

The Mindfulness-Based Interventions: Teaching and Learning Companion (MBI:TLC)



*Reflective practice for
mindfulness-based teachers*

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THE MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTIONS: TEACHING AND LEARNING COMPANION (MBI:TLC)

The purpose of the MBI:TLC (we use the shorthand ‘TLC’ in this document) is to support the reflective practice of MBP teachers. It is designed to be helpful for teachers at all stages, from those just starting their teacher training to those who have been teaching for years. Reflective practice is essential to teaching MBPs with integrity; it gives space to see what we are doing well, and to explore the inevitable ‘edges’ that arise when teaching.

This companion reflective guide is based upon the Mindfulness-Based Interventions: Teaching Assessment Criteria (MBI:TAC: Crane et al., 2021) which offers a map of teaching skills and is used worldwide to assess mindfulness-based programmes (MBP) teachers.

What is reflective practice?

Being an MBP teacher asks a lot of us on a deeply personal level, and skilful engagement with reflective practice is key to our development. Effective reflection requires an element of critical thinking – it is a combination of analysis and questioning within an open reflective approach, which encompasses engagement with our whole system – body, emotions, and cognition.



Developing reflective skills is a learning process in itself. It is important that it includes and engages with our personal mindfulness practice, our teaching practice, our everyday life, the values we hold, our social conditioning and so forth. The development of critical reflective skills is key to enable learning in an MBP context, and helps ensure that MBP teachers are part of a culture of reflective practice and self-assessment which continues beyond formal training. In this way the ethics and integrity of the field is held largely at a grassroots level.

There are some key features to reflection:

- It encourages us to look at issues from different perspectives, which helps us to understand and scrutinise our own values, assumptions, biases and perspectives.
- It results in learning – through changing ideas and our understanding of the situation, it may lead to shedding of outworn attitudes, ideas, or behaviours. Reflection is thus part of our evolution as people and MBP teachers.
- It is an active process of learning and is more than thinking or thoughtful action.
- It recognises that teaching MBPs is not without dilemmas, challenges and issues.
- It is not a linear process, but a cyclical one where reflection leads to the development of new ideas which are then used to plan our next stages of learning.

As MBP teachers we are trained in facilitating inquiry. The inquiry process, with its three layers of friendly and curious engagement with the immediacy of experience, our relationship to experience, and the wider implications of what we are noticing, is a beautiful and effective system of reflection (Segal et al., 2013). The aspiration we hold for our participants (and ourselves!) is that this way of inquiring into experience becomes a natural default way of engaging with our lives.

How can the TLC support my development as an MBP teacher?

- It offers a structure for reflective engagement with personal process and skill development as an MBP teacher.
- It serves as a gentle introduction or stepping stone to the MBI:TAC, without the ‘threat’ of an assessment, as it maps onto the MBI:TAC (with the same six domains and key features).
- It offers practical guidance to support ongoing development. In the book chapter in which the TLC is presented, there are further pointers to practices and resources (Griffith et al., 2021).
- There is a section which enables you to reflect on a particular teaching incident – which can be used in combination with the TLC or separately as the need arises. Challenging or uncomfortable teaching moments can offer rich learning if we use them to enable a deeper reflection.
- The TLC encourages you to also reflect on your strengths – this may help to counteract tendencies to be overly critical, and to build confidence and understanding about how to further develop.

The TLC is designed to be a companion throughout training and beyond. It supports a self-reflective process around your teaching skills that comes from your internal sense of your own process as a teacher – the ‘inside-out’ feel of things. The TLC may serve as a basis for discussions with peers or your supervisor. It can be used many

times over, with the invitation to treat the self-reflection as part of your mindfulness practice – noticing when criticism or praise arises, and being aware of any bodily or emotional responses as you reflect. Remember, that while we naturally aspire to be as skilful as possible in our teaching, it is also important to allow ourselves to be where we are from moment to moment. Using the TLC we can play with holding the natural (and wholesome) wish to be a ‘good’ MBP teacher with kindly awareness, rather than being driven by it.

The TLC can act as a stepping-stone to greater familiarity with MBP teaching skills, without the focus on assessment inherent in the MBI:TAC. As you engage with the TLC over time, you may wish to fine-tune reflections beyond the suggestions given in this document. When arriving at that stage, you can turn to the full MBI:TAC, which gives more details on each domain (see mbitac.bangor.ac.uk).

How to use the TLC

It may be useful to ground yourself before engaging with the TLC using a short meditation practice. This may be particularly important for those of us who have natural tendencies to judge and strive. This is about your internal process of being a teacher; an ‘inside out’ feel of things, rather than a way of judging or comparing yourself to others.

Notice when the mind gets caught in concepts – e.g. “I’m no good at embodiment”, and subsequent proliferations on particular themes e.g. “I shouldn’t be teaching at all if I can’t embody the practice”. If this happens, take a pause and invite yourself to move from thinking to directly sensing in the body. What impact does getting caught up in thought have on the direct *here and now* experience? For example, if a memory arises of a mistake made during teaching, this may be accompanied with a sinking sensation in the chest, or a fizzy feeling in the abdomen. All of this is rich information and can be used to help reflection and journaling.

Notice if thoughts move into more of a narrow judging mode when reflecting upon your teaching – given the human mind, judgement is almost inevitable, and this can often feel unpleasant. Hold any such judgements as lightly as you can, and integrate mindful pauses, with the option to step away from the process and return later. Be open to noticing and reflecting on moments of excellent or effective teaching also, and to hold these positive judgements equally lightly. Finally, remember that everyone who engages in the work of becoming an MBP teacher has been through similar questions and doubts (including the authors of this work!). You could even step away from the TLC and come back when ready, or, if your mind is drawn to a particular teaching incident as a result of using the TLC, you could turn to the Atkins and Murphy (1993) model to help you reflect upon this (a ‘how to’ guide for reflecting on particular instances of challenge while teaching is located on page 12).

The MBI:TAC maps the teaching process into six domains of teaching skills/capacities, which is mirrored in the TLC. Each section covers one domain, with brief descriptions of the key features within it. You are invited to complete a table which facilitates reflection on your teaching strengths and areas for development in each domain (by ticking the box that feels most closely aligned with the stage you are currently at – which range from ‘Yes I definitely do this’ to ‘I’ve never even thought about this key feature before’).

Choose the category that feels most honest and accurate in this moment, the one that intuitively feels most closely aligned. Remember that the process of learning is one of



ongoing development, everyone has to start somewhere, and there is no right or wrong response. The intention of the TLC is to enable you to pause and self-reflect, to support your practice and development as an MBP teacher.

There is space under each table which is divided into two sections. Under ‘strengths’ the invitation is to reflect upon areas of teaching strengths in that domain. Always find something positive to write, even though this can sometimes feel challenging. Under ‘areas for development’ the invitation is to reflect upon skills that would be helpful to cultivate. In the book chapter (Griffith et al., 2021), you will also find a list of resources specific to each domain for further reading.

We recommend keeping a journal as an aid to this developmental process. If specific teaching points or questions arise as you complete the tables (e.g. from big questions like “How do I know if I’m embodied?” to small practical points such as “I need to ensure the chairs are set up before participants arrive”), write these down to aid deeper reflection with yourself, peers, or with your mindfulness supervisor. Also notice when you are unsure about what to write and acknowledge that this is ok; in fact, use this uncertainty itself to point towards deeper self-reflection. Invite awareness of the process itself as part of this reflective practice, noticing how it is to self-reflect in this way – holding any judgement or self-criticism that may arise with kindly awareness. Remember that your writing is for your eyes only, so allow yourself to be free and unencumbered.

Key to the categories

Below are descriptions of the categories: hold them lightly; there isn’t a right or wrong here – you are capturing aspects of your subjective experience in this moment. You may well feel that you fall in between them, in which case indicate that on the table by ticking in-between the categories. Use the process freely and intuitively to support your reflective process, learning, and development.

Yes, definitely

This category represents being aware of this as a key feature of MBP teaching; it is present *consistently* while you are teaching; you have confidence in your capacities in this key feature, although there may be still some fine-tuning to be explored.

Yes, sometimes

This represents an awareness of the key feature, and of it being present regularly while teaching, but it can be *inconsistent*; or this key feature is present in your practice consistently, but there is a reflective sense that it could be improved substantially.

Yes, but rarely

You apply this key feature less than half of the time, or are very inconsistent or unconfident with it, or it may be an ‘edge’ being worked with. You recognise the process of becoming familiar with it and learning to cultivate it within MBP teaching.



No, not yet

You are aware of this feature as part of MBP teaching, but you have not applied it when teaching MBPs just yet and you would like to work on doing so.

Not sure

This category is for when a key feature is unfamiliar to you, perhaps not thought about before; you do not know whether you include this when teaching MBPs yet, or, you have not yet had the opportunity to put this key feature into practice.



DOMAIN 1: COVERAGE, PACING AND ORGANISATION OF SESSION CURRICULUM

Key Features

- 1) **Adherence to curriculum:** Your teaching adheres closely with the MBP curriculum guide for the course being taught (e.g., Kabat-Zinn et al., 2021; MBCT, Segal et al., 2013).
- 2) **Responsiveness:** There is an appropriate dynamic balance between the session plan being used and the needs of the moment e.g., if working with difficulty emerges as a strong theme from the group in session 1, you are able to incorporate this appropriately without losing the particular intention of session 1; if the dialogue is particularly fruitful you are able to give it the space it needs and dynamically rework the timings for the rest of the session in ways that are coherent and complete.
- 3) **Appropriate inclusion of themes and content:** You stay close to the core themes of the session and do so safely (e.g., it is inappropriate to encourage proactively directing attention to difficult intense sensations in early sessions).
- 4) **Organisation:** All materials are organised and at hand. You have a session plan and have prepared the room or online space before the participants arrive.
- 5) **Pacing:** The rhythm and flow of your teaching gives space for participants to understand and reflect on the themes. Sessions are not rushed, nor unhelpfully slow.

	<i>Key Features of Domain 1</i>	<i>Yes, definitely</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes</i>	<i>Yes, but rarely</i>	<i>No, not yet</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
1	Do I adhere to the chosen curriculum?					
2	Am I able to balance flexibility and responsivity to the needs of the class while covering the curriculum?					
3	Am I able to appropriately introduce course themes and context– and be flexible around these when needed?					
4	Am I well organised for class (e.g, timetable, all materials to hand, the room)					
5	Is my teaching appropriately paced? e.g., I allow space for participant learning, without stagnating around a particular issue?					

Strengths:

Areas for development:

DOMAIN 2: RELATIONAL SKILLS

Key features



- 1) **Authenticity:** You teach in a way that is aligned with who you are, congruent and open in your relationships with participants. Responses to individuals or the group arise from a responsiveness to the moment, rather than a cognitive focus on what 'should' be happening.
- 2) **Connection and Acceptance:** You 'tune into' what a participant is saying, both in terms of content and emotional tone, with the ability to reflect this back, meeting the participant where they are in the moment, fostering a sense of acceptance of yourself and the participant.
- 3) **Compassion and Warmth:** You convey authentic warmth and compassion towards participants. This manifests through relating with attentiveness, encouragement, and compassion in difficult moments, and being a 'fellow-human' who is interconnected with the experiences of the participants.
- 4) **Curiosity and Respect:** You encourage participants to actively explore their own experience rather than relying on your expertise as the teacher, with a consistent message of encouraging them to participate in their own way, and with deep respect for participant's vulnerabilities and boundaries. You convey genuine curiosity about participants' experiences as they unfold.
- 5) **Mutuality:** You communicate a sense of shared exploration, of co-journeying with participants, emphasising the human vulnerabilities we all share.



	<i>Key Features of Domain 2</i>	<i>Yes, definitely</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes</i>	<i>Yes, but rarely</i>	<i>No, not yet</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
1	Do I relate to participants in an authentic way?					
2	Can I 'tune into' the participant's world, and convey an accurate and empathic understanding of this?					
3	Do I give participants my full attention when they speak, and relate in a warm and compassionate manner?					
4	Am I able to be genuinely curious about participants experiences, and respect individual vulnerabilities and processes?					
5	Do I foster a sense of shared exploration among participants, of which I am a part?					

Strengths:

Areas for development:

DOMAIN 3: EMBODYING MINDFULNESS



Key features

- 1) **Present moment focus:** You are grounded and steady in the body (but not stiff) whilst teaching, which is also manifested in the rhythm and pitch of your speech, so that your physical manifestation of mindfulness is 'sensed' by participants.
- 2) **Present moment responsiveness:** You are mindfully responsive to what is emerging internally within (thoughts, emotions, physical sensations etc), and externally in the teaching space (curriculum issues, participants, group processes etc). This includes how you respond to the group moment-by-moment. You guide the session with a steady intention.
- 3) **Conveying steadiness alongside alertness:** There may be inner reactivity arising within whilst teaching (particularly during challenging moments), while fully acknowledging this, you are able to convey steadiness alongside alertness and vitality. You convey stability and vitality within discomfort – opening to and allowing moments of wobble, vulnerability, and uncertainty; being responsive rather than reactive.
- 4) **Attitudinal qualities:** You convey the attitudinal foundations of non-judging (developing a stance of friendly witnessing to participants and personal experience), patience (working with the present moment, allowing things to emerge in their own time), non-striving (allowing things to be as they are, not trying to fix), and allowing (modelling a kindly presence towards self, others, and experience).
- 5) **Natural presence of the teacher:** You teach through your own unique, authentic, natural style of being, and inhabit your own personhood. There is no sense of putting on a 'persona' of what a mindful person 'should' do as you teach, rather, you teach naturally from who you are and from your own practice.



	<i>Key Features of Domain 3</i>	<i>Yes, definitely</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes</i>	<i>Yes, but rarely</i>	<i>No, not yet</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
1	Am I grounded and steady in my body when I teach, with a present moment focus?					
2	Am I responsive to internal and external experience when teaching?					
3	Am I able to remain steady and alert through challenging teaching moments, and teach from a place of connected groundedness?					
4	Do I convey the attitudes of allowing, non-striving, non-judging, and patience while teaching?					
5	Do I feel that I teach authentically from 'myself'?					

Strengths:

Areas for development:

DOMAIN 4: GUIDING MINDFULNESS PRACTICES



Key features

- 1) ***Language is precise, yet conveys spaciousness:*** In each practice these three elements are present:
 - a. Clarity about which aspects of experience participants should direct their attention to.
 - b. Guidance about how to work skilfully with the process of mind wandering (with emphasis on this being a natural process), such as how to note this natural movement and bring the mind back with kindness. Offering silent spaces within practices to allow participants to engage with the guidance. Giving clear invitations to modify the guidance offered if it does not suit them.
 - c. Naming what attitudinal qualities to evoke (e.g., inviting non-striving, gentleness, curiosity).
- 2) ***Making the key learning for each mindfulness practice available to participants:*** You are aware of the core intentions of each mindfulness practice, and ensure that this learning is clear to participants both through implicit and explicit teaching processes.
- 3) ***The specific elements to consider when guiding each practice are clear:*** For example, in the body scan, always start with grounding in the whole body before exploring specific body parts, name different experiences (e.g., sensations may be quite intense, or there may be no sensation); and attending throughout to safety and trauma sensitivity considerations.

There is a helpful summary of these specific elements in the MBI:TAC (Crane, 2021).



	<i>Key Features of Domain 4</i>	<i>Yes, definitely</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes</i>	<i>Yes, but rarely</i>	<i>No, not yet</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
1	Do I give clear guidance on attention, mind wandering, and attitudinal qualities within each mindfulness practice?					
2	Am I aware of what the core intentions are of each practice, and convey these to participants when guiding?					
3	Do I cover the elements that need consideration while guiding practice?					

Strengths:

Areas for development:

DOMAIN 5: CONVEYING COURSE THEMES THROUGH INQUIRY AND DIDACTIC TEACHING



Key features

- 1) **Experiential focus:** You support participants to connect to their direct experience (particularly emphasising sensations in the body) and encourage awareness of the different elements of present moment experience (thoughts, sensations, emotions). You bring participants back to the immediacy of direct experience if they start to become abstract or conceptual, and use open questions to explore experience, with a non-fixing orientation.
- 2) **Use all 'three layers' of inquiry:** in a way that is non-linear, emergent and with a light touch.
 - a) **Layer 1: Direct experience of participants.** E.g., ask questions such as “What did you notice?” “What was that sensation like?” “Were there any thoughts related to that?”
 - b) **Layer 2: How participants relate to their direct experience.** You inquire into the inner relationship the participant had or has with a particular experience e.g., “How did you feel when the mind wandered?” “How does that sensation of restlessness feel now you have named it?” “How did you work with impatience in that practice?”
 - c) **Layer 3: Linking what participants say to the theme of the programme or to wider life, when appropriate.** You encourage participants to make links themselves, by allowing them to see how their mind gets caught. You can do this by inviting links between practice and wider life, e.g., “Does striving show up elsewhere in your life?” Note that it is better to allow learning to arise from participants than shoehorn a point in because we think we ‘should’. Some dialogues will just cover layers 1 and 2, and that is fine.
- 3) **Conveying learning themes:** This key feature includes many elements – it describes how you may draw on a range of teaching strategies to enable learning. In different moments you will offer didactic teaching, psychoeducation, links to theory, experiential engagement; stories, poems, and metaphors. You use a range of teaching aids (flip chart, post it notes, drawing materials, etc).
- 4) **Fluency:** This covers your capacity to teach in a way that is fluid and intuitive, and arises from your knowledge of key themes.
- 5) **Effective teaching:** This key feature is about whether your teaching effectively enables participant learning. E.g., How engaged are the participants in the sessions? Do you sense that participants are integrating the learning material into their personal process?



	<i>Key Features of Domain 5</i>	<i>Yes, definitely</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes</i>	<i>Yes, but rarely</i>	<i>No, not yet</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
1	Do I skilfully bring participants back to direct experience during dialogues, and generally keep them on track?					
2	Am I aware of the three layers of inquiry and do I navigate between them as appropriate when teaching?					
3	Do I teach the course themes in ways that enable effective experientially engaged learning?					
4	Do I feel confident in my knowledge/ understanding of the themes of the program? Am I able to convey these fluently?					
5	Is my teaching effective – does it enable participant learning to happen?					

Strengths:

Areas for development:

DOMAIN 6: HOLDING THE GROUP LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.



Key features

- 1) **Creating a secure learning container:** You create an environment that enables participants to feel safe with clear group boundaries and ground rules, such as confidentiality, time keeping etc (Griffith et al., 2019).
- 2) **Group development:** You work with core group development processes in ways that enhance the learning potential, including skilfully managing beginnings and endings of the group, and dynamics within the group. This includes working with challenging participants in a way that support the whole group.
- 3) **Personal to universal processes:** You use the group context to highlight the universal nature of human tendencies/patterns, and raise awareness of the interrelatedness of personal and universal stories. For example, during inquiry when one participant speaks of the distracted mind, you use the language of ‘we’ and ‘our’ e.g., “We all have minds that wander” thus drawing from individual experiences to make wider teaching points. You include the whole group in your awareness, even whilst engaging with one participant.
- 4) **Leadership style:** Your authority as a teacher is drawn from having ‘walked the walk’ in your own practice; and you can confidently communicate a sense of co-journeying with participants.

	<i>Key Features of Domain 6</i>	<i>Yes, definitely</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes</i>	<i>Yes, but rarely</i>	<i>No, not yet</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
1	Do I maintain a safe and effective container for learning throughout the course?					
2	Am I aware of key group development processes and apply these when teaching?					
3	Do I consistently use individual contributions to draw the groups attention to universal processes?					
4	Is my leadership style authoritative yet non-hierarchal?					

Strengths:

Areas for development:



HOW TO REFLECT ON A CHALLENGING TEACHING EXPERIENCE

The TLC is designed as an aid to reflect on your current teaching skills and learning development – but what about those times when we wish to reflect upon a particular teaching experience, especially one that we found difficult or unpleasant? We particularly recommend the model by Atkins and Murphy (1993) to engage in this type of reflective practice. This model was originally designed to be used to support reflection on a professional incident that was challenging, and it is also well suited to the MBP teaching context. This model can be used in conjunction with aspects of the TLC but does not quite map on exactly, although some principles from it may be useful when reflecting on core skills. This section can be used separately for those times when it may be helpful to take some time to digest and learn from an uncomfortable or challenging teaching experience.

Hold the model lightly as a structure within which to engage in deeper reflective practice on themes that are emerging in your personal process or from a particular teaching moment. Reflecting in this way on challenging or uncomfortable teaching incidents does require us to engage with our vulnerabilities and perhaps also our habit patterns, including how we can so often ‘get in the way of ourselves’ when teaching. Bring kindness and presence to your process. Below is the description of the model (Figure 1), followed by a worked example of how I (GG) have used this model to reflect on a challenging teaching experience.

Awareness

Begin with this ‘awareness’ stage of the model, and notice your experience of the event as you begin to reflect – with the emphasis on the emotions, thoughts, and body sensations that occurred at the time, or while you are reflecting on the experience. What was the experience, and how did it impact on your emotions?

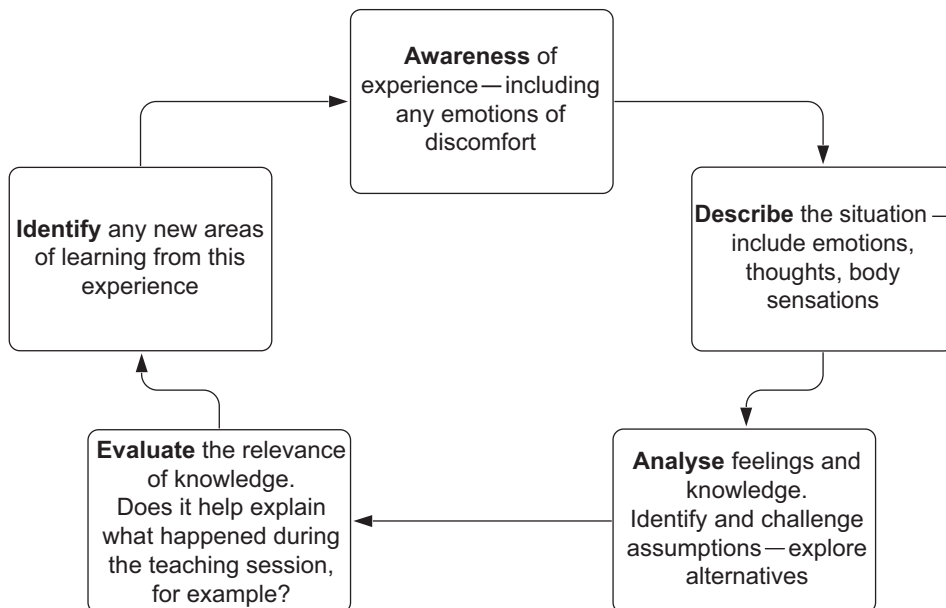


Figure 1 Atkins and Murphy’s (1993) model of reflective practice, slightly adapted for MBP teachers

Example: A participant was talking a lot during session 1 of an MBSR course. He went into rather detailed stories about his workplace several times, this took time away from the focus of the session, and I started to feel uncomfortable about how much time he was taking up in the group. I also noticed my mind wander, my thoughts were engaged with ‘how can I get this person on track, or to finish this story quickly’ I worried about the impact on others in the group. I felt my stomach and jaw start to clench and underneath that, a kind of sense of resignation ‘oh well I’ll have to let him get to the end of his story’. I was anxious and unsure about what might be the right thing to do during the session. Right now, as I reflect, I have a feeling of uncertainty and am not feeling very confident, and underneath that, a fairly stable ‘ok-ness’ with feeling these unpleasant feelings.

Describe

This is where the practical, background details are described – what were the key events? What did you do? What did other people do?

Example: It was session 1, so the group is at an early forming stage with group norms not yet established. The participant was male, in a mostly female group. He said he was going through a difficult time at work and described this in some detail during first go-round, and again during the inquiry after the body scan. I saw that he was going into ‘story’ mode as soon as he started talking and tried to find a space where I could ask him about how that is manifesting in his body, but couldn’t find an appropriate place without feeling I was interrupting. Later on he also came back to this issue – and then other participants started sharing stories about the workplace for about 5 mins or so before I could get them back on track. I could see some other participants look bored when he was talking. I started to feel a bit resigned when he started talking in detail (part of my habit pattern- akin to a kind of ‘freeze’ mode), which was unpleasant to experience. As soon as I could bring him back into experiential mode after his story, I did, careful to validate his experience at the same time.

Analyse

In this stage, we analyse any assumptions we may have made about the event – are they actually true, or simply our perceptions?

Example: As teacher, I have a sense of expectations for how I want the class to go and a curriculum to cover – participants wouldn’t be aware of this. They may not have shared my anxiety about this person talking so much about a work situation, and indeed, some joined in so it was engaging for some. I thought I saw other participants look bored, but I don’t know what they might have been feeling. I also think perhaps he is trying to establish his place in the group, and this is a normal part of group process – but this may or may not be true. This also taps into a habit pattern of mine – I find it challenging to be assertive or to intervene – I feel much more comfortable letting someone run with a story (even if it not helpful for the group) and then bring them back on track when they naturally pause.

Evaluate

How was the analysis you did in step 3 useful – how does it explain what happened or your discomfort about it? What steps could you take to work with this challenge?



Example: This habit pattern of preferring not to intervene directly is known to me, and is not easy to face as it means coming out of my comfort zone and becoming more directive as a teacher. Maybe I need to do this in this case or perhaps not, I do still wonder if it may be too early in the course to take direct action towards him as an individual, and think I largely did the ‘right’ thing, but do have a question about whether it would have been helpful to be more directive. At the same time, he may be finding his place in the group and, as the group norms become established, be less inclined to describe his situation at work as time goes on.

Identify

This is where you can identify any learning that has arisen from this reflective process. What will you do in future situations if something similar arises?

Example: In the short-term with this class – I intend to frequently ask to hear from people who have not spoken yet to encourage others in the class to contribute, and to keep a close eye on whether this participant’s contributions become problematic for others in the group – it is too early to tell right now. In future courses – I think I will emphasise listening in the ‘group contracting’ in session 1, and also pre-empt participants going into story mode by saying to the group something like ‘I may re-direct you back to exploring your here and now experiences, so if I do this to you at any point, know that it is not personal, but it is to help us explore mindfulness together.’ I also need to explore my habit-patterns around this both within the teaching space and in everyday life – but not quite sure how yet, I’ll take this theme to my mindfulness supervisor at our next session.

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HOW TO FIND THE MBI:TAC

Download the MBI:TAC for free online (mbitac.bangor.ac.uk). The MBI:TLC can be used alone, but if you wish to deepen your reflection further, the MBI:TAC explores the key features in more detail.

Crane, R. S., Soulsby, J.G., Kuyken, W., Williams, J. M. G., & Eames, C. (2021). The Bangor, Exeter & Oxford Mindfulness-Based Interventions Teaching Assessment Criteria (MBI:TAC) for assessing the competence and adherence of mindfulness-based class-based teaching. Retrieved from mbitac.bangor.ac.uk

APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY SHEETS WITH ALL SIX DOMAIN TABLES



	<i>Key Features of Domain 1</i>	<i>Yes, definitely</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes</i>	<i>Yes, but rarely</i>	<i>No, not yet</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
1	Do I adhere to the chosen curriculum?					
2	Am I able to balance flexibility and responsivity to the needs of the class while covering the curriculum?					
3	Am I able to appropriately introduce course themes and context– and be flexible around these when needed?					
4	Am I well organised for class (e.g., timetable, all materials to hand, the room)					
5	Is my teaching appropriately paced? e.g., I allow space for participant learning, without stagnating around a particular issue?					

Strengths:

Areas for development:



	<i>Key Features of Domain 2</i>	<i>Yes, definitely</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes</i>	<i>Yes, but rarely</i>	<i>No, not yet</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
1	Do I relate to participants in an authentic way?					
2	Can I 'tune into' the participant's world, and convey an accurate and empathic understanding of this?					
3	Do I give participants my full attention when they speak, and relate in a warm and compassionate manner?					
4	Am I able to be genuinely curious about participants experiences, and respect individual vulnerabilities and processes?					
5	Do I foster a sense of shared exploration among participants, of which I am a part?					

Strengths:

Areas for development:

	<i>Key Features of Domain 3</i>	<i>Yes, definitely</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes</i>	<i>Yes, but rarely</i>	<i>No, not yet</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
1	Am I grounded and steady in my body when I teach, with a present moment focus?					
2	Am I responsive to internal and external experience when teaching?					
3	Am I able to remain steady and alert through challenging teaching moments, and teach from a place of connected groundedness?					
4	Do I convey the attitudes of allowing, non-striving, non-judging, and patience while teaching?					
5	Do I feel that I teach authentically from ‘myself’?					

Strengths:

Areas for development:



	<i>Key Features of Domain 4</i>	<i>Yes, definitely</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes</i>	<i>Yes, but rarely</i>	<i>No, not yet</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
1	Do I give clear guidance on attention, mind wandering, and attitudinal qualities within each mindfulness practice?					
2	Am I aware of what the core intentions are of each practice, and convey these to participants when guiding?					
3	Do I cover the elements that need consideration while guiding practice?					

Strengths:

Areas for development:

	<i>Key Features of Domain 5</i>	<i>Yes, definitely</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes</i>	<i>Yes, but rarely</i>	<i>No, not yet</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
1	Do I skilfully bring participants back to direct experience during dialogues, and generally keep them on track?					
2	Am I aware of the three layers of inquiry and do I navigate between them as appropriate when teaching?					
3	Do I teach the course themes in ways that enable effective experientially engaged learning?					
4	Do I feel confident in my knowledge/ understanding of the themes of the program? Am I able to convey these fluently?					
5	Is my teaching effective – does it enable participant learning to happen?					

Strengths:

Areas for development:



	<i>Key Features of Domain 6</i>	<i>Yes, definitely</i>	<i>Yes, sometimes</i>	<i>Yes, but rarely</i>	<i>No, not yet</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
1	Do I maintain a safe and effective container for learning throughout the course?					
2	Am I aware of key group development processes and apply these when teaching?					
3	Do I consistently use individual contributions to draw the groups attention to universal processes?					
4	Is my leadership style authoritative yet non-hierarchal?					

Strengths:

Areas for development:



Raisin/eating meditation

Making key learning available through practice guidance and within the inquiry (Key feature 2):

- Experiencing the difference between mindful awareness and automatic pilot. If we are on autopilot, we cannot see our moods change, or notice stress rising. The raisin practice can help us realise that there are other things to be seen, that there is more to life than our preferences, preconceptions, deductions, opinions and theories; that slowing down even the most routine activities might transform them; and that paying attention to our experience in this ‘curious’ interested, and open way may show us aspects of our experience that we had not seen before; the experience itself is different.
- Experiencing how bringing attention to direct experience can reveal new perceptions, potentially transforming the way we relate to ordinary events and behaviors.
- The present is the only time we have to know anything. Differences exist between eating this way and usual attitudes to eating; impulses around food are often unconscious, powerful and uncontrolled. *And*, mindfulness practice allows us to see this more clearly.
- Experiencing how the mind wanders. The mind is always making associations from present-moment experience to memories, deeper level understanding, stories, etc., but we are not usually aware of where this is taking us. Mostly we do not *choose* where our mind goes. We see how difficult mind states easily take hold when we are unaware. Analysing the past and worrying about the future can be ‘second nature’ to us.
- Recognizing that mindfulness meditation is not a specialized or lofty activity—but quite ordinary and available at any moment.

Raisin/eating meditation—elements to consider in guiding (Key feature 3):

- Hygiene considerations—use a spoon, clean bowl and new box of raisins. Pour out raisins in front of participants, kitchen paper to hand.
- Offer the option not to eat raisin, and to explore with other senses.
- Choose to offer participants just one raisin, or two or three. There is the potential to guide the first one interactively as a group by inviting them to call out sensing words, which can give a flavour of what is being asked for; with the next one, you can ask them to eat it in silence with you guiding. The next one can be in silence completely with no guidance (if only one, ask them to eat in silence with you guiding).
- Invite participants to let go of knowing that this is a raisin and instead to see it ‘fresh’ as a child first encounters experience.
- Emphasise the attitudes of curiosity, interest and exploration, as a scientist might investigate.
- In the inquiry there are several areas that can be explored with participants:
 - encourage lots of direct noticing of the sensations of the experience from all senses
 - elicit observations about how it might have felt different from their usual experience of eating a raisin



- help the group to gather observations about the nature of our minds, the ways we generally pay attention and how this relates to our well-being.
- Permission, options and ways to adapt practice, including opting out, are skilfully offered throughout all the guidance.

Body Scan

Making key learning available through guidance (Key feature 2):

- Direct experiential knowing of physical sensations.
- Learning to be intentional about how we pay attention.
- Relating skilfully to mind wandering when it occurs (acknowledging and bringing back).
- Guidance about how to handle difficulties (sleepiness, discomfort, etc.) by taking care of self (making personal choices). Not seeing difficulties as a problem. Giving permission to stop practicing, move/change position, bring awareness to a neutral focus of attention.
- Attending to the body, present to how things are moment-by-moment, without needing to change anything, no goals to be achieved, no right way for the body to feel.
- Guidance on beginning to *notice* and *relate differently to* our sensations and mental states, including boredom, irritation, impulses, etc.

Body scan—elements to consider in guiding (Key feature 3):

- The teacher should adopt a position where they can monitor the room for safety, track participants, be audible, and also be in touch with their own body scan practice.
- Begin by offering postural options: lying down, astronaut, sitting or standing. Include options to open eyes, shift position (especially to avoid a sense of being frozen or having to lie still). It may be comforting and protective to have a blanket.
- Start and end by bringing attention to the whole body.
- Pay particular attention to detail of body sensations; give examples of words describing sensations such as warm, cold, heaviness, tingling, numbness, ease or lightness.
- Give options to come back to a neutral anchor/to open the eyes at any time to stabilise attention or if they become overwhelmed; remind them of this during the practice.
- Allow the absence of particular feelings or sensations to be just as important as their presence.
- Instruct participants to let go of the last body region before moving awareness to the next, or clearly communicate continuity of awareness as attention is shifted to the next region.
- Be precise in guiding where and how participants place attention, with careful language that also allows choice, i.e., ‘if you care to...’ ‘seeing what it’s like to attend now...’.
- Vary instructions between both narrow angle, detailed awareness of a small part of the body, and also wider angle awareness of a larger area of the body such as the trunk, or the whole body.
- Periodically through the practice offer guidance on dealing with distraction. Acknowledge that thoughts and emotions may be evoked; there’s no need to push these away. Simply return to the area of the body that is being explored.

- Recognition that sensations change: they are coming and going, staying awhile, intensifying, dissolving—sometimes subtly, sometimes more strongly.
- Offer guidance that invites participants to move into a direct ‘being with’ body sensations rather than looking at them from a distance.
- Balance guidance that gives the flavour of being with, allowing and accepting, alongside that which gives a flavour of exploration, curiosity, aliveness and adventure.

Sitting meditation (NB form/length of this practice evolves through the sessions/program in specific ways. Assessing the fidelity of practice form, and the alignment of the practice with the intentions of the session is addressed in Domain 1)

Make key learning available through guidance (Key feature 2):

- Anchoring to the present moment through body sensations, sound or other specific foci.
- Dealing skilfully with mind-wandering.
- Learning gentleness, encouraging curiosity, learning acceptance.
- Noticing a mindful ‘feel of things’ (pleasant/unpleasant/neutral), and reactions to this.
- Noticing aversion, the ‘unwanted’.
- Continuing the development of flexibility of attention (from body scan): widening/narrowing the lens.
- Mindfulness of the natural flux of experience.
- Cultivating being fully with experience AND having an observer stance simultaneously.
- Learning to receive experience as it is, distinct from mental labels, stories about it, etc.
- Learning to see recurring patterns in the mind and how they develop, play out, etc.
- Seeing more deeply into the nature of human experience.
- Learning to take care of oneself: i.e. recognizing overwhelm or ‘zoning out’. Responding by changing position, opening eyes, bringing energy with a deeper and more deliberate breath, or stopping/changing the practice.

Elements to consider in guiding (Key feature 3):

Posture...

- Give practical information on helpful posture using a chair, stool, cushion to establish the intention of the practice and to facilitate the transition into this period of deliberate cultivation of ‘being mode.’

Anchor...

- Anchoring in the present moment using a specific aspect of experience. Give guidance on choosing a reliable, accessible, neutral anchor—e.g. feet, hands, touchpoints (hips and seat), breath, or sound. Offer participants many opportunities over the sessions to see the impact of various anchors.
- Use language that encourages direct connection with the anchor rather than thinking about it.



Body sensations...

- Transition from the anchor—expand the attention around the sensations of the anchor (or from the ears/sound) to an awareness of sensations in the body as a whole.
- Offer explicit guidance about how/where to place attention.
- Offer clear guidance on options for working with discomfort/pain/intensity that arise from either physical or emotional origins.

Sounds...

- Receiving sounds as they come and go; listening to sounds as sounds (e.g. noticing loudness, tone, length, etc.); recognising sounds as events in the mind; and noticing layers of meaning added to the direct experience of sounds.

Thoughts and emotions...

- Relating to thoughts similarly to how we relate to sounds—arising and passing away.
- Seeing recurring patterns and how these develop and play out within the mind.
- Using metaphors to help point towards what is being invited here.
- Acknowledging challenge (not setting up a specific idea of how we ‘should’ see thoughts).
- Using one’s anchor to return to when the mind becomes unsettled or attention feels lost.
- Expanding attention to include emotions, naming these, seeing arising as body sensations.

Mindfulness of the full range of experience (i.e. choiceless awareness)...

- Bringing an open attention to whatever is arising/predominant moment by moment in the breath, body, thoughts, sounds, emotions, etc.
- Noticing recurring patterns in the body and mind.
- Coming back to the chosen anchor as often as is needed.

Mindful movement

Mindful movement elements to consider in guiding (Key feature 2):

- Building on the foundation of the body scan to learn how we can bring awareness to and directly inhabit bodily experience/sensation.
- Experiencing awareness of the body in motion, as it often is in life.
- Relating to the body with friendliness.
- Learning that movements and postures offer an embodiment of life experiences and processes.
- Seeing habitual tendencies play out.
- Working with physical boundaries/intensity in a way that parallels working with emotional experience; experiencing how physical movement can change emotional experience.
- Learning and experiencing working with present moment acceptance, including physical limitations, and learning to relate in new ways to pain—no ‘perfect’ pose, nothing to strive for; rather is it possible to respond to this body and its needs today, with wonder and gentleness?
- Learning new ways of taking care of ourselves.

Elements to consider in guiding (Key feature 3):

Ensuring that participants engage in the practices in ways that are safe and respectful to their body is a major consideration in guiding movement practices, including...

- Giving clear and precise guidance on ways of working with physical boundaries at the beginning of the practice.
- Interspersing the practice with reminders about working within safe limits for their body in this moment.
- Offering guidance in particular on:
 - Potential adaptations for postures as they are taught;
 - Reminders to hold postures for the amount of time that is right for each participant regardless of how long the teacher or others hold a posture;
 - Reminders that it is OK not to do a posture and either to do something different, or to sit/lie and possibly to visualise the body doing the posture.
- Always encouraging participants to err on the side of caution.
- Always encouraging participants to listen to the wisdom of their own body and allow this to override any guidance you may be giving.
- Reminding participants not to be competitive with themselves or others.

Breath guidance...

Helpful guidance regarding the breath, including...

- Encouraging participants to breath fully and freely in whatever way feels most natural as they move.
- Guidance on relaxing into postures and breathing with or into regions of greatest intensity.

Ensuring that guidance is given in ways that invite detailed awareness of moment-by-moment experience, including...

- Encouraging participants to explore and discover the creative edge between exploring/ investigating/discovering, and accepting/letting be/being with.
- Giving plenty of space within and between postures to enable detailed noticing.
- Using precise language so that participants can focus inwardly.

The three step breathing space (3SBS) (core practice in MBCT; often included in other MBIs)

Three step breathing space—making key learning available through guidance (Key feature 2):

The learning is encapsulated within the three steps of the practice. Each step needs to be clearly conveyed. Prepare by stepping out of automatic pilot, then commence the three steps:

Step 1. Awareness—recognising and acknowledging all of one's current experience (thoughts, emotions, sensations).

Step 2. Gathering—bringing the attention to the sensations within an anchor point in a particular place in the body (e.g. breath, feet, hands etc).

Step 3. Expanding—the attention into the body as a whole: whilst staying in touch with the particular sensations of the anchor, open to the range of experience being perceived across the body.



The three step breathing space—elements to consider in guiding (Key feature 3):

Guidance on posture—communicate the effect of coming to an upright and dignified posture. If this is not possible (e.g. when using the additional 3SBS in difficult situations), then start with encouraging participants that simply *becoming aware* of their posture is helpful.

Be precise in communicating the 3 steps of the practice during guidance.

N.B.

The 3SBS and other practices need to be accompanied by a teaching process that supports participants to practise at home and integrate the process into their everyday lives. This aspect of the teaching is rated in **Domain 5** (Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching). Examples of how this needs to be attended to in relation to the 3SBS are cited below:

- **Preparing participants to integrate this into their day**—encourage participants to anchor the practice to a specific activity in their day. It is useful to guide the practice and then afterwards to explain about the three parts, perhaps using the flip chart.
- **Encouraging participants to use the 3SBS as a natural first step** (e.g., whenever things feel difficult or there is confusion; using the 3SBS during class when strong emotions have been explored, or there is another need to re-ground in present moment experience, can be a good reminder of this).
- **Developing clarity regarding the application of the 3SBS throughout the MBCT course** (see Segal et al., 2013 for details).