



MINDFULNESS
EXERCISES

5 MINDFULNESS GUIDE
KEY CHALLENGES
MINDFULNESS
TEACHERS FACE





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INTRODUCTION

Do you feel called to share mindfulness with others, but you're held back by self-doubt? Do you wonder if you have enough experience to teach in a way you're proud of?

It's true that you need experience to teach others skillfully. However, it might not be the kind of experience you think.

In this guide, we'll talk with you about five key challenges that aspiring teachers face and how they keep talented teachers from getting out there and sharing what they know.

We'll look at each challenge in this way:

- | Challenge
- | Solution
- | Bottom Line

So let's dive in and look at how you can overcome these challenges, so you can help people through teaching mindfulness.

BEING UNCLEAR ON YOUR MOTIVATION CHALLENGE


Mindfulness meditation is a versatile, powerful life skill. It has been shown to help people with everything from reducing anxiety, to improving relationships, to making everyday living easier and more fulfilling.

The good news is just about anyone can benefit from learning the skill of mindfulness. The bad news is this can leave teachers without a clear motivation for their teaching. And it's why many teachers who are starting out struggle to find students. They try to be all things to all people.

As an experienced meditator, you know that mindfulness meditation has a range of physical, mental and emotional benefits. However, those benefits become most compelling to people when you make them personal: for you and for learners. Your potential students want to know who you are and how you can help them.

SOLUTION

Why do you want to teach mindfulness? The more precisely you can answer this question, the more authentic and powerful your teaching will be. Knowing your personal "why" will give you focus and guide you through the personal and practical challenges of teaching.

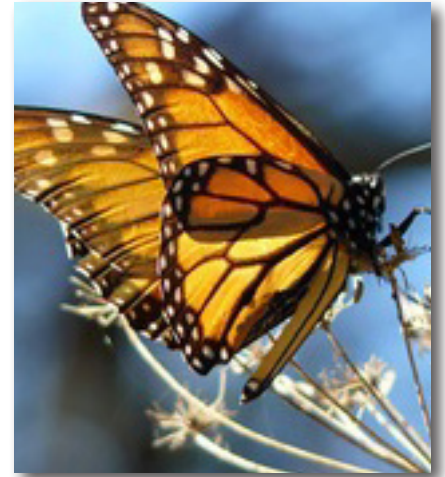


WHY DO YOU WANT TO
TEACH MINDFULNESS?
THE MORE PRECISELY
YOU CAN ANSWER
THIS QUESTION, THE
MORE AUTHENTIC
AND POWERFUL YOUR
TEACHING WILL BE.

People will be drawn to you when they see that you “get” their specific challenges, like depression or being stuck in finding a meaningful career.

Understanding your motivation will help you launch your unique offerings. Here are some questions you can explore to find your way.

- | Think about your personal journey with mindfulness practice. Where did you begin and why? What have you learned about yourself, about the human experience?
- | When you talk about mindfulness, what do you most want to share with people?
- | What excites you the most about teaching mindfulness?
- | Is there a particular group you’re really drawn to teach? This may be people with a particular challenge, like addiction, or people who you feel would leverage mindfulness to benefit large groups, like leaders or educators.
- | How would learning mindfulness meditation help your chosen group or groups?



BOTTOM LINE

CREATE A CLEAR PICTURE OF WHO YOU WANT TO TEACH AND WHY.
THIS WILL FILL YOUR TEACHING WITH AUTHENTICITY AND CONFIDENCE.

PEOPLE WILL BE DRAWN TO YOU WHEN THEY SEE THAT
YOU “GET” THEIR SPECIFIC CHALLENGES, LIKE DEPRESSION OR
BEING STUCK IN FINDING A MEANINGFUL CAREER.

THINKING (TOO) BIG CHALLENGE

A definition of mindfulness we like to use here at MindfulnessExercises.com is “paying attention to your moment to moment experience without judgment.” It’s a clear, description that most people can understand—though they discover it isn’t always easy to do!



This definition points to another common challenge for teachers. They “think too big” and create unrealistic expectations for themselves and for students.

Because you want to teach mindfulness, chances are you want others to share some of your profound experiences and growth. This is a solid motivation, but you may try to attract students with claims like, “Mindfulness will change your life!” or “Be 10 times more productive through mindfulness!”

The problem with this kind of “thinking (too) big” is it sets a very high bar for yourself and for your students. It’s a recipe for disappointment in yourself as a teacher and for your learners when they don’t “get what they signed up for.”

SOLUTION

Keep it simple.

The power of mindfulness lies in orienting students to the present. You don’t need to take your students any further than becoming proficient at being curious and kind with their moment-to-moment experience.

Consistent practice with this simple instruction will help your students discover a lot about themselves: their negative self-talk, habitual emotional patterns, their judgments and an always-present awareness that observes everything without preference.

You can help people develop this core skill of noticing the flow of their lives with clarity and compassion. You can trust that, as your students practice, they will uncover their own path to growth and their own answers.

Keeping it simple is the best way to ground your teaching. It will be the home base you and your students return to again and again.

- | Incorporate this definition of mindfulness regularly into your own practice. Use it to become grounded in this simple approach.
- | Practice explaining the skill of mindfulness in this straightforward way. Paying attention. To the moment. Without judgment.

BOTTOM LINE

BEWARE OF OVER-PROMISING TO YOURSELF OR YOUR STUDENTS. DEVELOP YOUR OWN SIMPLE RELATIONSHIP TO MINDFULNESS AND USE THAT TO GUIDE YOUR TEACHING.





IMPOSTOR SYNDROME

THE CHALLENGE

One of the biggest challenges for mindfulness teachers is self-doubt. “Who am I to teach? I don’t have everything all figured out!”

Sound familiar? Maybe you feel you just don’t know enough or you’re all too aware of the situations or moods that continue to throw you off balance. Maybe you compare yourself to meditation teachers you respect.

THEY THINK THEY NEED TO KNOW MORE, SO THEY READ EVEN MORE BOOKS, AND TAKE MORE COURSES AND WORKSHOPS. STILL, THEY NEVER FEEL QUITE “READY.”

Many teachers who could be out there supporting people through mindfulness are caught up in impostor syndrome. They think they need to know more, so they read even more books, and take more courses and workshops. Still, they never feel quite “ready.”

The problem with this approach is that teaching mindfulness isn’t about sharing information—well, it’s not essentially about that.

It’s about creating a safe, inquiring, compassionate space for others to learn mindfulness. It’s about modeling mindfulness by being yourself, being non-judgmental, and sharing the principles and practices of mindfulness.

It's good to want to be a skillful guide for others. You want to teach with integrity, with grace and to honor the teachings of mindfulness. You want to lead great meditations that help others experience the rich world of practice.

Just know that you don't have to be perfect to teach. If we did, there would be far fewer excellent mindfulness teachers today.

Is it really true that you're not ready?

SOLUTION

The solution to impostor syndrome is understanding that teaching isn't about you.

Impostor syndrome is based in fear of failure or judgment. You think you might say something awkward or not be able to answer a student's question. You don't want to go blank or feel foolish.

Great mindfulness teaching comes from compassion for others and their well-being. When you connect to your desire to support others, you take the focus off yourself. Your priority becomes learning how to be a mindful presence and create a fertile learning environment for your students.

- | Use your own mindfulness practice to spend some time with your fears to see what is beneath them. Is it a deep desire to be a compassionate support for others? Do you want to share mindfulness skills with people who have experienced the same hardship you have?



- | Think about your “worst case scenarios” and face them head on. “What will I do if I don’t know how to answer a question?” Or, “What if I completely mess up explaining something?” Sit with your fears mindfully for a few minutes. What **would** you do? Could you admit something didn’t go well and try again?
- | Be non-judgmental and kind with yourself around your fears. Working with them will help you to become a more grounded and forgiving guide for your students.

BOTTOM LINE

TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF YOURSELF BY REMEMBERING THAT TEACHING IS NOT ABOUT YOU. IT’S ABOUT SHARING THE SKILLS OF MINDFULNESS IN AS GENUINE AND OPEN-HEARTED A WAY AS YOU CAN.



FOCUSING ON OUTCOMES

THE CHALLENGE

When you are teaching mindfulness one of the biggest challenges is to center your teaching in process, rather than outcomes.

When describing their mindfulness offerings, many teachers will focus on promising outcomes, like:

- | feeling relaxed
- | being happy

LIKE “THINKING TOO BIG,” FOCUSING ON OUTCOMES CAN SET UP YOUR STUDENTS FOR DISAPPOINTMENT OR SELF-JUDGMENT. THEY MAY WONDER WHY, “EVERYONE ELSE GETS THIS, WHY DON’T I?” AND YOU MAY HARM YOUR CREDIBILITY BECAUSE YOU DON’T DELIVER ON YOUR “PROMISE.”

- | experiencing less pain
- | achieving flow
- | increasing productivity

All of these **are** often outcomes of practicing mindfulness, but what happens if your students don’t have these experiences? What if meditation makes them feel more anxious, not less?

Like “thinking too big,” focusing on outcomes can set up your students for disappointment or self-judgment. They may wonder why, “Everyone else gets this, why don’t I?” And you may harm your credibility because you don’t deliver on your “promise.”

There is a paradox in mindfulness that you need to be comfortable explaining to students.

Mindfulness is based on being open to and non-judgmental about whatever experiences you are having in any moment. It helps you to be more accepting of yourself and others, even when it’s difficult.

However, people often come to mindfulness because they **want** something to change.

“Isn’t this a contradiction?” learners often wonder. “Why should I accept things as they are, when I want to change them? And aren’t you saying mindfulness will help me change things that aren’t affecting my self-worth?”

SOLUTION

The solution is orienting students to the present, again and again. Being present in the moment, just as it is without judgment, is where acceptance and the possibility of change intersect. This is one of the most important places your guidance is needed because it is something that has to be experienced to be understood.

You can't promise your students an outcome, but you can promise to guide them mindfully through their moment to moment experience, good, bad and neutral. With your kind guidance, students learn how to do this on their own. They experience what happens and what changes when they observe themselves with kindness, rather than with resistance or judgment.

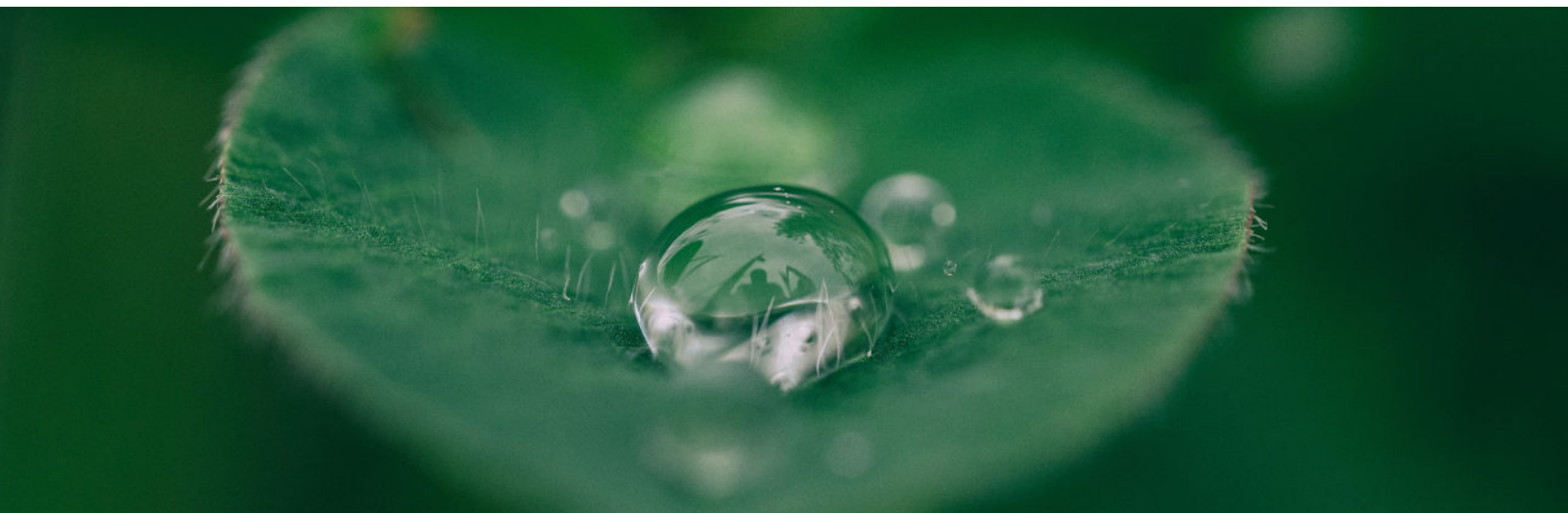
Learners will need to be reminded of this paradox, and the way through it, many times. And this will be a deep learning for you as well. You will practice resisting your own desire to "fix" students' challenges and rest in the wisdom of the moment instead.

Mindfulness is about being as fully and deeply here as we can. And then seeing what our minds and hearts tell us is the "next step."

- | Devote some of your own practice to watching for a desire for outcomes. In a period of practice, are you wanting to "get past" certain thoughts or moods, rather than being with them?
- | Do you have a subtle preference for some effects of practice over others?
- | Do you see some practice sessions as more "successful." Why?

BOTTOM LINE

NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU MAY WANT TO FOCUS YOUR TEACHING ON POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF MINDFULNESS PRACTICE, FOCUS INSTEAD ON HELPING YOUR STUDENTS PRIORITIZE AWARENESS OF THE PRESENT MOMENT. THIS SKILL IS A SWISS-ARMY KNIFE FOR EVERY CHALLENGE AND SITUATION LIFE WILL BRING THEIR WAY.





BE YOURSELF. EVERYONE ELSE IS TAKEN.

BELIEVING YOU CAN'T BE YOURSELF CHALLENGE

The final challenge we'd like to talk about with you arises from some of the others: thinking you can't quite be yourself if you want to teach.

When you believe this (consciously or not), you might:

- | feel the need to project yourself in a way that's not quite genuine
- | leave your full, colorful personality at the door
- | teach what you think you should, rather than what you know and love
- | limit yourself to traditional teaching topics and methods, when you could be including your own ideas that expand your students' understanding of mindfulness

We live in a wonderful time where we have access to experienced, ethical and skilled teachers. You may have your own beloved teachers who are your models for teaching.

That inspiration can be a powerful guide along your path, as long as you add a commitment to being yourself and finding your unique voice.

SOLUTION

Have you ever been in a learning environment where a teacher said they saw something new through a student's eyes? Or, the teacher talked about their own challenge with a situation? Authenticity creates connection. And it encourages your students to do the same. When you lead the way, students can risk talking about a struggle they may be having with a life situation or mindfulness technique you're teaching.

People have radar for teachers who are genuine and authentic. We can recognize someone who is committed to what's real and present, including difficulties. It's grounding to learn from someone who faces the same challenges that we do.

One of the best ways to help students connect the dots between mindfulness meditation and those challenges is to give them many points of entry. Each person has their own personality and ways of learning.

Bring to class that TED Talk you love on fractal geometry. Read your favorite poem about nature. Start a discussion about how they relate to mindfulness. Enthusiasm is contagious.

AUTHENTICITY CREATES CONNECTION. AND IT ENCOURAGES YOUR STUDENTS TO DO THE SAME.



And remember that as a teacher you will be learning too. Make student feedback a part of your learning environment. Who better to tell you how you're doing than your students? You will empower them, learn invaluable lessons and create an open, lively learning environment.

- | Close your eyes and imagine yourself teaching, with nothing to prove. What do you think and feel? How do you act?
- | What does it feel like to know you will be learning along with your students? That you can trust yourself to be open to growing as you teach?
- | Imagine bringing one of your favorite poems, videos or hobbies with you to class. How does it feel to share your enthusiasm about it and how it connects with your understanding of mindfulness?

CONCLUSION

If you would like to take the next step on your path to teaching, consider devoting some of your mindfulness practice to these five challenges. We hope the practice tips in this guide will help you to dissolve the beliefs holding you back around:

- | Being Unclear on your Motivation
- | Thinking (Too) Big
- | Impostor Syndrome
- | Focusing on Outcomes
- | Believing You Can't be Yourself

And please see the resources we've gathered for you at the back of this guide.

There is no doubt the world can use more people living and contributing to our communities mindfully. You can be part of this change.



RESOURCES

RESOURCES ON MINDFULNESSEXERCISES.COM

We have compiled a comprehensive library of free and premium resources you can use to deepen your practice, and boost your teaching skills and confidence.

Some have been mentioned in this guide, but here are a few other in-depth offerings if you are ready to begin your journey of teaching mindfulness.

Mindfulness Meditation Teacher Training

https://teach.mindfulnessexercises.com/?_ga=2.137897584.150028855.1662414910-578268171.1656541500

Brandable Mindfulness Curriculum

<https://premium.mindfulnessexercises.com/brandable-curriculum/>

300 Mindfulness Worksheets

<https://premium.mindfulnessexercises.com/300-mindfulness-worksheets-sale/>

200 Guided Meditation Scripts

<https://premium.mindfulnessexercises.com/guided-meditation-scripts/>

Mindfulness at Work

<https://premium.mindfulnessexercises.com/mindfulness-at-work/>

OTHER RESOURCES

Mindfulness Meditation Teacher Certification Program

A two-year online program on awareness and compassion-based practices with Jack Kornfield and Tara Brach

<https://www.soundstrue.com/products/mindfulness-meditation-teacher-certification-program?>

Mindfulness Teacher Training

A one-year training program to help you teach mindfulness with confidence and clarity with Mark Coleman and Martin Aylward

<https://markcoleman.org/teacher-training/mindfulness-teacher-training>

Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Training

The nine-week original training program developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn

<https://www.mbsrtraining.com/>

Free Online Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Course

A course given by Dave Potter, certified MBSR instructor

<https://palousemindfulness.com/>



Sean Fargo,
Founder

MINDFULNESS GUIDE

5 KEY CHALLENGES

MINDFULNESS TEACHERS

FACE