own intelligence. Non-conceptual.

Discuss eating one mindful meal and/or the experience of their relationship with food this week.

Examine the experience of working with the 9 dots and the theme of expanding the field of awareness in problem solving and recognizing behavioral, cognitive and emotional patterns that arise when working with difficulties and challenges. The breakthrough "aha!" experience. (Connect this theme to practicing the body scan.)

(Option: use the old woman/young woman or other "trompe L'oeil" or visual aids to investigate different ways of seeing or not seeing. If "Upstream/Downstream" article was assigned, reflection on the theme of early intervention and self-care.)

Introduce sitting meditation with awareness of breathing (AOB) as primary object of attention. Do a short guided meditation.

Discussion re: AOB meditation.

Go over home practice. End with short AOB meditation.

Home Practice Assignment:

- Body Scan recording ≥ 6 times per week
- AOB sitting meditation: 10-15 minutes per day.
- Home Practice Manual: fill out Pleasant Events Calendar for the week - one entry per day.
- Mindfulness of routine activities: brushing teeth, washing dishes, taking a shower, taking out garbage, shopping, reading to kids, eating.

Class Three

Overview: In this 2.5 hour session, participants practice several distinct yet interrelated formal mindfulness practices -- mindful hatha yoga (ending with a brief body scan), sitting meditation and optional walking meditation -- for a minimum of 90 minutes. This extended formal practice period is followed by inquiry into and exploration of participants' experiences with in-class and assigned home practices. Typical topics include challenges and insights encountered in formal practice and in integrating mindfulness into everyday life.

Theme: There is pleasure and power in being present. Attending to and investigating the way things are in the body and mind in the present moment through the practices of yoga and meditation.

Yoga as a practice of mindfulness. Emphasis on gentleness and non-judgment, curiosity, respect for current physical limits, and non-striving, especially in the teaching of yoga.

Noticing the tendency of the mind to label events as pleasant or unpleasant, the way we push away what is unpleasant and grasp what we perceive to be pleasant, and the role of conditioning. Questioning of our relationship to self-narratives and fixed ideas and opinions about the nature of reality as personally experienced.

Recognition that we can have pleasant moments in spite of being in a crisis or in pain, and unpleasant moments in situations that would normally be perceived as pleasurable. (Note: this theme continues into Class 4.)

Typical Class Sequence:

Sitting meditation with awareness of breathing. Specific guidance related to establishing a stable, upright and balanced sitting posture.

Attendance.

Group discussion re: sitting, body scan, and mindfulness in routine activities. Discuss the importance of being embodied through the sharing of participants' direct experience of feeling embodied or ungrounded.

Optional : introduce walking meditation.

Mindful yoga, slowly going through the sequence of postures on the Lying-down Yoga recording, with comments interspersed as required. Emphasis is on mindfulness and approaching one's current limits with gentleness. Participants are encouraged to avoid any postures they feel would cause injury or a setback, or to experiment with caution and care

when in doubt. Particular attention is paid to people with chronic problems with the lower back, neck, and chronic pain in general. Verbal guidance is explicit and accurate (i.e. if lying on the floor: "...as you breathe out, drawing the right knee up to the chest and wrapping your arms around the shin...") so that people know what to do without having to look at the teacher -- who is engaged in the postures while giving instructions. The teacher may move around the room and instruct people individually as needed. Ask permission of students to make adjustments to postures through physical contact.

Group discussion about the experience of practicing the yoga postures.

Optional: before a formal group discussion with the participants about the Pleasant Events Calendar consider leading a short guided reflection that asks participants to select one pleasant event, focusing on physical sensations, emotions, and thoughts as they arise as memory, and then as they arise in the present moment.

Go over Pleasant Events Calendar, being particularly attentive to exploring the ordinariness of experiencing a moment as pleasant. Particular emphasis on mind/body connections, patterns, what people observed/learned about themselves. Wondering together if there were any pleasant moments experienced during the body scan in the past week. Investigating what qualities in all of these pleasant moments or events caused them to be labeled as pleasant? What qualities do these distinct pleasant moments or events have in common?

Assign homework, alternating yoga with the body scan. Emphasize the importance of getting down on the floor and working mindfully with your body every day, if only for a few minutes.

Finish class with a short sitting meditation, AOB, expanding attention to the whole body.

Home Practice Assignment:

- Alternate Body Scan recording with Lying-down Yoga recording, every other day \geq 6 days per week
- Sitting meditation with AOB - 10 - 15 min per day
- Home Practice Manual: Unpleasant Events Calendar for the week, one entry per day.

Class Four

Overview: During this 2.5 hour session, participants engage in a combination of the three major formal mindfulness practices that have also been practiced at home during the preceding three weeks - the body scan, mindful hatha yoga and sitting meditation. Instruction emphasizes the development of concentration and the systematic expansion of the field of awareness.

Theme: How conditioning and perception shape our experience. By practicing mindfulness, we cultivate curiosity and openness to the full range of experience and through this process cultivate a more flexible attentional capacity. We learn new ways to relate to stressful moments and events, whether external or internal. Exploration of mindfulness as a means of reducing the negative effects of stress reactivity as well as the development of more effective ways of responding positively and pro-actively to stressful situations and experiences. The physiological and psychological bases of stress reactivity are reviewed and in-depth discussion is directed toward the use of mindfulness as a way of working with, reducing, and recovering more quickly from stressful situations and experiences. Daily practice aimed at recognizing and experientially inquiring into reactive patterns is assigned for home practice.

Typical Class Sequence:

Standing Yoga postures

Sitting meditation with focus on breath, body sensations, and the whole body. Particular emphasis on working with painful physical sensations.

Attendance.

Group discussion exploring the opening sitting meditation in this session. Inquire into the experience of working with physical sensations, the daily sitting practice, and yoga. Fine-tune yoga instructions as required. Invite exploration about the relationship between practicing yoga and the body scan. Connect to daily life experience.

Optional: before a group discussion with the participants about the Unpleasant Events Calendar, consider leading a short guided reflection that asks participants to select one unpleasant event, focusing on physical sensations, emotions, and thoughts as they arise as memory, and then as they arise in the present moment.

Review Unpleasant Events Calendar, being particularly attentive to exploring the familiarity of unpleasant moments. Particular emphasis on mind/body connections, patterns, what people observed/learned about themselves. Wondering together if there were any unpleasant

moments experienced during any of the formal or informal home practices in the past week. Investigating any common attributes in all of these unpleasant moments or events that caused them to be labeled as unpleasant. What qualities do these distinct unpleasant moments or events have in common?

(note: if pleasant events were not investigated in class three, both pleasant and unpleasant events may be explored in this session.)

Group discussion: continue exploring physical sensations, emotions, thoughts associated with unpleasant events. Connect to experience of stress -- How do we actually experience it physically, cognitively and affectively? Ask participants to name stressors --what is particularly stressful for you and what are you discovering about it through the practice of mindfulness? Explore with the class: What is stress? How does it influence mind, body, health, and patterns of behavior? Association with expectations, not getting one's own way (what is my way, anyway...and would I know it if I got it, and how long would it last?) Definitions of stress and stressors (see, for example, evolving theories and studies about stress from Cannon, Selye, Holmes and Rahe, Lazarus, McEwen.)

Assign home practice.

Conclude class with sitting meditation.

Home Practice Assignment:

- Alternate Body Scan recording with Lying-down Yoga recording, every other day ≥ 6 days per week
- Sitting Meditation 20 minutes per day with attention to breathing, other physical sensations, and awareness of the whole body.
- Be aware of stress reactions and behaviors during the week, without trying to change them.
- Awareness of feeling stuck, blocking, numbing, and shutting off to the moment when it happens this week.
- Review information about stress in practice manual or handout

Class Five

Overview: This 2.5 hour session marks the halfway point in the course. It emphasizes the capacity of participants to adapt more rapidly and effectively to everyday challenges and stressors. Experiential practice of mindfulness continues with an emphasis on developing problem, emotion, and meaning-focused coping strategies. (See Lazarus and Folkman, and Folkman.) A central element of the session is oriented around the patient's capacity to recover more rapidly from stressful encounters when they occur. Strategies continue to be developed with emphasis on the growing capacity to attend more precisely to a variety of physical and mental perceptions and to use this awareness as a way of deliberately interrupting and intervening in previously conditioned, habitual behaviors and choosing more effective responses. Daily mindfulness practice is assigned, with an emphasis on the observation and application of mindful awareness in daily life.

Theme One: Awareness of being stuck in one's life, highlighting the conditioned patterns of escape from difficulty (i.e. fight and flight - stress reactivity/automaticity/mindlessness.) Investigation of the ways people often cope by escape or denial - naming the shadow side of our conditioned coping patterns: substance dependency, numbing and suppression of feelings, suicide. Honoring that these coping methods may have been protective and supported survival, and are now counter-evolutionary and limiting, if not destructive.

Theme Two: Connect mindfulness with perception/appraisal in the critical moment (the moment of conscious contact), and with the arising of reactive physical sensations, emotions, cognitions and behaviors. Emphasis on attentiveness to the capacity to respond rather than to react to stressful situations. Explore the effect of emotional reactivity in health and illness. Learning to honor the full range of emotions and when called for, to express them with clarity and respect for self and other.

Typical Class Sequence:

Standing yoga

Sitting meditation with breath, body, sounds, emotions, thoughts, as "events" in consciousness, distinguishing the event from the content, and then choiceless awareness/open presence. Stillness is emphasized.

From meditation move into guided reflection: The program is half-over today. How has it been going so far? Pause and take stock: What am I learning? How does it show up in my life? How am I engaging with this program in terms of commitment to weekly classes and daily practice? Am I willing to recommit for the second half of the course? Note that growth is non-linear. Letting go of expectations for the second half based on experience of

the first half of course. Invitation to practice and take each moment as a new beginning; a fresh opportunity to be fully engaged, fully alive.

Midway assessments, completers moving into dyads to discuss their experience of the program so far.

Attendance

Inquire into experiences practicing the meditation and yoga home practice, as well as the new meditation introduced at the beginning of class.

Explore observations of reacting to stressful events during the week. Note habitual behavioral patterns, thoughts and emotions associated with the feeling of being stuck in these conditioned reactions. Include patterns that arise during meditation practice.

Introduce the possibility of responding with awareness in these moments, rather than reacting automatically. In making the distinction between reacting and responding, emphasize that in many situations, reacting is skillful. It's not the stress but how you handle it which dictates its effects on the mind and the body (within limits).

Option: Review reacting vs. responding diagrams from Full Catastrophe Living. Mention evolving theories and studies about stress hardness, coping, resilience (see, for example Kobasa, Antonovsky, Schwartz and Shapiro.) Best to explore this through dialogue and reflection rather presenting didactically as a lecture.

Go over home practice assignment -- Emphasize that the new Sitting Meditation recording has more silence on it to allow participants to practice more deeply on their own in between the guided instructions.

Sitting meditation

Home Practice Assignment:

- New Sitting Meditation recording. Alternate with either Body Scan or Lying down Yoga recordings.
- Fill out Difficult Communications Calendar.
- Bring awareness to moments of reacting and explore options for responding with greater mindfulness, spaciousness and creativity, in formal meditation practice and in everyday life. Remember that the breath is an anchor, a way to heighten awareness of reactive tendencies, to slow down and make more conscious choices.

Class Six

Overview: In this 2.5 hour session, experiential training in MBSR continues, with an emphasis on the growing capacity to cope more effectively with stress. Discussion is oriented around the continued development of "transformational coping strategies," attitudes and behaviors that enhance the psychological characteristic known as "stress hardiness" or resilience. Theory is linked directly to the MBSR methods and skills being practiced, grounded in the actual life experiences of the participants. The emphasis continues to be on the broadening of participants' inner resources for developing health-enhancing attitudes and behaviors and the practical application of such competencies given each person's particular life situation and health status. Daily mindfulness practices are assigned again for homework with an emphasis on the observation and application of these skills in daily life. Participants engage in an in-depth exploration of stress as it presents within the domain of communications. The focus of this strategy-building session revolves around the application of previously learned MBSR skills and methods in the area of communications. A variety of communication styles are examined both didactically and experientially, and strategies for more effective and creative interpersonal communication are developed.

Theme: Stressful communications; knowing your feelings; expressing your feelings accurately; developing a greater awareness of interpersonal communication patterns; and barriers to doing so. Interpersonal mindfulness: staying aware and balanced in relationships, especially under conditions of acute or chronic stress, the strong expectations of others, past habits of emotional expression/suppression and the presentation of self in everyday life. Based on the skills that we have been developing through the entire program, emphasize cultivating the capacity to be more flexible and to recover more rapidly during challenging interpersonal situations.

Typical Class Sequence:

Standing yoga

Sitting meditation with less instruction: breath, body, sounds, thoughts and emotions, choiceless awareness/open presence.

Attendance

Optional: return midway evaluations with comments. Possibility of using anonymous quotes from participants' evaluations to identify and share the experiences and learnings of this particular group.

Discuss the home practice, especially experiences with the sitting meditation recording. What did you notice about responding more creatively in life and in meditation? Were there new responses? What surprised you?

Discuss the upcoming all day session. Explain the intentions underlying this session and describe in detail the structure and format of the day, including options for self-care and teacher availability. Discuss how to work with extended periods of silence and practice. Provide suggestions for preparing for the day, including what to bring: Lunch, loose fitting clothes (layers), mat or blanket.

Optional: guided reflection - recall 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 behavior.

Optional: Discuss in small groups or dyads

Group discussion about difficult communications.

There are a number of exercises that can be used to explore this topic. Embodying a relational pattern tends to make it more available to awareness. The dialogue and inquiry during these exercises allows a heightened awareness of habitual patterns and behaviors, not only in the realm of interpersonal communication, but also in one's inner life. It is essential to pause and reflect together on these experiences and to notice how relational patterns are externalizations of internal mind and body states. Participants make connections between their present-moment experience of witnessing and/or participating in these exercises and the personal cognitive, emotional and behavioral patterns with which they have become familiar during the course. These exercises also provide an opportunity for participants to experiment with new behaviors and ways of engaging interpersonally.

Note: the intention behind engaging in any of the following (or any other) communication exercises is the cultivation of awareness. The form of the exercise is less important than the essence of this intention.

Some of the options for communications exercises may include, but are not limited to:

- Aikido-based "pushing exercises", role-playing the initial contact (taking the hit); avoiding conflict/stepping aside/passive-aggressive; being submissive; aggressive, engaged in an equal struggle; and assertive/blending/ "entering", staying engaged and with eye and wrist contact, but stepping out of the path of the aggression. Demonstrate with a volunteer (choose carefully, trusting your intuition). Importance of centering in the moment, taking a firm stand, not running away but not having to be in total control; the importance of stepping out of the way, of making contact (hand to

wrist), of turning, of acknowledging the other person's point of view; showing one's own point of view; staying in the process without knowing where it is going or being fully in control; maintaining mindfulness, openness, staying grounded and centered.

- Verbal aikido role play - similar to above, but done with dialogue with volunteer.
- Experiencing and exploring patterns of communication by physically enacting and expressing different patterns and options (i.e. passive, aggressive, assertive, etc.), then having class take postures, possibly interacting in pairs, small groups or the entire class.
- Exploration of assumptions: Guided by instructor, participants face each other in silence, and are led into noticing differences between observation and assuming or interpreting/mind reading. This may be followed by structured dialogue between participants.
- Speaking and listening exercise: in dyads, participants are given a topic based on class discussions and content. One speaks, one listens, then reverse roles.

Assign homework.

Sitting meditation.

Home Practice Assignment:

- Alternate Sitting Meditation recording with Body Scan and/or Standing or Lying down Yoga recordings.

All Day Class

Overview: The intensive nature of this 7.5 hour session is intended to assist participants in firmly and effectively establishing the use of MBSR skills across multiple situations in their lives, while simultaneously preparing them to utilize these methods far beyond the conclusion of the program.

Theme: Cultivating a sense of presence from moment to moment, and being open to any experience, whether evaluated as pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, as an opportunity to practice mindful attention.

Typical Class Sequence:

Morning session options:

Brief sitting meditation in silence.

Welcome, introduction of teacher(s), and guidelines for the day, which include being silent, no eye contact, self-care, availability of teachers, etc.

Sitting meditation: focus on awareness of breathing.

Guided Yoga, with the option of ending with short body scan.

Slow walking meditation: with introductory guidance.

Sitting meditation: less guidance, more silence.

Slow walking meditation: less guidance

Mountain or Lake meditation -- These images are used to help people understand the practice on a deeper level, not to take them out of the present moment to some other place or time. They are metaphors used to connect to aspects of the practice connected to stability, flexibility and strength.

Talk - an opportunity to give encouragement or inspiration, with the option of telling a teaching story or reciting a poem and drawing out one or more of the core teaching elements of the curriculum.

Attendance

Lunch instructions

Silent lunch

Afternoon session options:

Fast/slow walking exercise, with specific, well-paced verbal guidance by teacher. Include repeated instructions for noticing, in movement and stillness, various mind-body experiences. Emphasize options for meeting needs as they arise, and the possibility for moving in and out of the exercise. (Note: if people choose to sit out for part or all of the exercise, the teacher's guidance includes suggestions for active participation by noting mind-body experiences while sitting.)

Begin with slow walking, gradually move to each person's usual walking pace, pause...invite people to be attentive in the pause to body, thoughts and emotions...begin walking at a comfortable pace, incrementally increasing speed, with instructions to increase body tension (i.e. clenched fists and jaw) and moving towards deliberate (imaginary) objectives...continue increasing pace, changing directions, then stopping...attentive to entire experience...begin walking again at a regular pace with instructions for staying present and open...increasing the pace, unclenching hands and jaws, while continuing to walk faster, changing directions, stopping... teacher asks participants to reflect on current mind-body experience and note if there are any differences between the previous rounds of walking. Teacher gives instructions for very slowly walking backwards with eyes closed, keeping arms and hands at sides, gently leaning into contact before moving in another direction, then stopping... teacher asks participants to reflect on their mind-body experience...teacher gives instructions to orient to center of room, and continues the invitation to walk slowly backwards, making contact with others and remaining in physical contact while moving towards the center of the room. (Note: in the interest of inclusion, provide options for stepping into contact or out of contact.)

Lovingkindness meditation: guidance using minimal talking, emphasis on spaciousness, ending in silence. (This meditation is used to help people recognize qualities of lovingkindness, friendliness, warmth and compassion, towards self and others, that are already present and capable of being cultivated, but may not yet be available to awareness. Care is taken to recognize and affirm any resistance to the possibility of these qualities existing within oneself or wished for others.)

Optional ending exercises: Short sittings alternated with short walkings, sitting anywhere one can when change occurs.

Or, Visual meditation followed by mindful walking, possibly outdoors, stopping and noticing one thing. Teacher rings bells to bring participants back to room and guides a contemplation on

the memory of what was seen, followed by an open awareness meditation.

Dissolving the silence by whispering in pairs, then in groups of 4, discussing what was learned and experienced during the day and how the participants worked with challenges.

Group discussion and dialogue -- Emphasize that the day was not meant to be pleasant or unpleasant. Question of how one works with whatever appears. Invite participants who had difficulties to speak about them and feel supported.

Sitting meditation

Optional: closing ceremony, which may include: holding hands, standing in circle, looking around, making eye contact, tuning into feeling whole and embedded in the context of the larger group, finding one word to describe the experience of the day or the moment.

Good-byes

Class Seven

Overview: In this 2.5 hour session, experiential training in MBSR skills continues. The all day class is reviewed and discussed. There may be a continuation of the discussion of communication that began in class 6. Participants are asked to exercise greater personal latitude in the choice of formal mindfulness practices done as home practice during the week between this session and the final one. Emphasis is on maintaining 45 minutes of daily practice, without recorded instructions. Participants are encouraged to create their own blend of the various practices. (For example, 20 minutes of sitting, 15 minutes of yoga, 10 minutes of body scan.) The intention is to further maintain the discipline and flexibility of a personal daily mindfulness practice by encouraging people to become attuned to the changing conditions in their lives.

Theme: Integrating mindfulness practice more fully and personally into daily life. Participants are asked to purposefully reflect on life-style choices that are adaptive and self-nourishing as well as those that are maladaptive and self-limiting.

Typical Class Sequence:

Options include one or both of the following exercises:

- 1) Changing seats exercise: After participants take their seats in the room, invite them to close their eyes and notice how it feels to be sitting where they're sitting. Ask them to:
 - Pay attention to what's familiar, if this is a seat they choose often, or what's different if it's a new seat.
 - Notice physical sensations, thoughts, and/or emotions that may be present as they sit in this familiar or new place.

Then invite them to open their eyes, and get a sense of what the room looks like from this perspective. Is it the same room? Why did they choose to sit where they did when they came in? Scan the room for a seat in which they've never sat or where they think they won't like to sit. Ask participants to move to that seat, in silence, and to close their eyes and notice how it feels to be in the new place, with a new perspective, perhaps sitting near new people. Ask them to consider whether they tend to stay in the same places or to explore new places, making sure to emphasize that these are simply patterns, and that one pattern isn't better than the other. Can we be at home wherever we are? Mention awareness of choices of positioning oneself in a room, the idea of taking one's seat in the meditation (taking a stand sitting, no matter where you are.) Invite awareness of attachment to place. Where am I in my life - in this moment? Where am I going? Don't know...

This changing of seats may be repeated again or even a few times. Finally, invite participants to find a seat and establish themselves in a posture for sitting meditation, consciously choosing to return to "their" familiar seat or to explore being in a different place.

2) Yoga choices exercise: each participant does a standing body scan and identifies an area that needs attention. Individually and with the group, explore yoga poses that address that area of the body, or favorite yoga postures learned in the program. Each participant, with help from the teacher if necessary, teaches their chosen pose. Emphasis is on using yoga in ordinary daily experience, not as a special, rarified activity.

Sitting meditation: choiceless awareness, using the breath for an anchor if lost.

Attendance

Discuss the home practice and the all day retreat: reactions and responses to it, likes and dislikes. What you saw, what you learned about yourself. Invite responses to different aspects of the day, and how it felt afterwards. Connect the discussion to the experience of doing the meditation practice this week, both formal and informal (daily life). Emphasis on importance of making the practice one's own. This week, no recordings for home practice. Encourage people to take the same 45 minutes, and practice on their own. They decide what, how much, etc.

Option: questions and observations about communication stemming from last week's session. If necessary, there is the option of continuing to explore communication through the exercises that are related to this week's class discussion.

Discuss theme of what we take in, as food or as any kind of sensory experience, and patterns that are self-destructive and self-nourishing.

Assign home practice.

Optional: mountain, lake or lovingkindness meditation

Home practice assignment:

- No recordings this week. Practice formal sitting, yoga, walking and/or the body scan on your own, every day for 45 minutes. (Note: if this is too difficult, suggest alternating between the recordings and self-guidance every other day.)
- Practice informally when you are not doing the above formal practices by being as aware and awake as possible throughout the day.

Class Eight

Overview: In this 3.5 hour session, experiential mindfulness practice continues and participants are given ample opportunity to inquire into and clarify any lingering questions about the various practices and their applications in everyday life. A review of the program is included with an emphasis on daily strategies for maintaining and deepening the skills developed during the course of the program. Creating a satisfying closure by honoring both the end of this program and the beginning of the rest of your life.

Theme: Keeping up the momentum and discipline developed over the past 7 weeks in the meditation practice, both formal and informal. Review of supports to help in the process of integrating the learning from this program over time: books, recordings, graduate programs, free all day sessions for all graduates 4 times per year; mention retreat centers.

Hand out Hints and Reminders booklet with reading list and resources list.

Typical Class Sequence:

Body scan (coming full circle, since this is how class one begins.)

Yoga stretching, either guided or self-guided.

Sitting Meditation, mostly silent.

Optional: one or both of the following:

1) Guided reflection - what do you want to be sure to remember - something you've touched or learned about yourself. Option of setting three short-term (3 months) and three long-term (3 years or more) goals which come out of your direct experience in the program and with the meditation practice. Include potential obstacles to reaching these goals and your strategies for working with them. Participants write letters that include these themes and then seal them in envelopes which they self-address. Instructor collects envelopes and will mail them "sometime in the future."

Or, 2) Complete post-program paperwork. (This may also be preceded by a guided reflection that incorporates some or all of the questions below.)

As each participant completes their letter or paperwork they are placed in pairs by the instructor to discuss how the course has been for them. Examples of questions: (1) think back to why you came originally - expectations - and why you stayed; (2) What did you want/hope for? (3) What did you get out of the program, if anything? What did you learn? (4) What sacrifices did you make? What were the costs to you? What obstacles did you

encounter and what did you learn about yourself in working with these obstacles? (5) How will you continue to practice when this program is over?

Group dialogue and discussion: Discuss the experience of practicing without recordings this week. Review the entire course and focus briefly on salient features.

Group go around - each participant shares their experience of the course with the whole group, how they feel about the course ending, what they have learned, how they will keep the momentum of their practice moving and growing.

Attendance, home practice, Hints and Reminders booklet, resources handout, address exchanges.

Final meditation and acknowledgement of the ending of this particular group.

Home Practice Assignment:

- Go back to the recordings if you wish. Keep up the practice and make it your own.