

Resources to support a socially engaged Mindfulness-Based Program pedagogy

This resource accompanies and is linked to the article:

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Introduction to this resource

We are a group of practitioners from diverse racialised groups, cultures, and backgrounds, and have been exploring what Mindfulness-Based Programs (MBPs), and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) specifically might look and feel like when held in a more culturally inclusive, and racially sensitive way. A way that includes everyone, through creating a sense of belonging, and through integrating teachings and elements that speak to concerns that go beyond individual wellbeing. As a group, we comprise Black, Latinex, Asian, Native American (BIPOC) and White practitioners dedicated to widening access to mindfulness. For the last few years, some members have been offering an evolved form of MBSR to both BIPOC and White participants, as well as in our teacher trainings; and two of our group members from the Urban Mindfulness Foundation (UMF) have developed an award-winning program called Mindfulness-Based Inclusion Training (MBIT).¹ We consider these developments as part of a dynamic, evolving learning process and are at the beginning of exploring embedding social engagement and awareness into the MBP curriculum.

From its inception, Jon Kabat-Zinn intended MBSR to be a *public health* initiative that would both have an impact on the individual and be a catalyst for systemic societal change. As a social activist himself, this was always part of the impact he wanted to address. However, over the last 40 years, MBSR has been predominantly focused on the stress and health of the individual. The societal, racial, planetary concerns and BIPOC trainers, teachers and participants have largely been left out of the program and the conversations.

We gathered as a group to share our learnings from our intersectional experiences of teaching and training diverse communities on both sides of the Atlantic. Our conversations were rich, deep and at times challenging. We aimed to create a process within our group that embodied the themes we want to bring into the pedagogy of MBPs - namely awareness of power and structural imbalances that have been created over 100s of years of historical oppression on the grounds of race, class, and various other intersections. In this document, we aim to share some of what emerged in our learning and sharing together. The resource is supplemental to the linked paper, so we therefore recommend reading it alongside this.

In our explorations, we became aware of the risk of offering curriculum suggestions for MBP teachers that could be taken as superficial formulaic 'methods' for anti-oppression pedagogies, rather than conveying

that teaching in a more inclusive way must come from the lived, embodied experience of the teacher. The diversity of our group supported these understandings to emerge and highlighted the tangible benefits of bringing a greater breadth of wisdom to the table through diverse lived experience. It was also agreed to include some models utilised by practitioners in the UMF. It should be noted that the models offered are not intended as part of the explicit curriculum content within MBP teaching. Instead, they are offered as a resource to support MBP teachers and trainers in their personal practice, inquiry, and embodiment of socially aware mindfulness practice. This orientation aims to facilitate a cultural shift towards mindfulness, that is both rooted in the wellbeing of self and others, and in justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Through this inclusion of the social elements of mindfulness, it is hoped that the practice will be rooted in tangible ethical foundations that expand the benefits of mindfulness into communities and systems.

Our intentions in writing the paper and offering this resource

We aspire to catalyse engagement, interest, and action in the following areas:

- Widening the representation of Mindfulness-Based Program (MBP) trainers, teachers, researchers, and participants (including racial and cultural diversity, age class disability, gender, sexuality, and other forms of underrepresentation). This includes creating pathways to livelihood for new MBP teachers and trainers.
- Widening the vision for MBP teaching to include both the personal, *and* the community, social and environmental drivers of distress and flourishing.
- Introducing essential new cultural understandings, narratives, language, discourse, signs, and symbols that deepen relational awareness and provide language that facilitate the necessary cultural shift required to meet our current times with inclusivity.
- Re-examining the pedagogy of MBPs to explore how the themes above can be embodied and brought alive for all demographics of society - with a particular emphasis on awareness of oppression and power dynamics and the creation of spaces that nurture psychological safety and create a sense of belonging.

This is a living document and is expected to evolve and grow as collective understanding on these themes develop.

How to use this resource

We have used the concepts of the 'implicit' and 'explicit' aspects of MBP curricula to share elements that we feel are important in offering MBPs in more inclusive ways. We unpack these terms in the accompanying paper and say more about what we mean by them below. However, we have also come to recognize that the task of communicating what is implicit within any MBP curriculum is challenging. This is particularly true when considering the themes of race, culture, and other forms of oppression. The implicit curriculum includes the communication or sharing of one's own relational and contextual lived experience and understanding of mindfulness, through one's own embodied way of being in the learning space (as contrasted with themes that are explicitly discussed). Naturally, this transfer of embodied knowledge, by the nature of being embodied, also includes our histories, deep philosophies, moral, ethical, religious and or spiritualities or their absence. These inherent parts of a present moment human experience are communicated implicitly knowingly, or unknowingly, by both the MBP teacher and participants.

We use the terms implicit knowledge, implicit learning, and aspects of the implicit curriculum interchangeably. We primarily mean those parts of oneself that cannot be, or are at least difficult to express, extract, and transfer to others by means of writing it down or verbalizing it. This is because by nature, it is based on the embodiment of one's own life experience expressed within the present moment. Consequently, when discussing implicit learning, we are talking about learning, that is not explicitly transferred through instruction or curriculum content, but that which is learnt or shared through embodied practice.

This resource aims to offer deeper layers of awareness and understanding that can be brought into the MBP classroom to support the emergence of equity, equality, diversity within the teacher and participants' lived experiences. We therefore see this work as effectively contributing to the long-term work of 'decolonizing' the MBP curriculum, and we see the embodiment of the teacher, as a primary means for reducing potential for patterns of identity-based harm being perpetuated in mindfulness spaces.

Embodied practice and therefore the implicit curriculum is founded upon and transmitted through one's own personal practice and the process of continuously learning and knowing oneself in relationship to others, the world, and the moment that we find ourselves in. A process that is deepened through practice,

contemplation, and reflection with others. We are acutely aware of the risks related to solidifying the magic of a unique moment in ways that limit space for true embodying and lived experience to organically emerge and be held with authentic mindful attention. This offering therefore is more about encouraging deeper layers of awareness and understanding through stimulating insight into how justice, equity, diversity and inclusion can be brought into the mindfulness classroom either implicitly or explicitly. We invite engagement with this resource with these paradoxes, subtleties, and nuances in mind and invite you to explore utilizing it for deepening your own personal inquiry rather than gaining new ideas for MBP curriculum content. This is particularly true for the Social Mindfulness Maps offered by UMF that are intended to sit implicitly below the surface of any MBP program and facilitate insight, that is then communicated through the embodied practice of the teacher.

Themes for white MBP teachers to examine and explore

Our view is that the resources we offer and point to here are relevant to any teacher regardless of their background, ethnicity, or culture. The more awareness of how we each carry the effects of historical oppression in our systems, the greater the chances we all have of stepping out of the automatic pilot patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving caused by our social conditioning. However, we also take the view that white MBP teachers have a particular responsibility to engage in work and practice to support their waking up journey in relation to race and privilege. So, the following questions are a starting point in helping you find your own way of opening to the conversations around social justice in your MBP teaching:

- Are you prepared to investigate whiteness and “be with” the pain (stress) of oppression?
- Can you feel and hold the deep pain of racism and social injustice?
- Do you recognize micro and macro aggressions in the classroom?
- How does privilege meet oppression in the classroom?
- Can you trust that your BIPOC students and colleagues know more than you do about these themes, and humbly learn and listen?
- Have you participated in a class and engaged with study resources addressing “whiteness” and racialized trauma? Would you be willing to explore your experience, intentions, and actions with a group of fellow teachers?
- Is there one thing that you can do today to support your values around social justice?

What are the explicit and implicit curriculums?

The explicit curriculum is the actual *content* of what is taught session-by-session, such as the formal meditation practices, inquiry etc. The implicit curriculum is the qualities and values that are communicated through *process* rather than content, such as the embodiment of the teacher, and their relational way of being. In MBP teaching both are equally valued, and if the learning is to be meaningful, they need to be aligned and congruent with each other. There is always a lot more going on in learning spaces than the actual content of the curriculum (i.e., what is immediately seen, heard, and felt). The phrase ‘mindfulness is caught rather than taught’ captures the sense that it is both through *what* we are taught, and through *how* we are taught that learning happens. Sometimes, the implicit aspects of the teaching process are called the ‘hidden curriculum’: the parts of the learning process that are often given less priority than what is taught. However, as Maya Angelou said: ‘I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel’ – so the atmosphere of the teaching space is vital if learning is to take place. The implicit curriculum is created largely through the teacher’s non-verbal messages: their voice tone, prosody, affect, body language, and eye contact. It is the aspect of the pedagogy that communicates ethics, values, authenticity, congruence, and trustworthiness (or lack of these). It also includes implicit messages conveyed through structural issues such as choice of room layouts, and use of poems and metaphors. It is particularly through attending with awareness to the implicit curriculum that we communicate an attuned capacity to embrace diversity and teach inclusively. In the sections below, we first highlight important implicit curriculum elements - the teacher’s relational stance and group holding skills, their capacities to both embody mindfulness and authenticity, and to inclusively welcome participants and create a sense of belonging. We then present some reflective models from UMF to support self-inquiry, relationality, and social awareness, via their Social Mindfulness Maps. These seek to facilitate insight, understanding and dialogue into the roots of how our social and cultural conditioning creates certainties and habits of mind that can unnecessarily divide or polarise us when not understood (the implicit curriculum). We then finalise the resource by illustrating some examples of session-by-session practices, methods and exercises that support inclusion and belonging (the explicit curriculum elements).

The Implicit MBP Curriculum

We start by exploring the implicit curriculum as it is expressed through three domains of the MBP teaching process – the relational stance of the teacher, the embodiment of the teacher, and the holding

of the group learning space.² We then look at some broader themes related to the implicit curriculum that cross over all three domains using the UMF Social Mindfulness Maps to introduce how relationality, holding of the group learning space and embodying, when held with social awareness, have offered innovation to the UK BIPOC community.

Relational stance

Often when we explore the idea of relational skills, we might start by reflecting on how we are relating to others whilst holding the dominant position and power of the teacher. However, as MBP teachers, a key element of relationality might be to consider how we relate to ourselves in the context of others, our environment, the wider world, and the power dynamics that come with constructed identity labels that form personas and the label of 'mindfulness teacher'. In awareness and understanding of our own positionality and present moment standpoint as teachers, we might access the phenomenological awareness that supports reflexivity in our approach. Such potential is conveyed through the concept of 'Ubuntu' that brings forward an African perspective of how we relate to ourselves, each other, and the wider world.³ As Desmond Tutu expressed, Ubuntu means, 'I am because we are', or 'a person can only be a person through another person'. Such reflection requires us as teachers and practitioners to consider whether we see ourselves as totally interconnected beings, emerging out of one another in ways that mirror the fractal nature of reality, as some indigenous and global majority wisdom keepers might understand or communicate it. Or perhaps we see ourselves as totally autonomous beings living existentially separate individual lives? Or maybe we even see ourselves as constantly learning how to dance between these two paradigms to keep regulated and therefore more open to our relational reality? The latter is often described by Parker Palmer as the jazz ensemble called life.⁴ Consequently, when we talk about relationality in the context of the implicit curriculum, we are saying it includes the teacher being able to access the narrative, language, and discourse of the moment we are living in, in a way that enables participants to access a deeper awareness of self, within the relational world we live. We are also talking about how the teacher themselves relates to the material being delivered, to participants, and to different demographic groups; how the teacher communicates the material to the participants - what poems, references, readings, or stories they choose to share and how they choose to share them. One of the most joyous things about teaching in all BIPOC spaces is being able and comfortable to share poems in cultural dialects that resonate.

Embodying

As we engage in mindfulness practice and step onto the path of becoming an MBP teacher, we might learn to recognize that we ourselves become a key and integral component of the implicit curriculum through what our embodied way of being is communicating to others. A teacher's way of being is harming when it embodies and therefore reinforces existing power imbalances and inequities - even if this is due to a lack of awareness or is unintended. Consequently, it is imperative that teachers hold a reflexive awareness of underlying power dynamics and the systemic structures at play that may inform our own or another's actions and perspectives and inadvertently perpetuate inequity, inequality, and exclusion.⁵⁶ For example, there are many conditioned responses that are normalized within western hierarchical structures associated with the teacher-pupil relationship, that can result in assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and goals relating to achievement and attainment, power, influence, and control etc. If the MBP teacher has reflexive awareness of this, there can be a natural impulse or embodied tendency to counter such issues by purposefully creating an environment that reduces the sense of hierarchy and supports co-learning. We might invite participants to change seats to challenge habitual ideas of the teacher pupil relationship and dynamics. We might emphasise the importance of a co-learning environment that includes the teacher's own learning. In these ways we are building trust, communicating an understanding of social dynamics and the importance of connection, collaboration, and solidarity in a process of learning together. Such embodied invitations also implicitly encourage a deeper and fuller exploration of what it is to be human amongst other humans in a way that is grounded in humility, accepting of uncertainty, and invites a levelling up in our coming together. Implicitly, this also allows for the immediacy of the present moment to be embraced wholeheartedly, offering both participants and teacher a doorway into new possibilities, that nurture a critically engaged, compassionately active and courageous stance, and that challenges autopilot in the context of justice, equity, equality, diversity, and inclusion. By widening the lens of where we look to see autopilot working to include actions and behaviours that impact social justice, diversity, equity, equality, and inclusion, we support the maturing of the practice through the teacher's embodied awareness of the social and structural issues that perpetuate harm. Therefore, when we are talking about embodying mindfulness in the context of this resource, we are not simply talking about embodying the practice devoid of our social, cultural, and relational context. Instead, we are talking about an embodied social justice that is rooted in mindful awareness not only of self and others, but also of systems, structures and dynamics that cause undue harm to some, whilst uplifting others to the detriment of all beings and our planet.

We recommend that MBP teachers attend additional (ideally) BIPOC led Continuing Professional Development trainings that cover important areas of equity, equality, diversity, and inclusion. The value of such trainings being BIPOC led cannot be emphasised enough. This radically shifts the dynamics to create a collaborative learning experience that is visibly embodied as socially and culturally informed and rooted in justice, equity, equality, diversity, and inclusion. We often invite participants to count how many of their bosses, senior managers or teachers were from the BIPOC community at school, in the workplace or in the field of mindfulness. Invariably, the response to this question is little to none. In awareness of the many other variables that might influence this, we also question whether there are familiar patterns playing out within the mindfulness field that are replicated in wider society, and whether we ourselves are able to collectively address this. We have a unique opportunity in the mindfulness field due to its size, to ensure all MBP teachers access BIPOC teachers. Whilst this may seem trivial to some, we are convinced that the field is missing an amazing opportunity to do, be, and embody something different that would be exemplary. This will be particularly so, if as a field, we are all able to embody a genuine collective wish for justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion for all in a way that leads to widening representation of MBP trainers, teachers, researchers, and participants, including creating pathways to livelihoods for new MBP teachers and trainers from diverse demographics.

Holding the group learning environment

To create inclusive learning containers, there is a need to intentionally set up the group process and learning space in ways that invite and make room for inclusion, co-learning and belonging. To illustrate some key implicit components of this, we include a model (Figure 1) below from The UMF's Mindfulness Based Inclusion Training (MBIT) program, that offer some considerations for how the group process and mindfulness program might be introduced to facilitate a sense of inclusion.¹

To set up the learning container for inclusive co-learning, it is important to recognise that the coming together of individuals into a group forms a 'community of practice'. As part of this process, it is important that the intentions and motivations for coming together with a shared theme and intention are made clear. This is described in the model as the 'common theme'. In a beginner's mindfulness class, the common theme might generally be to learn about or practice mindfulness. However, once practitioners become familiar and the practice starts to become embodied and brought into daily life, other common themes can emerge, such as lived experience of discrimination or prejudice. Coming together around a

common theme is the driving force for affinity groups (see Noriko Morita Harth's personal description of engagement in an affinity group on p. 37).

The importance of trust is highlighted in the second element of the mindful community of practice model shared in Figure 1 below. Building trust amongst marginalised groups relies on communicating why and how mindfulness benefits the unique issues and challenges they face. Otherwise, it is likely that such groups will find it challenging to wholeheartedly engage, as it may become clear to participants that the implications of their contextual experience is unclear to the teacher. Therefore, it is really important to ensure that those with lived experience are leading the way in this work whilst being supported by the field and its allies. Elements of trust are typically addressed by confidentiality agreements and ground rules normally set out at the beginning of standardised courses. However, when groups contain marginalised participants, it is unlikely that such participants will feel safe or trusting enough to truly share their lived experiences due to the nature of group dynamics. In contrast, such reservations are likely to be less apparent in the dominant demographic group in the room or space. This can result in the inadvertent perpetuation of hierarchal structures that fall into habits of superiority and subordination unless carefully managed by an aware MBP teacher. Therefore, when working with marginalised groups, the importance of trust can be extended and directed towards a commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, (described by the UMF as 'JEDI WORK'). Rather than setting the first ground rule to automatically be confidentiality as done in many mindfulness classrooms, purposefully setting the first ground rule to being a commitment to JEDI work throughout the process can helpfully shift dynamics. For many marginalised, disadvantaged, or underserved communities, a clear and early commitment to justice, equity, equality, diversity, and inclusion above all else, could be the only grounds upon which they would feel safe and appropriately supported or happy to engage, particularly if they find themselves as the 'only one' in the room, as often is the case in the context of race for example.

What makes a mindful community of practice different to a standard community of practice, is that the MBP teacher or facilitator will hopefully have a commitment to developing an embodied social mindfulness practice, and be either working towards, or have completed trauma aware and EDI aware mindfulness trainings that include understandings on reflexivity, dynamics, systems theory, anti-oppression pedagogy, projection, transference, and counter transference etc. When working with groups who may have historically difficult relationships with authority, due to past adverse experiences of discrimination within the education, health care or justice system for example, compassionate effort is

required to build an inclusive container, that prevents the perpetuation of conditioned power dynamics, that can trigger trauma responses. It is also worth highlighting that it is possible that shifts in power will trigger trauma responses amongst those who normally hold on to power unchallenged. There are no easy answers or quick fixes to this important but sensitive work.

If we are to achieve a genuine sense of inclusion within the mindfulness classroom, the teacher is required to simultaneously hold the space for safety, be a learner themselves, whilst conveying the key learning points and practices, and allowing space for the wisdom and experience of others to emerge, be shared, contemplated, reflected upon, and included. All of which can only really be achieved, if the commitment to a socially informed mindfulness practice, is deeply embodied by the teacher. **As illustrated in the model below, learning will only flow when there is enough trust in the teacher embodying social justice and mindfulness practice demonstrated by the way they hold space and communicate a genuine wish to include everyone in the room with the warmth of justice, equity, equality, diversity, and inclusion.**

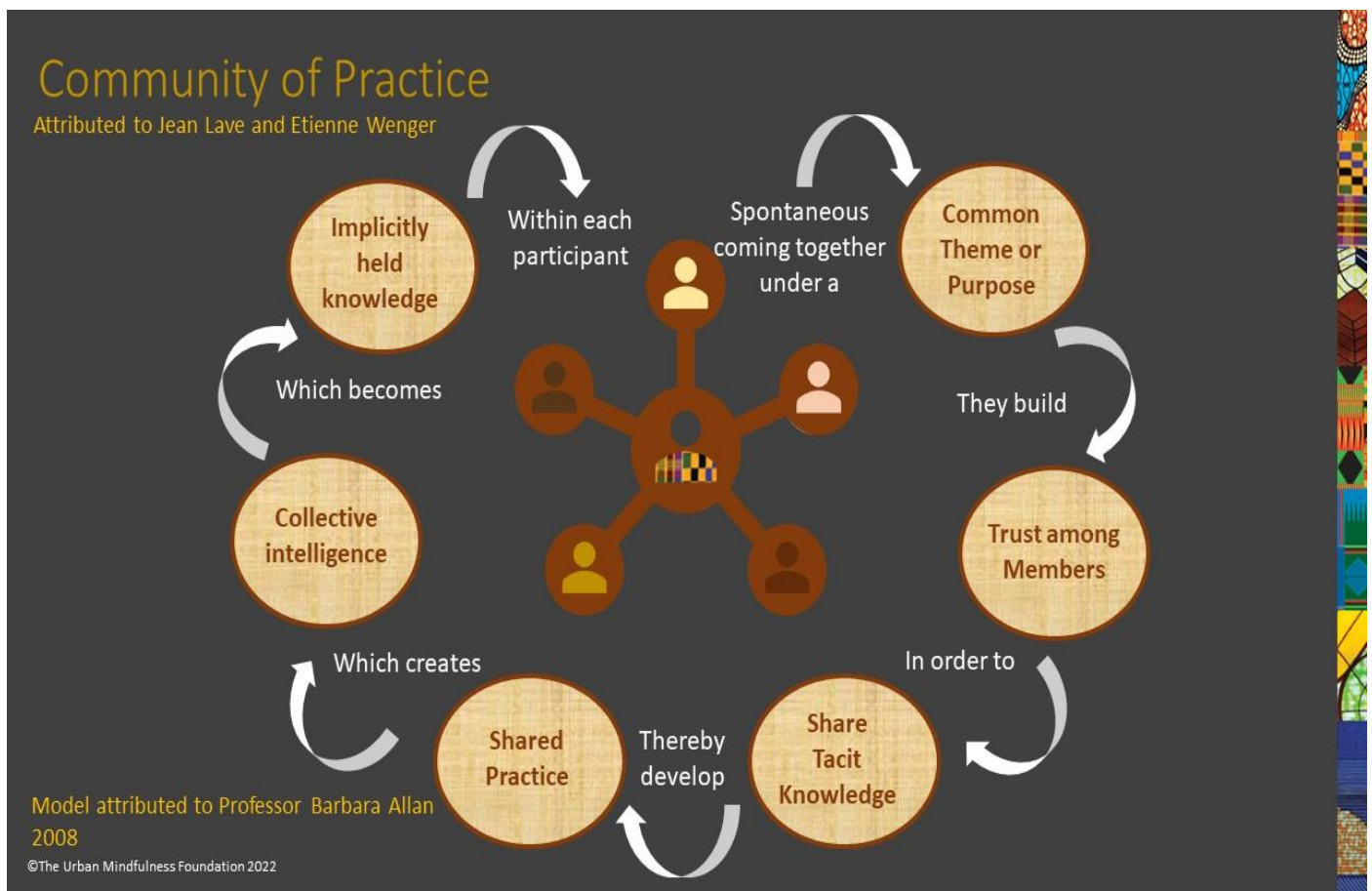


Figure 1: Forming a group/ a mindful community of practice

Exploring the implicit MBP curriculum, across the three domains using the social mindfulness maps of the Urban Mindfulness Foundation (UMF)

The Social Mindfulness Maps offered in Figures 2, 3 and 4 below provide models that that may support MBP teachers' understanding and subsequent integration of anti-oppressive pedagogy within the mindfulness classroom. They are quite complex and are not intended to be explicitly used as MBP curriculum content. Rather, they aim to provide material and a framework for reflective practice on the underpinnings of socially aware mindfulness practice. We recommend studying the maps and associated material both on one's own and in peer and supervisory contexts. Importantly, a key point of all the maps is to remember that there is a lot more going on in the MBP classroom than delivery of the explicit curriculum content. Things are always changing including our biases and blind spots that can cause harm if totally unrecognised, unchallenged, denied, or unexamined. It is important to note that whilst these offerings seek to widen and develop perspectives, they are not meant to be taken as something solid. Rather, they are offered to invite new language from the social sciences and deeper contemplation, reflection, and dialogue, that can subsequently emerge implicitly within the MBP teaching space to facilitate a process of awakening together.

The models can support MBP teacher reflection in a range of areas including:

- communicating why self-compassion within this work is so important. By offering reflections informed by the models, we might recognise with self-care and humility just how much of our lived experience is socially and culturally conditioned.
- developing the skill of de-centering, socially. Much is said in mindfulness practice about the importance of de-centering from aspects of personal inner process, but less is said about social de-centering. This involves taking a wider perspective on human experience in its social and environmental context. By nurturing the skills of social de-centering, the models invite dialogue into diverse cultural and socially aware perspectives on reality and lived experience that build trust, understanding and the relationships needed to allow for teachers to create more innovative and inclusive spaces. With the awareness of how we come to know, we can purposefully exercise our own agency and autonomy by choosing to reframe, re-imagine and reshape the way we perceive the world, including ourselves within it.
- reflecting on, uncovering, recognizing, and questioning biases that might limit our ability to connect with self and others at greater depth.

- encouraging linkage to one’s own historical roots and cultural heritages. The benefit of this work is immense, particularly for those who have been cut off from their roots, history, or cultural heritages through global atrocities. It is also vital for those in dominant groups to reflect on the historical and cultural influences that have bequeathed them their current privileged position in society.
- helping to explain the power of social and cultural differences and conditioning that can lead to discrimination, marginalisation and oppression and misunderstandings in its many forms. By inviting awareness of a more wholesome and inclusive interconnected self, represented at the centre of each of the models, we hope there is the potential for a deep sense of bigger than self-concerns and interconnection to emerge. The maps seek to invite access to a wholesome lived experience that is aware of continuous reciprocity and relationship to everyone and everything else, with the ability to meet life with the tenderness of compassion for self, others, the planet and cosmos, or the micro, macro and meso aspects of lived experience.

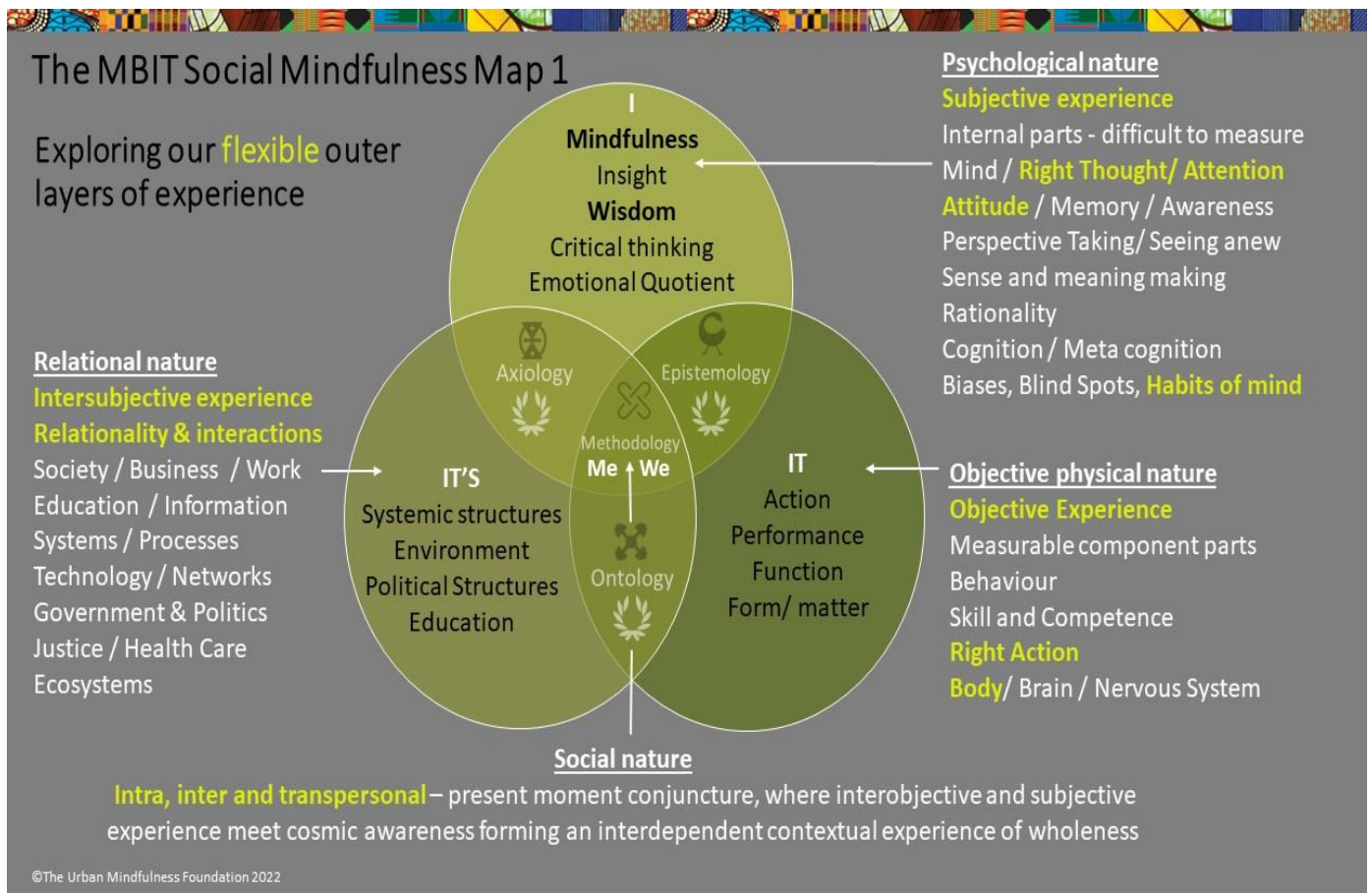


Figure 2: Social mindfulness map 1: exploring the flexible layers of lived experience. Inspired by Ken Wilber, Mooji, Cornel West, Thich Nhat Hanh, bell hooks, Mark Leonard, and Valerie Kaur.

Figure 2 introduces some of the flexible and ever-changing layers of human experience, by inviting exploration on the nuanced relationships between the micro (personal and intrapersonal), macro (community) and meso (systemic) aspects of lived experience. The (top) light green circle covers the **'micro'**, internal cognitive components or psychological elements of mindfulness described as the **'I'** circle. The (right) dark green **'IT'** circle, covers the biological and physical components that manifest as physical aspects and or behaviours that are relatively easy to objectively experience and measure. The (left) mid green circle is the **'ITS'** circle and covers **the 'meso' and 'macro' social, relational and systemic components** of lived experience, such as the socio cultural, economic and ecosystem in which the mind and body has been shaped. At the centre of the model is the coming together of these three flexible interconnected elements that are experienced concurrently to create our biopsychosocial existence.

This interconnected sense of awareness allows for the dance between 'micro, meso and macro' experience, and between **'YOU', 'ME', 'WE', 'I', 'it' and 'it's,'** perspectives captured by the African philosophy and understanding of Ubuntu. The model encourages us to know and clearly observe the various elements that make up lived experience. This could simply include the self - am **'I' up to the task**, the material – is **'It' appropriate**, the context and venue – does **'its' capacity allow and fit**, and the culmination of it all, the **'We'** can make it happen. In addition, the overlapping parts around the centre of the model, introduce some key social science terminology that support a mature debate about not only our purpose, meaning and agency as mindfulness teachers or individuals, but also the purpose, meaning and agency of mindfulness in wider society. These terms are unpacked in social mindfulness map 2 below (Figure 3).

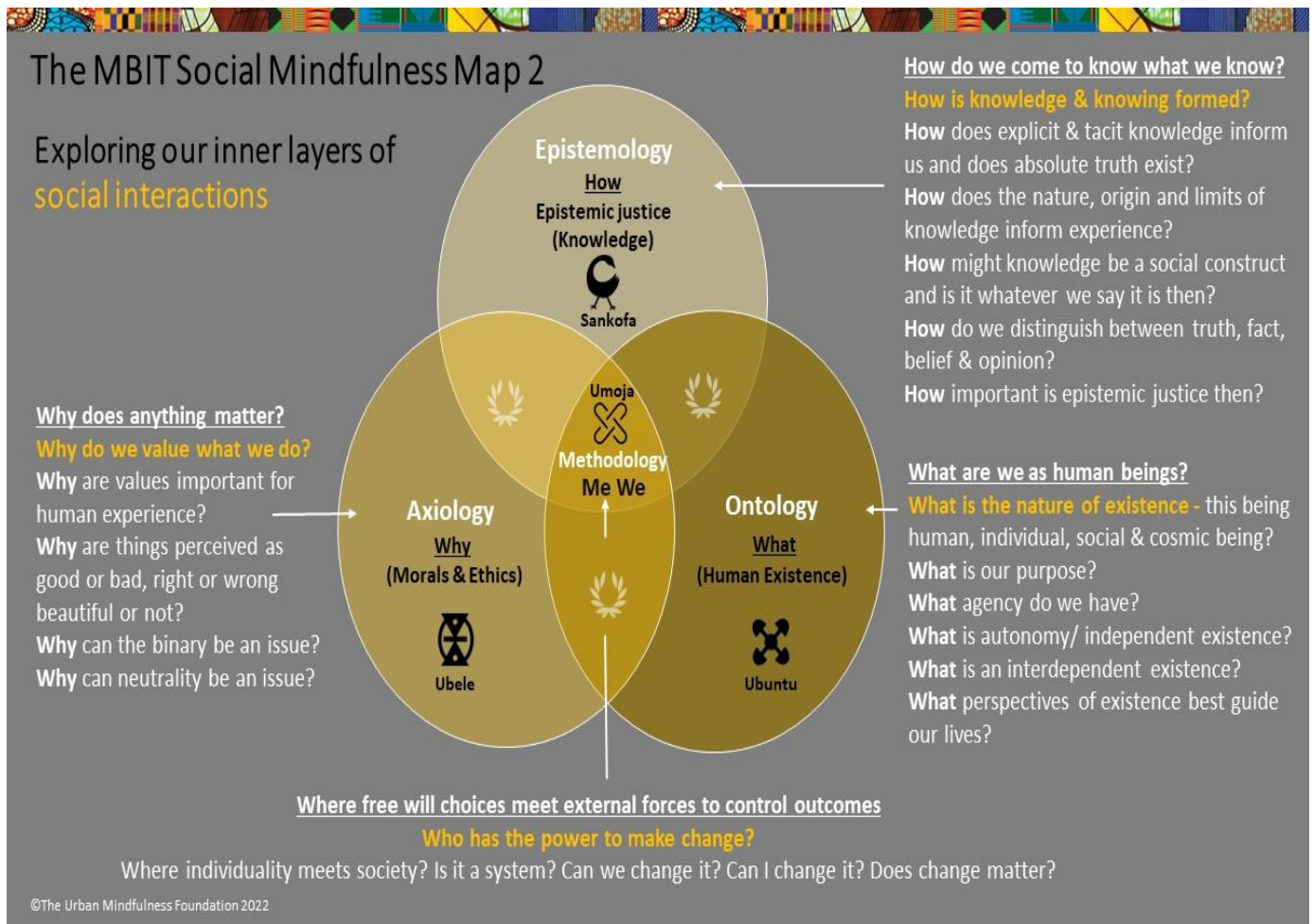


Figure 3: Social mindfulness map 2. Exploring the inner layers of social interaction. Inspired by the works of Joy Degruy, Nelson Mandela, Mungi Ngomane, Graeme Nixon, Desmond Tutu, Maya Angelou, Kehinde Andrews, and Stuart Hall.

Figure 3 opens out the overlapping parts around the centre of the previous Figure 2, to introduce hidden layers of experience that become clearer as contemplation, reflection and courageous dialogue deepen through a socially informed mindfulness practice. The map invites a deeper exploration of the ‘**what** questions’ of experience through the window of ontology¹ that questions the existence of things like ‘what is mindfulness?’ The ‘**how** we come to know questions’ that are explored through the window of epistemology² that questions how we come to know what mindfulness is? or indeed isn’t. It might be argued that it is our logic and reason that brings us to the answer of how we come to know what we know.

¹ Ontology: the philosophical study of being, existence, becoming and reality

² Epistemology: the theory of knowledge, and the distinction between belief and opinion

Others might suggest that who feels it knows it, and unless we feel it we will never know it. Are there other ways of knowing that are habitually overlooked in the West? What about embodied knowing? Is embodiment a form of 'epistemic justice' that not only invites indigenous and global majority wisdom and philosophical understandings to the fore, but also allows for a non-conceptual knowing that is free from formulaic structure. The topics being explored such as discrimination, marginalisation, and racism etc, are rooted in value judgements placed on a person's identity that can and do cause harm. By becoming more aware of our value judgements, and what we value (axiology³), we can use our practice and surrounding understanding to introduce new language and cultural meanings to offer a more inclusive and embodied message.

The purpose of Figure 3 is thus to communicate the importance of reflecting deeply on how we come to know, how we each go about meaning making, both individually and collectively, how in turn, this shapes our world views, and how we then feed those world views back into the world. With this embodied awareness of how knowledge is formed, practitioners are supported in socially de-centering, cultural humility and detangling from the certainties perpetuated by an individualized western approach to life that can result in harmful conditioned automatic categorizations. Categorisations are often reaffirmed by a consumer driven media-controlled marketplace, that forms the culture and associated normative cognitive schemas. Schemas that we imbibe habitually shape conceptual ways of thinking and being that are not necessarily solid, nor congruent with other cultural perspectives or even one's own self-image, but nonetheless can go completely unquestioned or challenged. This deeper awareness can also help us to recognize how perspectives are created within the context of power structures and dominant pedagogies, and how these inform our decisions, what we do and how we do it, and the way we see ourselves, others, and the world we live in. The whole process therefore invites practitioners to recognize, see, and build the skills to unhook from conditioned habits of mind that not only divide us, but also limit our potential to embrace our differences in ways that allow for a symbiotic resonance to emerge and flow from each of us as prosocial purpose within an interconnected society. Just as we learn to unhook from habitual thinking by coming back to the body in mindfulness training, we too can train to unhook from unhelpful socially conditioned perspectives. Through this we connect with difference more appropriately by collectively unpacking the following:

- 1) How our conditioning is formed and often grounded in inappropriate division and disconnection

³ Axiology: the philosophical study of value. What kinds of things have value?

- 2) How our social conditioning is vulnerable to media and market driven manipulation that amplifies irrational fears of others that control behaviours
- 3) How our social conditioning is often rooted in limited cultural perspectives, hyper individualism, and hierarchical power structures that lead to disproportionality

Figure 3 also invites a deeper layer of awareness built on western philosophical contemplations that the UMF have aligned to African understandings of Umoja, Ubuntu, Sankofa, and Ubele, alongside adinkra symbols that widen our understanding, and broaden perspectives on knowledge credibility and knowledge formation. This can be particularly useful when delivering and relating the material to communities of African descent, the African diaspora or African-Caribbean descent. The reason this is highlighted here is because it is an innovative demonstration of how mindfulness is and can be culturally framed for relatability.

Next, Figure 4 explores common driving forces that create many of our biases and blind spots. These forces are totally interconnected with the previous two maps already shown. It introduces often strongly held aspects or layers of experience that can go unquestioned in our contemplative practice and daily life. Using this map, practitioners are invited into a deeper exploration of what are sometimes known as the hidden reefs of meditation and daily life.⁸ These include our deeply held assumptions, expectations, and beliefs, that form the goals, perspectives and projections which are then used to navigate and experience the world, including the world of mindfulness practice. These deeper more strongly held certainties also influence automatic ways of being that are often less flexible, less fluid and harder to influence, because they often get totally integrated into an unseen, and uncontested autopilot of navigating the world controlled by likes and dislikes. Figure 4 therefore seeks to shed light on how these strong forces can create blind spots, as we get habitually bombarded with conditioned certainties about what we 'should' and 'shouldn't' like, without the critical engagement required to see our own role in the experience with new and compassionate eyes that allow for new insights, choices and actions to unfold that disrupt unwanted conditioned biases. Whilst we might consider that we carry most of our biases individually, many perceived "personal perspectives", are often a manifestation of social elements of experience. What we often perceive as a 'personal perspective' in a hyper individualised society, is often shaped by wider social and cultural determinants that are not personal at all, but for which we can nonetheless take responsibility, as active prosocial members of society and MBP teachers.

Another important rationale for Figure 4 is to offer the MBP teacher the opportunity to take some time to really reflect on their intentions and motivations in ways that help to unpack the driving forces in awareness of our own positionality, standpoint, ontological, epistemological, and axiological stance. With the ability to unpack one's own stance to life in this way and communicate it compassionately and sensitively and mindfully, there is a possibility for new understanding and insight to emerge that leads to embodied transformation and change.

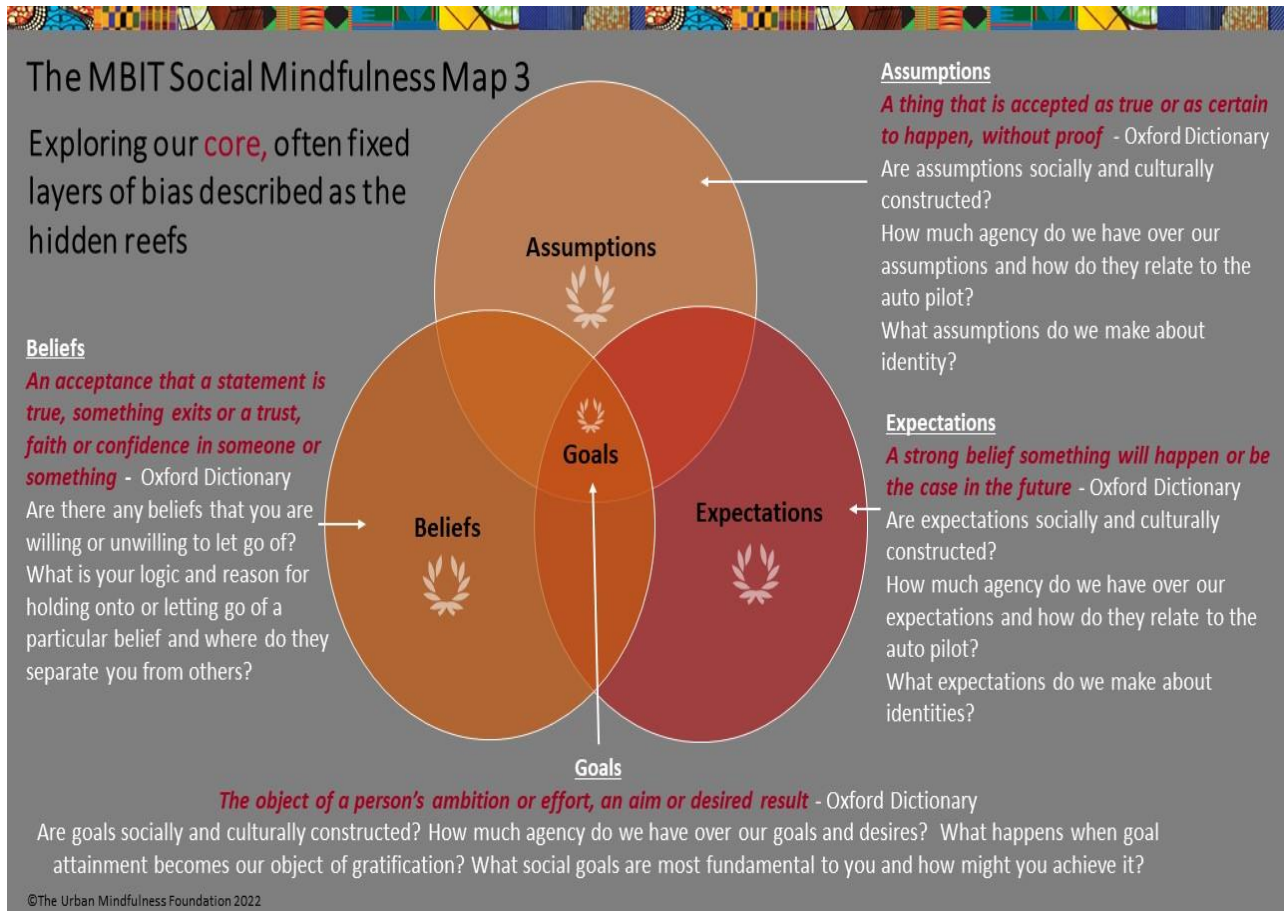


Figure 4: Social Mindfulness Map 3. Exploring our core and often fixed layers of bias described as the 'hidden reefs'. Inspired by Rob Nairn and Annick Nevejan.

When the implicit becomes explicit

Whilst the themes explored in the social mindfulness maps might normally sit implicitly below the surface of any MBP program through the embodied practice of the teacher, there may be moments when they emerge as explicit content themes. Elements of these themes can be woven into the teachings to support participants to clearly see that practice is held within an inclusive moral, ethical and values-based framework.

Figure 5 below is an example of how the UMF have condensed the information from the social mindfulness maps for Black, Asian and people of colour communities, that make aspects of the maps become an explicit educational element of the training. Remember, the idea is not to offer any certainties, but to invite participants from different cultures to find their own cultural expressions and connections to mindfulness practice by demonstrating how this can be done.

This process invites participants to share different cultural concepts that have meaning to them such as Namaste; the Buddha's call for unending compassion; Guru Nanak's call 'to see no stranger'; Abraham's call to 'open our tent to all'; Jesus who called us to 'love our neighbours'; Muhammad who called us to 'take in the orphan'; Mirabai who encouraged us to 'love without limit'; the Sanskrit truth 'tat tvan asi' which translates to 'I am that'; or the Mayan precept of 'In la Kech' which translates 'you are my other me'¹⁵ or Ubuntu, 'I am because we are,' that Valerie Kaur suggests offer different variants of the same attitudinal truths that may be cultivated through socially engaged mindfulness, contemplation and compassion trainings for social health and wellbeing that reconnect us to a life centred and therefore most wholesome practice.

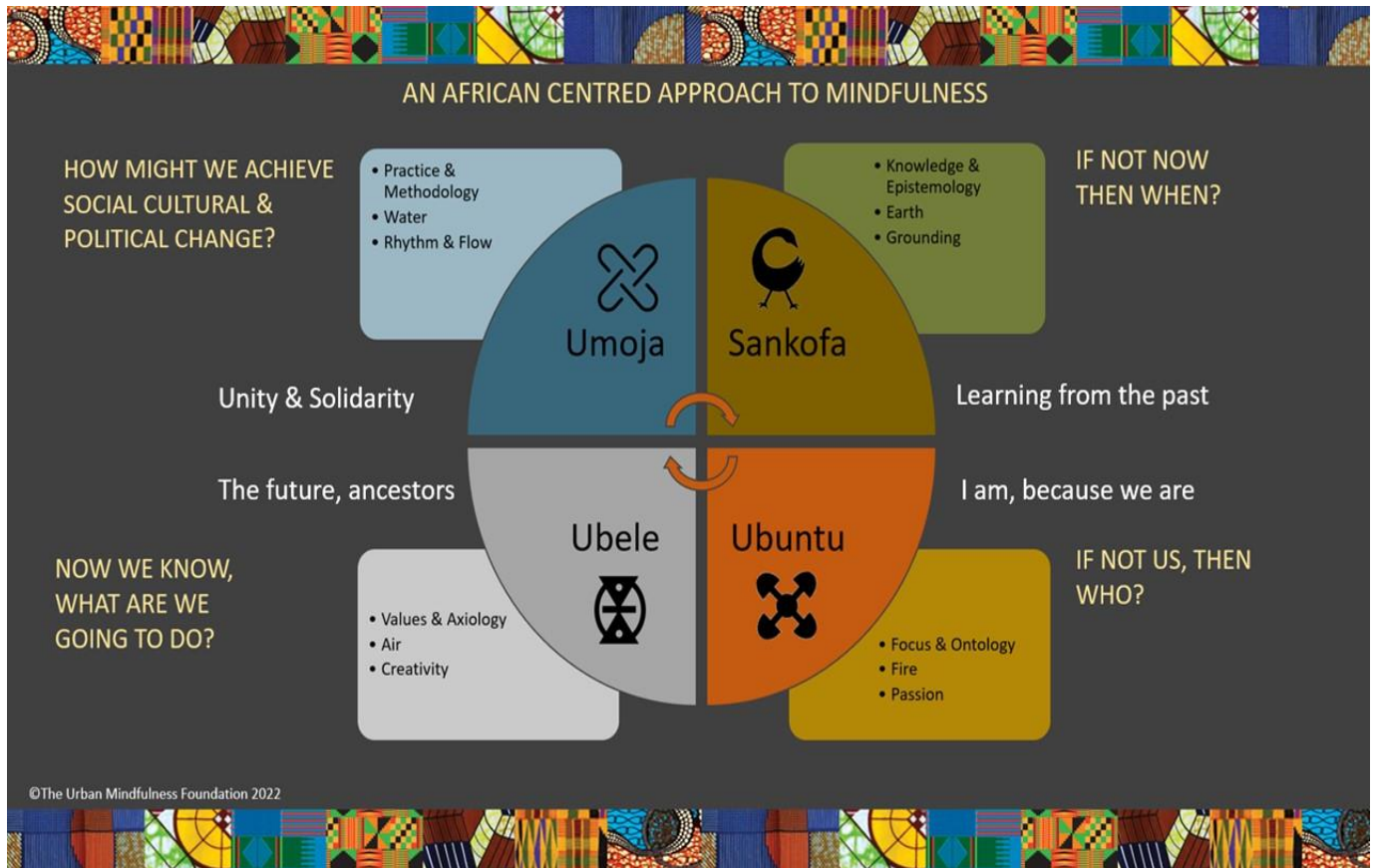


Figure 5: When the implicit becomes explicit

In the model above, created for BIPOC communities, we have centred the philosophies of **Umoja**, described as the ‘spirit of togetherness,’- something that can be aligned to ‘Sangha’ or congregations, community, and unity; **Sankofa**, meaning ‘it’s not taboo to go back and fetch that which is needed in the present and future’. This can be aligned to epistemology, how we come to know, knowledge building or what is called “the history of the present”, or “present moment conjuncture” by Stuart Hall, and also described by the late Thich Nhat Hanh, when he asked “can you see the clouds in my tea?”; both of which invite us to see the bigger picture and the wonder and awe of life including its history in any present moment.

Further still, when we think of the importance of research, it might be possible to see the importance of Sankofa that could equally be described as the African call for research and critical thinking. Wouldn’t it be amazing to recognise that every time we call for research and the evidence base in mindfulness, we might actually be calling for us to ‘Sankofa’, meaning going back to fetch the evidence base needed in the

present, for what's to be implemented and what's to come in the future. If we think about the value we put on research in the mindfulness world, we might see how important Sankofa could be. **Ubuntu**, that asserts 'I am because we are' can be aligned to the ontological question of what we are as humans, and the idea of interconnection, non-duality or perfect symbiosis, synchronism or the fractal nature of reality that realises a human can only be a human through other humans; and finally, **Ubele**, meaning 'the future' that can be aligned with the idea of becoming good ancestors by working in the present through an exploration of moral and ethical agency rooted in compassion, kindness and care for self and others as we move collectively forward in solidarity and the service of bigger than self-concerns.

The Explicit MBP Curriculum

See Table 3 in the linked paper for a summary of MBSR's core themes and curriculum elements. The Essential Resources for Mindfulness Teachers book offers more detailed general guidance on MBSR curriculum elements and sessions.⁹ The suggestions below are intended to be integrated around these and illustrate some ways to 'tune' the teaching towards diverse groups.

Good MBP teaching always involves tailoring and responding to this moment, this group, this context, and this aim or intention. See Loucks et al,¹⁰ Sanghvi et al.¹¹ and Crane, Karunavira and Griffith⁹ for guidance considerations to hold in mind when adapting MBP curriculums. Critically, adaptation needs to be grounded in an understanding of the intention of each session, each curriculum element, and deep sensitivity and attunement to the group and the context, so that when we are adapting, we know what and where to place emphasis. The Steven Covey quote is helpful here: 'The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing!'¹² The tension we need to be aware of when making adaptations to any MBP is that we can lose sight of the 'main thing', which broadly, is enabling participants to access new perspectives and the subsequent potential for psychological and emotional freedom from habitual patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving in the world. There is a risk that the introduction of curriculum elements that may be helpful to build group cohesion, connection and belonging, diverts the teacher and the participants from the core intentionality of the learning process.

Two more overarching points to bear in mind on the explicit curriculum:

- Be aware throughout of the sourcing and authorship of poetry, quotes and references used and the implicit messaging of what and who is most valued that is inherent in these choices.
- It is important to stay cognizant of the times that we are trying to 'make something happen' in the session, and balance this with allowing and trusting the curriculum to simply unfold as we stay alert to and present with the natural teaching opportunities that arise organically within the class, participants, teacher, and curriculum.

Orientation

See chapter 16 of Essential Resources for Mindfulness Teachers⁹ for an outline of themes related to participant orientation and assessment prior to embarking on an MBP course. Here we highlight some areas for consideration that could develop greater levels of belonging and inclusion. The sense of safety and trust within the group setting is paramount and is earned not a given.

- Playing soft music in the background as participants arrive can be supportive

- In the opening welcome:
 - Have an intention to meet participants where they are
 - Acknowledge and welcome the range of visible and invisible diversities and differences in the space (see example diversity welcome in Appendix 3)
 - Emphasize self-care: invite participants to take care of their own process by doing only what feels comfortable and slowly opening to challenging their comfort zone as the training/weeks proceed. Include normalizing conversation that supports recognition that most in the room, including the teachers, were not raised to prioritize self-care. Recognizing that learning to take care of oneself is a pivotal step in shifting one's relationship with stress. Name that the struggles of life are likely to emerge during the program and invite a spirit of coming together to hold difficulties in the context of the solidarity of this community of practice. Difficulties are an opportunity for personal and collective learning.
 - Offer a reflection on 'how would you like to be treated so you feel safe, comfortable and have a sense of belonging?' and 'how would you like to treat others, so they feel safe, comfortable and have a sense of belonging?'
 - Acknowledge who's in the room, who's not in the room
- Give time and space for participants to warm up.
- When introducing oneself as teacher, include something about one's own positionality, standpoint, and intersectionality. This can help to remove perceptions of expertise, invites humility about one's own limited perspective, and welcomes the value of others' positionality. It also helps to set up a space of co-learning, co-creation of knowledge and insight that can facilitate marginalized communities to step into an exploration grounded in their own authenticity.
- In a light touch way, it can be helpful to highlight how mindfulness is shaped by its purpose and that there are many purposes to which it can be applied including raising awareness of identity-based harm, and the cultivation of care for both self and others. As appropriate to the context, participants can be invited to practice in a way that makes space for themes such as addressing race or identity-based stress.
- Interweave periods of dialogue with guided movement, dancing, shaking etc.

MBSR Class 1

Guided reflection and opening go around:

- What brought you here?
 - o BIPOC participants may not have vocabulary or emotional will to share. Give a few examples during the reflection. At this early stage the invitation to share needs to be creative and non-threatening. Ways into this can include imagery ('your internal weather') and keeping it small and light ('share two words that express something of what is present for you now').
 - o Be aware of the assumption that group sharing with strangers is normative. For BIPOC communities this is not necessarily a cultural norm. Sharing internal emotions or actions outside of the family can and is often counter cultural.
 - o Guided movement can disrupt awkwardness and charge in the room and can introduce collective vulnerability without threat.
 - o Potentially lightly point to collective stress (e.g., trauma, oppression, race, pandemic, culture, etc.). Right from the outset we are thus building understanding that we all experience painful emotions as internal to our personal experience as individuals, and collectively through our shared experience of social discrimination, oppression, systemic racism, and racialized trauma.
 - o It can be helpful to invite participants to connect with their own intentions and motivation for practice. Helping participants to link to both personal and wider social intentions and motivations to practice early can help them connect the individual benefits of mindfulness with wider social concerns or social determinants of health.
- Early awareness of paradoxes between intentions, motivations, expectations, assumptions, and goals can invite participant curiosity in relation to experience.

Raisin practice

- Reflection can include the theme of interconnection through wondering how it came to be in our hands: the family who were grape pickers, what their lives were like, recognition of labour practices, and inequity of access to food. Be aware that some may have challenging and complex relationships with food. Therefore, handling food or eating may

be an issue. Alternatives should therefore be considered depending on the context. This could include contemplating a glass of water, or an object and deconstructing it in the same way as the raisin using the senses. Again we are reminded that any option can trigger challenges for participants so deliver with trauma awareness. Inviting participants to bring their own item to eat can also alleviate concerns for some participants.

Body Scan

- It is important to create bridges into the meditative practices to support a gradual building of internal resources towards fuller engagement with them as they appear in the standard MBSR curriculum. This creates a sense of being in control and awareness of safety.
- Invitational language and offering lots of choices is important. For example:
 - Offer that the body scan can be done lying down or sitting, eyes open or eyes closed. Lying down with people whom they don't know can be triggering
 - One can also do the body scan practice whilst walking!
 - It can be helpful to start the body scan by inviting participants to find / locate an area in the body that represents safety, groundedness, stability, resilience etc. that they can come back to if/when difficulties arise, before going into scanning the whole body more deeply
 - Another adaptation of the body scan is to teach in the first classes a shorter body scan seated practice, interspersed with gentle movement, i.e., lifting the right leg pointing and flexing the right foot, making circles with the right foot in one direction and the opposite direction, eyes open, with the opportunity for participants to begin finding words for sensations thus creating a vocabulary of sensations. Lifting the right arm..., rotating the shoulders in one direction and then the other... By the time that the day of practice is offered, participants are generally able to practice lying on their backs between 30-45 minutes without difficulty as there is a sense of safety in the group and with the teacher.
 - It can also be useful to introduce the process as 'befriending the body' and its component parts, exploring wonder and awe opposed to scanning it. Scanning can incite judgements and trauma. Inviting awareness of the body as a unique expression of nature that is a unique gift to the world can also encourage participants to come to be more comfortable with exploring the body.

- Explore inviting participants to focus on investigating and cultivating the attitudinal aspect of mindfulness by checking in on the attitudes they are habitually bringing to their body, with the aim of gradually cultivating the capacity to meet oneself with a sense of kindness and healing energy
- Depending on the context, when leading the body scan to marginalised racial groups, it might be useful to acknowledge there are sometimes complex relationships people have when living in a racialised body and society. It is also important that teachers therefore know how mindfulness specifically might help or hinder such complexities. When the context is right and the teacher has a clear understanding of how mindfulness helps with living in a racialised body and society specifically. Only then can the teacher consider the practice to be delivered sensitively to marginalised racialised groups. If the teacher is from the marginalised community, and there is an affinity group for example, the body scan can also be used to help participants start to positively frame the racialised body and the things that have been negatively framed in western culture and society. For example, if hair and or skin are brought into the process in such context, it is possible for the experienced practitioner to positively frame them by including awareness of the mind wondering off into stories. Instead of offering things such as the mind wondering off thinking about food, walking the dog later or shopping etc as seen done in many mainstream mindfulness classrooms. The practitioner can use other places the mind can wonder that are specific to that group. It could be a native food dish, cultural delicacy or thoughts about the gifts, skills and creativity that come with having Afro hair, and the brilliant design and care that go into it, before bringing them back to direct sensations to offer a very skilful way of bringing the practice to context in a culturally informed and positive way.
- Similarly, references to skin can also be positively framed by checking participants attention and acknowledging the mind might go off into stories about the wonderful gift of a melanated body that is built for the earth and naturally protected from the sun before bringing them back to direct experience.
- By contextualising the body scan in this way, the teacher is able to skilfully offer something for the moment, time and context that can help to bring humour and joy into the practice for particular groups whilst also widening participants perspectives to positively frame the lived experience of a racialised bodies in a society where whiteness

tends to be idolised. This doesn't mean we avoid the harsh realities of racism, but it does mean the practice is culturally appropriate and seeks to balance out conditioned negative biases marginalised groups are so often exposed to.

- Nonetheless, it is important to always be aware that bringing awareness to skin, hair, size, weight, condition, age, teeth, eyes, ears etc, can all be triggering and bring up challenging emotions regardless of racial identity. As such, the only true way to do this work is to do it with deep humility and sensitivity, knowing that the process is about learning from our mistakes and being open to learn and adapt as we go. Importantly, this doesn't necessarily mean adapting the practice too much, rather adaptation here means more about how as teachers, the practice is offered and delivered that would benefit from less certainty and ever greater humility! This way, the important implicit teachings of the practice become more apparent.
- We should also assume this practice and perhaps all practices will be triggering for someone in the room who has a trauma history, and therefore lead it with this awareness and sensitivity in mind.

Home practice

- The 9 Dots exercise: This exercise is often equated with corporate and oppressive working practices. Consider bringing in alternative examples for some participant groups to support the exploration of perception (e.g., exploration of media perception of leadership images; coding bias in computer AI <https://www.ajl.org/> etc).
- Exploring the wonder in the everyday, inviting participants to practice the raisin meditation with things around the home to facilitate seeing things afresh with beginner's mind, wonder, and awe. This can be resourcing for people who are disadvantaged as it helps access gratitude.

Class 2

Introduction to the meditation:

- Begin with resting in awareness of sounds instead of automatically beginning with awareness of breath. Most participants may be more familiar or at ease with focusing on

sounds rather than focusing on the breath. Focusing on the breath can be triggering and intense for many. It can also be problematic especially for those with respiratory illnesses or those who have experienced trauma linked to breath and breathing.

The role of perception:

- This exploration can include inquiry into the way we place ourselves in boxes; the way others place us in boxes; the way we live in default autopilot mode; the way we have patterns of bringing stress to self; and perhaps begin to peel back layers to help understand where and how these inner perceptions may have been learned and accepted as our way of being. This can lead into discussion of macro and micro aggressions.
- Themes that can be introduced within the exploration of perception include implicit bias, how our unconscious beliefs, values, and culture affect the way we think, feel, act, and our health and sense of belonging; having to pretend, imitate and adapt in order to fit the mainstream culture; looking at other cultures from the lens of our own culture with regards to morality, ethics, customs, etc.
- One way of inviting awareness of self-perception is to invite participants to recall the different roles we have in different aspects of our life - family, friends, work, public, community etc. This can support bringing awareness to conditioned perceptions by touching on stereotypes within default characters and media conditioning that can stifle our ability to reframe, rethink and reimagine.
- Highlight that awareness of the experience of 'resistance' or 'aversion' is often a gateway into perception as it points to our relationship to what is showing up in awareness.
- The theme of perception can be an opportunity to bring awareness of how our social conditioning influences perception by introducing key concepts within the social sciences including, Ontology - or what we perceive, Epistemology - or how we come to know it, and Axiology - or why it matters ethically, morally, and culturally perhaps. All of which unconsciously inform our expectations, assumptions, beliefs and goals that can lead to biases that are often reinforced by automatic categorizations perpetuated by the mainstream.^{13 14} When we invite awareness of epistemic justice to the conversation, we invite participants to access their own ability to reimagine, reframe or rethink how what they have been taught perhaps no longer serves them, e.g., 'west is best', 'science is truth' etc. Epistemic justice also allows indigenous knowledge and perspectives to be explored

which helps with disengaging from conditioned beliefs that do not serve the individual or wider society. Epistemic justice can be about reclaiming the body and identity. These themes may emerge explicitly or may be part of the implicit knowledge base that informs the way the teacher orients in the teaching space.

Week 2 home practice

Depending on the context, consider inviting the exploration of a positive experience around race for the 'pleasant experiences' calendar, if possible and available. Below are examples that we (NMH and MW) use from our own lived experience. We walk through the Pleasant Experiences Calendar using one of these examples, completing each column as we go.

- I went to a gathering at my mother-in-law's. I've been to these gatherings before and normally the majority of people who are there are much older, and I have a hard time finding things in common to talk about. Also, I'm usually the only person of colour (and the only Japanese person). Because of this, I was not particularly excited to go to the gathering. While driving there with my husband, I was feeling a slight tightness around my neck and my chest area as I was anxious. I also asked my husband if we can leave in an hour. As we arrived and walked into the room, I spotted an Asian looking woman. I felt a sense of relief and a joy. After greeting a few people near the entrance, I walked up to her and introduced myself. As soon as she told me her name with an accent, I knew we could converse in Japanese. It was such a joy to have a conversation with her in our native language, and I had a great time at the gathering.
- When my mother passed away and I was named the executor of her will, I needed to file documents with the county courthouse which is in a predominantly white community that borders the Native American Reservation she lived on. There is a long history of racism and oppression between the communities of the Reservation and the surrounding white community. Past interactions with the woman, who is white, handling her case have been stressful and I frequently left them feeling dismissed and disrespected. As I entered my final meeting with her, I was aware of the discomfort and tension I felt in my body, feeling apprehensive and scared

and thoughts of just wanting to be done with this and her. I braced myself. However, as we entered into dialogue her tone was friendly and kind. She made eye contact and smiled. I was aware of tension being released in my body and mind. My speech became less pressured, and my breath moved with more ease. I felt my shoulder relax and a genuine smile come to my face. I walk through this 'Pleasant Experiences Calendar', completing all the columns, as an example of a pleasant cross-racial event. I then give the invitation to the class to explore an event in the week that was 'racially flavoured' that was pleasant.

Class 3

- The dialogue around Body Scan and Perception may continue to unfold in large group dialogue reflecting on cultural beliefs related to 'what is desirable' or approved in our own culture regarding the body and suffering that arises from not meeting the 'gold standard' within our own or the mainstream culture.
- Since this is a heavily practice centred class, emphasize trauma informed guidance.
- A walking meditation adaptation can be to start with fast walking in the room to meet participants where they are if there is hyperactive energy present in the group and gradually decreasing the speed to a stop, and then beginning with slow walking practice.
- Standing mindful movement could be some of the regular MBSR and perhaps ending with dance, free movement, shaking, etc.

Week 3 homework

Depending on the context, consider inviting the exploration of an unpleasant racial experience for the 'unpleasant experiences calendar'. Below are examples that we (NMH and MW) use from our own lived experience. We walk through the Unpleasant Experiences Calendar using one of these examples, completing each column as we go.

- I was driving back from Arizona (AZ) to California (CA) and had to go through the border check point. I was getting nervous as I always did because I had heard many stories about people getting questioned or getting into troubles even when they are permanent residents. The border patrol officers were waving to let many of the cars go without stopping them. Then it was my turn. The officer looked at me and asked me if I was a Citizen and if I had my passport. I showed my green card (permanent resident card) and

told the officer that my passport was in my suitcase in the trunk. The officer said I should always have my passport with me, and asked what I was doing in AZ, how long I stayed there, where I worked in CA, etc. I was nervous, feeling tense in my shoulders and stomach. As I recall the event, I wonder if they would have asked these questions me if I looked white.

- My colleague came to my office and said ‘You look like a person who would have soy sauce. Do you have some?’ I was taken by surprise by what he had said to me, and I simply responded to him that I did not have any soy sauce. His comment stayed with me for a while. It was not clear how I was feeling at the time, but I was aware of an unsettled emotion in my body. As I recall, it may have been an emotion of anger, sadness, and shame. I wondered if he would have asked me if I was not an Asian.
- There was a bakery in the predominantly white community that shares a border with the Native American Reservation I was born on and return to for visits with my mom, who lived there. Upon entering the bakery there was one white person before me and shortly after a few white people who arrived after me. The employee, who was white, waited on all the white customers before waiting on me. I was aware of tension in my body when entering the bakery, and the tightness in my body growing as the employee continued to call on white customers before me, feeling angry, scared, and dismayed, and a rush of thoughts happening.

Class 4

Stress reactivity and the stress reaction cycle:

- Include naming of external stressors such as oppression, racism, white supremacist systems, homophobia, male supremacy, climate change etc.
- Include naming of internal stressors such as internalized colonization and intergenerational stress
- Explore how maladaptive coping related to these kinds of stressors leads to higher rates of illness among certain racial groups. Teachers can add information on the social determinants of health that can offer a rationale for the importance of addressing both the inner and outer aspects of suffering. This aids awareness that many aspects of good or bad health are not totally a personal endeavour - there are many social, cultural,

systemic, and intergenerational determinants of health that we have no control over. This offers a segue into the importance of self-compassion and compassionate action in wider society.

- These themes also offer a great opportunity to introduce short breathing and grounding practices that settle the nervous system.

Class 5

Mindfulness Meditation - Responding

- The preceding weeks of body centred practices may have led to a recognition of racial stressors and a recognition of new ways to respond to oppression and racism. Using information from the body can support creating space between reaction or suppression of feelings and an opportunity to see new empowered ways to respond and take care of oneself
- Bringing a circle of ancestors and benefactors to awareness can be supportive to participants' engagement with practice
- In addition to leaning into ancestors for support, adding the plant world, animal kingdoms, and oceanic sources as options can be helpful
- Cultivating agency and purpose as a response to experience can be useful. The MBIT program uses a Sankofa practice that first brings awareness to the idea that we can learn from the past including those that have come before. We then invite a leaning into what it might take to become a good ancestor ourselves: Ubele working for the future and exploring what we might offer to future generations. We then come back to the present moment bodily experience and recognize that our learning from the past can benefit the future if we connect with the present momentary nature of life and its interconnected reality and share with others from a place of Ubuntu. The movement practices and interconnected nature of the whole lived experience built into this practice can help awareness of fluidity or flow, impermanence or change and transformation.

Week 5 homework

- Invite exploring a cross cultural/racially informed difficult communication when completing the difficult communication calendar.

Class 6

Mindful Communication: “People Stress”

- Exploring patterns around the way we communicate naturally brings us beyond the personal into exploration of systemic patterns. The session theme invites awareness of the dynamics of power discrepancies, race, gender, class, economic status, disability etc. Space can be given to feeling these types of communication in the body and noticing patterns such as going into to fight or flight or suppressing emotions. With mindfulness we can see more options.
- It is important to incorporate cultural differences about holding eye contact, posture, non-verbal: tone of voice, gestures, etc. when doing pairs exercises.

Class 7

- Typically, in this session we explore what we take in (consume) and what we leave out. We encourage widening this out to investigation of how we live in the world in terms of social and racial justice, and our carbon footprint. How might our mindfulness practice be applied to the way we engage with our family, our community, our workplace, and society more broadly?
- The session can be an opportunity to name common cultural blindness that are hurtful to BIPOC people: e.g. ‘I see no colour’

Class 8

The final ‘go-around’

- One option is to invite participants to bring a precious or symbolic object from their home or environment. Invite them to experience the object in meditation using the senses as per the raisin exercise. Participants often have a connection with their object so being invited to experience it differently through the senses is welcomed as it opens wonder and awe of something already valued but seldom deeply reflected upon in an embodied way. Weave in recognition of the constituent parts of the object that make it whole including the indigenous wisdom of earth, wind, fire, and water involved in the object’s

creation and its inherently interconnected nature. This practice finishes with reflecting on the wonder and awe of our object and own existence by offering a short reflection on what it has taken for us also to be part of this community.

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My experience of participating in a People of Color affinity group by Noriko Morita Harth

I still remember how I felt in my body as I reflect on my experience of one of the silent retreats and the People of Color (POC) affinity group.

I noticed there was something different from other retreats I had attended as the trainers walked into the meditation room, filled with about 100 participants for the 10-day Metta Retreat at Spirit Rock Meditation Center. There were 4 senior trainers, 3 assistant trainers and 1 qi gong instructor. Among them, there were 5 trainers of color. As I watched the trainers entering the room and taking a teaching bench, I remember feeling a sense of excitement because I realized that there were actually more trainers of color leading the retreat. It was my very first-time seeing trainers of color in a teaching bench.

As they guided us through an orientation session on the first evening, one of the trainers mentioned that two affinity groups: one for LGBTQI and another for People of Color had been set up. The message from the trainer was “If you want to go, just go. You don’t need to think too much about whether you should go or not.” I had never sat in an affinity group before, and I thought to myself that I would go this time.

As I sat in the room with a small group of 12-15 participants of color in silence for the first time, tears came out. I could not stop weeping. At the same time, I noticed the tensions in my body beginning to soften. I began to feel a sense of safety and relief that I had never experienced at any other trainings or retreats I had attended. The heavy armor that I had no idea I was wearing in the first place was disappearing.

During the 10-day retreat, I joined the POC affinity group every evening, and I cried every night. I did not need to worry about how I might be seen by anyone. Without even introducing ourselves to each other, we shared a space and practiced in silence. It was the most profound experience I have ever had. There was an unspoken connection among us, which made me feel that I belonged.

To read more on how affinity groups can support building inclusive communities check out his link:

https://mindfulness-alliance.org/2019/10/10/building-an-inclusive-community-mindfulness-affinity-groups/?fbclid=IwAR3kd6OxyXGOEpUluTSAS7G4XL6yVlpQhXeio_JZhppdvG05j8CD8IVMrYk

Authors

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Dean Francis is a Co-Founder of the [Urban Mindfulness Foundation](#), Trustee and co-lead of EDI at [BAMBA](#), and EDI Consultant at [Sussex Mindfulness Centre](#). He is passionate about innovation, collaboration, and the cultural relatability of mindfulness. Dean is a trained Environmental Scientist, EDI Consultant, Facilitator and Supervisor to mindfulness teachers interested in the intersection of EDI, mindfulness, and prosocial change. He is a co-creator of the award-winning Mindfulness Based Inclusion Training course (MBIT) and he has an MSc in Mindfulness Studies, focused on deconstructing racism and social inequality in non-adversarial and collective ways. Dean is now preparing to publish his thesis.

Pauline Gibbs is a mindfulness teacher and trainer who has been instrumental in the introduction and development of accessible programmes in the UK within the NHS. She has particular expertise in the development of community projects, and in reaching and amplifying seldom-heard voices within urban community settings. Pauline co-led a pilot training programme within CMRP looking at the BAPOC communities' access to and experience of MBSR Teacher Training. She is also a trustee for the Mindfulness Initiative, a global mindfulness and compassion policy institute and think tank. ([https://www.themindfulnessinitiative.org/.](https://www.themindfulnessinitiative.org/))

Nana Korantemah Pierce Williams is a certified MBSR Teacher through the UCSD Mindfulness Based Professional Training Institute. For more than 20 years, she has been an educator, counsellor, and senior priest practitioner (Nana Okomfo Panyin) in the Akom Tradition, Ghana, West Africa. Korantemah is a diversity and equity trainer for multiple organizations, in her lifelong passion to bring healing to racial oppression. As such she is a key part of UCSD's Mindfulness-Based Professional Training Institute's BIPOC MBSR teacher training. Her experience with trauma informed mindfulness also makes her the perfect teacher for UCSD's work with [Survivors Empowered](#).

Noriko Morita Harth is a Certified Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Instructor, Certified Mindful Self-Compassion Instructor, and the Managing Director of University of California San Diego Center for Mindfulness. Born in Japan, she moved to the States in 1985. Noriko feels that her life transforming journey of discovering and exploring mindfulness practices has allowed a more balanced life and identity between these two cultures. It is her mission to share what she has learned, and what she continues to learn, with our community.

Michael Waupoose is an enrolled member of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin. He is a licensed clinical social worker. He teaches adult MBSR classes and developed and offers a MBSR teacher training intensive with the UW Health Mindfulness Program in Madison, WI. USA. He has a particular interest in offering MBSR classes and MBSR teacher training to the BIPOC community. He also teaches an MBI on his Reservation. He recently joined the teacher trainer collective at the UCSD Center for Mindfulness.

Zayda Vallejo is co-founder and Executive Director of [The HeartWell Institute](#) (HWI) in Worcester, MA, a non-profit community-based urban retreat center. Zayda is a Certified Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) instructor who for the past 22 years has been teaching classes, mentoring professionals, designing Mindfulness-Based curricula, and conducting trainings in MBSR and its adaptations. Zayda teaches two of HWI's signature programs: *Mindfulness Immersion* and *Mindfulness as a Catalyst for Equity and Collective Healing*, infused with cultural and racial literacy frameworks and practices. Zayda is co-author of *Treating Co-Occurring Adolescent PTSD and Addiction*, and *Moment-to-Moment in Women's Recovery: A Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention Program*.

Rob Callen-Davies is the operational lead for the Primary Care Mental Health Support Service at [Aneurin Bevan University Health Board](#) (ABUHB). He has supported the implementation and development of Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy in ABUHB and in other health boards across Wales. He is a trustee with [Mindfulness Wales / Meddylgarwch Cymru](#) leading on their Health strand. He is engaged in a Master's by Research program at [Bangor University](#) focusing on MBPs for 'bigger than self-issues' and social engagement.

Rebecca Crane directs the [Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice](#) at Bangor University (www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness). She trains internationally in Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction. Her research focuses on how mindfulness-based programs can be implemented with integrity into mainstream practice settings, and how they can support inner change that contributes to collective and systemic societal shifts towards a more equitable and sustainable world.

Beth Mulligan had a long career in medicine before becoming a full time Mindfulness Teacher and teacher trainer. Beth is a certified MBSR and MSC teacher and international teacher trainer. Beth was on the faculty of the UMASS Center for Mindfulness and then took a position as Senior Advisor of MBSR teacher training, at the UCSD Mindfulness Based Professional Training Institute. At UCSD, she is part of a team guiding an MBSR teacher training for Diverse Communities, and Diverse Teacher Trainers, through a generous grant intended to bring more diversity to the MBI field. She offers retreats internationally. Beth is the author of the book, *The Dharma of Modern Mindfulness*.

Bridgette O'Neill is a trainer with the [Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice](#) (CMRP) at Bangor University as well as a trainer, supervisor and teacher within the UK's NHS through the [Sussex Mindfulness Centre](#) and the Retreat Lead for the Mindfulness Network. She has a lead role for equality, diversity and inclusion with [The Mindfulness Network](#) (MN), and has been privileged to work with Pauline Gibbs and others in offering MBSR teacher training prioritising Black, African, Asian, People of Colour through the CMRP and the MN.

Appendix 1: Anti-oppression resources

Table 1 in the linked paper presents our suggestions for ‘starting point’ resources for all MBP teachers to build their learning around race and anti-oppression. Below are further resources for all MBP teachers to support their inquiry on oppression and how awareness of this can influence how we guide groups and hold learning spaces.

Akala (2019) *Natives: Race and class in the ruins of empire*, Two roads.

Bach, A. J., Wolfson, T., & Crowell, J. K. (2018). Poverty, literacy, and social transformation: An interdisciplinary exploration of the digital divide. *The Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 10(1), 22–41. <https://doi.org/10.23860/jmle-2018-10-1-2>

Brach, T. (2016, December 26). Facing my white privilege Lions Roar. <http://www.lionsroar.com/facing-my-white-privilege/>

Choudhury, S (2016) What we say, not what we do in *The Wise Brain Bulletin*, 10,1 (adapted from *Deep Diversity: Overcoming Us vs. Them* by Shakil Choudhury. 2015)

Eddo-Lodge, R. (2020). *Why I’m no longer talking to white people about race*. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.

Irving, D. (2014). *Waking up white: and finding myself in the story of race*. Elephant Room Press.

Lorde, A. (1983). There is no hierarchy of oppressions. *Bulletin: Homophobia and education*, 14(3/4), 9.

Haga, K. (2020). *Healing resistance: A radically different response to harm*. Parallax Press.

Olusoga, D. (2016). *Black and British: A forgotten history*. Picador

Parent, Lauren (2016), *Mindfulness and Racial Bias: Resources for Deeper Understanding*. (2016, January 13). Mind & Life Institute. <https://www.mindandlife.org/media/mindfulness-and-racial-bias-resources-for-deeper-understanding/>

Sherrell, C., Simmer-Brown, J., & Petty, S. (2017). Social Justice, Inner Work, and Contemplative Practice: Lessons & Directions for Multiple Fields. *Initiative for Contemplative Equity & Action Journal*, 1(1).

Treleaven, D.A. (2018) *Understanding Social Context: Working effectively across difference in Trauma Sensitive Mindfulness*, Norton & Company, London

White Awake <https://whiteawake.org/>

Peter, D. [UCzDxVmCdpJrGCs7JXsKod6Q]. (2017, October 14). Social inequalities explained in a \$100 race - please watch to the end. Thanks. Youtube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4K5fbQ1-zps>

The following books integrate a consideration of identity and social context with Buddhist teachings:

Lama, D. (2016). *The Buddha's Teachings on Social and Communal Harmony: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon*. Simon and Schuster (A collection of the Buddha's teachings from the Pali cannon on conflict resolution and the development of harmonious relationships)

Loy, D. R. (2015). *A new Buddhist path: Enlightenment, evolution, and ethics in the modern world*. Simon and Schuster.

Manuel, Z. E. (2015). *The way of tenderness: Awakening through race, sexuality, and gender*. Simon and Schuster.

Karmapa, O. T. D. (2017). *Interconnected: Embracing Life in Our Global Society*. Simon and Schuster.

This following link offers a range of anti-racism and anti-oppression writings and resources:

www.resiliencebc.ca/learn-more-about-racism/anti-racism-tools/

Appendix 2 Definition of terms/ glossary

ABRAHAM

Key figure in Abrahamic religions including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

ADINKRA

A writing system from Ghana incorporating symbols that represent conceptual ideas of being and understanding.

ANTI-RACISM

A commitment to identify and challenge racist views and behaviour both individually and systemically. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zs9n2v4>

ANTI-OPPRESSION

An approach which seeks to understand how personal beliefs, cultural norms and structural institutions can lead to oppression (a system of power that subordinates some groups in order to privilege another and the painful and violent effects of this on individuals and groups) and seeks to challenge and redress power imbalances, injustices and inequities.

ASSIMILATION

A process by which individuals from differing groups are accepted into dominant culture by taking on the dominant cultures norms and ways of being.

AXIOLOGY

The theory of value and values related to ethics, philosophical study of goodness

EPISTEMOLOGY

The theory of knowledge, considering what knowledge is and how it is constructed.

EPISTEMIC JUSTICE

Justice in relation to knowledge, addressing the relationship between knowledge and power, including more and less privileged systems of knowledge.

FRACTAL

A geometric form with similar patterns recurring at smaller and smaller scales, with each part being the same as the whole, such as snowflakes.

GURU NANAK

The founder of Sikhism

MIRABAI

Sixteenth century venerated Hindu poet and devotee of Krishna.

NAMASTE

Hindi greeting conveying appreciation and respect towards another being.

ONTOLOGY

Branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being- your world view.

POSITIONALITY

Refers to how differences in social position and power shape identity and access to opportunities in society; how the social and political context shapes your identity in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability status, age etc and how your identity influences your understanding and outlook on the world.

RACIALISED WHITE

Categorised as white through the social construct of race.

REFLEXIVE

Including cause and effect in a circular relationship; reflecting on the bi-directional relationship between the teacher and participants; this requires self-awareness.

SANKOFA

Is a principle derived from the Akan people of Ghana in Africa, that in literal terms translates as; 'It is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind.' In essence it refers to the importance of learning from the past. In particular, Sankofa is about knowing your history and heritage as a way of knowing yourself and the world around you. Bringing forth wisdom from the past into the present in hope that it benefits the future. Sankofa is often depicted by the Adinkra symbols of a bird walking forward and looking back with an egg in its mouth. Or two stylized birds creating a heartlike shape. Sankofa also offers a way to recognise the history of the present known as the present moment conjuncture that allows for us to see the cloud in our tea as described by Thich Nhat Hanh

SANSKRIT

Ancient classical language of India.

SYSTEMIC STRUCTURES OF RACISM

Forms of racism that are deeply embedded in systems and structures of society such as the law, policy, cultural practices, and beliefs.

UBELE

A Swahili word meaning the future that we have combined with the Adinkra symbol for time changes or transformation that is utilised to encourage a sense of prosocial agency and purpose that grounds the practice in a moral and ethical framework by embedding a commitment to the wellbeing of all humanity, future generations, and the planet.

UBUNTU

An "Nguni Bantu" term which is sometimes translated as 'I am because we are' and highlights the universal bond that connects all humanity. 'A person is a person through other persons' Nelson

Mandela and Desmond Tutu. In its purest essence, Ubuntu can be likened to the concept of non-duality, emptiness, or interconnectedness

UMOJA

A Swahili word meaning unity or the spirit of togetherness that is likened to the terms Sangha or congregation. Incorporated to address the internal fractures of BIPOC communities resulting from colonisation of the global south.

Appendix 3: Example of an inclusive welcome at the start of an MBP

We warmly welcome you all into this space. Acknowledging that in this moment, there will be a diversity of experience in this room – some feeling settled and at ease, others feeling nervous, agitated, some experiencing pain in their bodies and so on.

Whatever your current experience, inviting you to make room to allow yourself to be as you are – widening the container of awareness to support us each to hold the entirety of who we are in this moment. And of course, this also includes the range of visible and invisible identities we bring with us – whatever race, gender, sexual identity, religion, age, class, nationality, or culture you identify with, Welcoming too those of us with disabilities - hidden or visible – there is a lot of diversity here – welcoming those parts of ourselves that are here now and that might show up this week during the retreat – the sad parts, the cheerful parts, the anger and despair, the hopefulness, the stillness, the agitation, the humor and the solemn parts – we can be ourselves here.

Inviting each of us individually and collectively to make room for ourselves and for each other to fully take our place within this newly formed community.

You will notice that I have added personal pronouns to my zoom name. This is entirely optional – if you would like to, you can add this to your name use the renaming function in zoom. The intention behind this is to ensure that we use each other's correct personal pronouns so that we are making more space for everyone to show up as they are. Overall, we are hoping to create a space that is inclusive and welcoming – and remember that this along with everything else we offer in this space is an invitation, a choice.