

## **Guidelines for taking on MBCT Co-Teachers and Participant Observers**

### **Preamble**

Training as an MBCT teacher involves a training pathway from foundational training to becoming a competent teacher, to developing proficiency through advanced training. This document sets out how co-teaching and participant observation can best support learning on that pathway. These guidelines are intended to enable trainee MBCT teachers to get the most out of these experiences by facilitating their development.

### **Co-teaching and participant observation as part of a training pathway:**

- [References as benchmarks](#) the UK Network Good Practice Guidelines (R.S. Crane, 2011) and the more MBCT-specific guidelines published in the MBCT manual (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2013; p. 422).
- Offers a coherent, stepped approach, considering progress from advanced beginner through to advanced MBCT teacher. At an early stage a trainee teacher may be advised to do more to be ready to begin co-teaching, or even to take on the role of participant observer (e.g. attend training courses; establish or deepen personal practice if their personal practice would benefit from more depth prior to continuing with training; or other reasons). At later stages, the trainee teachers' learning objectives may be about developing more advanced competencies.
- Builds on trainees' previous learning from formal teaching, workshops/retreats, skills training, reading and any previous supervision/mentoring.
- Integrates personal practice as part of embodiment both in the MBCT teaching and supervision.
- Uses the Mindfulness-based Interventions Teacher Assessment of Competency (MBI-TAC) (R. S. Crane et al., 2013) as both a formative and summative tool.
- Is evidence-based, ensuring informal and informal evaluation of MBCT classes informs trainees' learning

To provide safeguards for MBCT trainees and teachers as well as to promote best practice, participants will be expected to work within the ethical codes of their professional bodies. If they do not have such a code, training and attention to codes set out by the most relevant professional body are suggested as a safeguard and to promote good practice (Baer, 2015).

### **Experience needed to offer co-teaching or participant observer experience.**

In general, the more experienced teacher offering the co-teaching and / or participant observer experience should meet the guidelines for MBCT teacher trainers

<http://mindfulnessteachersuk.org.uk/pdf/GPG4-TrainersfinalOct2013.pdf>

as this is a training/supervisory role. However, there are occasions when this is difficult (due to geographical constraints, for example), in which case they need to have taught at least 3 MBCT courses, and themselves be receiving regular supervision from an MBCT teacher

trainer. Supervision is recommended in any case, but is particularly advisable if the experienced teacher is not a trainer. (In the UK the MBCT trainer must be on the UK listing as an MBCT teacher).

*\*The experienced teacher offering the co-teaching experience ideally needs to communicate with the trainee's previous trainer / mentor from their foundational training in order to agree the most appropriate next steps for the trainee.*

### **Co-teaching guidelines:**

Set aside time for regular meetings to allow time both before and after sessions for preparation and debriefing. Establish the level of participation which the trainee will have, according to their development needs, including a chance to review how this is going regularly.

Discuss how the teacher and co-teacher will work together (e.g. in enquiries, is it OK to add reflections or wait to be invited?).

Discuss any other ground rules which seem important to both parties e.g. how best to respect one another; what would be most helpful to facilitate development of the new teacher in terms of preparation; format of the debriefing etc.

#### ***Preparation***

In advance: it is helpful to invite the trainee to prepare for each session by reading the appropriate chapter of the appropriate MBCT manual (e.g., Segal et al., 2013) and or workbook (e.g., Teasdale, Williams, & Segal, 2014), and also to practise the meditations that the participants engage in during the week, particularly if it is their first co-teaching experience.

In the preparation for each session, it is helpful to begin with a meditation practice and see what issues or questions emerge from that. Reflect on the session theme, and the aims and intentions of practices and exercises together. It may be that the trainee wants to and is ready to practice leading both guided meditations and enquiry, or maybe they will need to take things more slowly by starting with leading a brief practice.

#### ***Debriefing***

In the debriefing session the trainee can be invited to:

- reflect on the session as a whole bearing in mind the theme of the session and the 'aims and intentions' of any practice element
- reflect on what went well in terms of the trainee's teaching experience. Then note any particular issues in their own teaching practice in the light of the aims and intentions, including the guidance of practice, the psychoeducation elements, and enquiry process
- discuss with the teacher(s) what the 'choice points' were in the session and the process (as far as can be discerned) that informed/determined those choices
- discuss any issues regarding the group process/dynamic or issues/concerns with individuals in the group

- reflect on what has been learned and how to take that forward to the next session and receive constructive feedback

*Debriefing can also overlap with supervision in that personal meditation practice, questions relating to MBCT pedagogy and the underlying cognitive science, and process issues arising during teaching (within the trainee, between us as teachers and between the trainee and individual participants) can be discussed. It may also be that the trainee covers some of these aspects in a separate supervision session.*

Finally, remember to leave time to plan the next session so that each teacher is clear what they are leading and the new teacher has time for preparation.

### **The role of the Participant/Observer (trainee) in MBCT courses**

#### **Notes for the teacher/trainer**

The trainee is invited to arrive a little early in order to settle before the session begins. There is no expectation that they should take on the role of ‘helper’...attending to questionnaires, registers, name labels, chairs etc., unless there is no ‘helper’ available. In this case the more experienced teacher would also likely to be helping the trainee carry out these tasks, in order to minimise any power imbalance.

The trainee is asked to take a **full role as participant** in the session, doing the meditation practices and exercises as taught, completing homework and recording observations. They would also take an active part in the enquiry without ‘claiming’ too much of the space and sharing their own experience with sensitivity.

The other aspect of the trainee’s role is to **observe the teaching**, as best they can, through the lens of a participant.

At the end of the session the trainee **de-briefs with the teacher(s)** and will be invited to:

- reflect on the session using the agenda/theme for that session and the aims and intentions of any practice element, keeping in mind the theory underpinning MBCT
- note any particular issues (delights & difficulties) in their own practice and any teaching or enquiry that facilitated clarity on these issues
- be helped by the teacher(s) to put the session in the context of their own aims and intentions
- discuss with the teacher(s) what the ‘choice points’ were in the session and the process (as far as can be discerned) that informed/determined those choices
- discuss any issues regarding the group process/dynamic or issues/concerns with individuals in the group

From time to time, the trainee will be invited to:

- lead a short (10-15 min) practice within the de-briefing session
- reflect on their own delivery of the practice
- ask teachers to reflect and give feed -back on this practice

## The role as Participant/Observer (trainee) in MBCT courses

### Notes for the trainee.

You are invited to arrive a little early in order to settle before the session begins. There is no expectation that you should take on the role of 'helper'...attending to questionnaires, registers, name labels, chairs etc., unless there is no 'helper' available. In this case the more experienced teacher would also likely to be helping the trainee carry out these tasks, in order to minimise any power imbalance.

You are asked to take a full role as participant in the session, doing the meditation practices and exercises as taught, completing home practice and recording observations. You would also take an active part in the enquiry without 'claiming' too much of the space and sharing your own experience with sensitivity.

*The other aspect of this role is to **observe the teaching**.*

At the end of the session you will take part in de-briefs with the teacher(s) and you will be invited to:

- reflect on the session using the agenda/theme for that session and the aims and intentions for any practice element keeping in mind the theory underpinning MBCT
- note any particular issues (delights & difficulties) in your own practice and any teaching or enquiry that facilitated clarity on these issues
- be helped by the teacher(s) to put the session in the context of your own aims and intentions
- discuss with the teacher(s) what the 'choice points' were in the session and the process (as far as can be discerned) that informed/determined those choices
- discuss any issues regarding the group process/dynamic or issues/concerns with individuals in the group

From time to time, you will be invited to:

- lead a short (10-15 min) practice within the de-briefing session
- reflect on your own delivery of the practice
- ask teachers to reflect and give you feed -back on this practice

### References

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