



Code of Ethics and Conduct Mindfulness Teachers Association of Ireland

A strong ethical framework underpins mindfulness teaching. International best practice dictates that teachers of mindfulness honour, embody and uphold an ethical code, detailed below. This Code of Ethics and Conduct aims to provide guidance and clarity to mindfulness teachers in relation to values and behaviours expected when interacting with members of the public, their class participants and fellow members of the mindfulness teaching profession.

In addition, this code aims to provide protection to the public engaging with the mindfulness teaching community.

Members of the MTAI undertake to comply fully with this Code of Ethics and Conduct. When complaints of misconduct arise, members will be accountable to the complaints and grievance procedure as outlined in the MTAI Constitution.

1.0. INTRODUCTION - THE NATURE OF MINDFULNESS TEACHING

MTAI members;

1.1 commit to the values underpinning mindfulness practice which include openness and transparency, kindness and generosity, authenticity and accountability, thereby aiming to promote human flourishing and well-being (Goldstein et al 2017).

1.2 undertake to facilitate mindfulness-based programmes that are grounded in awareness, compassion and wisdom.

1.3 commit to a daily personal formal and informal practice that is based on the nine attitudinal foundations of mindfulness practice (Kabat Zinn, 2009).

2.0. RESPONSIBILITY

MTAI members;

2.1 should take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of themselves and their participants. Participants should suffer neither physical nor psychological harm whilst participating in a mindfulness course.

2.2 recognise the potential imbalance in a mindfulness teacher-participant relationship; not exploiting participants either financially, sexually, emotionally or in any other way. MTAI members will put the well-being of participants above their own interests.

2.3 will develop fair and non-exploitative pricing structures for MBSR and MBCT courses, in keeping with the values underpinning mindfulness practice.

2.4 should help participants determine the suitability of their needs to the courses offered, prior to the start of the course.

This includes communicating logistical and practical aspects; cost, content, duration, methods, home practice commitment and possible outcomes.

2.5 should endeavour to be aware, in as far as is possible, whether participants are currently attending any other therapeutic, medical or helping professionals.

2.6 agree to uphold a secular and open, non-ideological framework, as is consistent with MBSR and MBCT teaching.

3.0. CONFIDENTIALITY

3.1 MTAI members are responsible for handling personal information from or about participants with confidentiality and consistent with current data protection legislation.

Information that participants disclose is the property of the participant and should not be divulged to others (except in the circumstances listed below).

3.2 MTAI members are responsible for indicating clearly to participants any limitations on confidentiality.

Confidential information may be shared in the following circumstances;

(a) When working in a multi-disciplinary team where information may be shared in a (confidential) clinical setting.

(b) In the context of the confidential supervisory agreement between an MTAI member and their mindfulness teacher- supervisor.

(c) An MTAI member may only make a video or audio recording following signed informed consent from the participant(s), which specifies the purpose of the recording, who it will be shared with, e.g. trainees, other professionals, the public etc. where and how it will be stored consistent with current data protection legislation and when the recording will be erased.

(d) Where clear evidence that serious harm to the participant or others is likely, and there is a belief that this can be averted by such action.

(e) MTAI members will adhere to the Children First Act (2016) pertaining to reporting of child abuse.

4.0. COMPETENCE

MTAI members;

4.1 are required to have achieved training in teaching mindfulness-based approaches to the level outlined in the MTAI Standards document.

4.2 are required to demonstrate a commitment to continued professional and personal development and a to have a genuine commitment to a daily personal practice.

4.3 will actively engage in self-care. MTAI members should not teach when their professional judgement is impaired by excessive stress or caused by factors such as illness or drugs or alcohol.

Where personal problems may affect their competence, they shall seek professional assistance and take appropriate action.

4.4 shall have regard for participants' moral and cultural values and shall not allow their interaction with participants to be affected by any bias regarding gender, sexual orientation, race, age, nationality, politics, social status or class.

Where a teacher believes their impartiality is compromised, they shall consult with their supervisor.

4.5 should not conduct themselves in their teaching in ways which may undermine public confidence in either their role as Mindfulness teachers or in the work of other MTAI members.

Commitment to the values underpinning mindfulness practice (see section 1) when dealing with fellow mindfulness teachers/MTAI members is expected.

4.6 should teach within the boundaries of their particular competencies and qualifications, as determined by education, training and experience.

Only those with relevant mental health training should offer MBCT to clinical populations.

MTAI members need to be aware of the limitations of MBSR/MBCT. Participation in MBSR/MBCT is not a substitute for any necessary medical treatment or psychotherapy.

4.7 if employed in a dual role (for example as a psychotherapist and mindfulness teacher), are obliged to work within the ethical parameters of that organisation as well as upholding best practice guidelines within both professions.

4.8 will engage in regular supervision with suitably qualified supervisor.

Supervision refers to a formal and confidential arrangement that enables MTAI teachers to discuss their work regularly with one or more competent and experienced mindfulness teacher-supervisors.

MTAI members are expected to consult with their supervisor or other suitably qualified professional when challenging issues arise during teaching.

References

Golstein J, Hudasch G, Heigke L, Kenny M, Korbel L, Luck P, Philips C, Vajra T 2017 A Framework for the Integrity of Mindfulness Based programmes: A Living Document. <https://www.pleine-conscience.be/www/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Ethics-and-Standards-for-MBP-Nov2017.pdf>

Kabat-Zinn, J. and Hanh, T.N., 2009. *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Delta.

Ethical Guidelines for MBSR and MBCT Teachers in the MBSR-MBCT Association.