Chapter 10
Teaching in Australia

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Setting the Scene in Australia

> In the highlands of New South Wales where we hold our mindfulness teacher trainings, the early mornings are cold, and warm blankets and colorful shawls envelop the group sitting quietly after the dawn yoga practice. The sun has come up and the wide opalescent sky is now clear and blue and echoing with bird song. The beauty and silence of the Australian bush supports and nurtures us in this endeavor although later the flies will be an invitation into non-judgmental acceptance. But for now, in this moment, the still purity of the morning brings a sense of wonder at the miracle of simply being alive. Is this what being mindful is all about? Or just part of it?

G'day.

We have been asked to write about Mindfulness-based Interventions within the Australian context—a broad remit indeed. We are aware of the responsibility of representing accurately all the ways in which MBIs have unfolded in Australia, and all the views that abound on mindfulness and its teaching in our multicultural society. We have had to reflect carefully about what we could usefully say from an "Australian perspective", especially as one of us originally hails from Scotland, and as our broader teaching and supervisory team and collegial network is a diverse mix of cultures, races, and nationalities.

But this reality is a quintessentially Australian scenario as we are a melting pot of cultures, sensibilities, and views on how we should be governed and our place in the wider world. The national character (if there is such a thing) could be described as

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having a broad streak of egalitarianism, optimism, and irreverence. There are refreshing qualities of mateship, directness, high energy, good humor, good-naturedness, and nonhierarchical interactions; a kind of deep democracy which resonates well with the nonhierarchical collaboration between teacher and participants in mindfulness classes. The Aussie spirit is summed up in such colloquialisms as "she'll be right" (all manner of things will be well), "no worries, mate" (happy to help/all will be well, my friend), and " this mindfulness lark is ridgey-didge" (the genuine article, trustworthy).

Geographically, Australia is a vast country with a disproportionately small population of 23.6 million despite it having the sixth largest landmass in the world. A two-day drive separates these two teachers (authors) who nevertheless work closely together. We are in the same country yet live in different climates, and there is rugged and sometimes dangerous landscape in between.

Yet we are also an English-speaking, "postmodern" society that participates in developments in the MBI culture in much the same way that Americans, Europeans, the British, New Zealanders, and now many parts of Asia, might (see Chap. 7). And the political landscape is changing too, with some of the Australian-defining characteristics described above arguably being less reflected in our foreign and domestic policies these days. Why is that relevant to a chapter on mindfulness? Our conditions are changing rapidly in this fast-paced world and mindfulness is needed more than ever to facilitate skillful and respectful ways of living.

So, for this book, the best we can offer a view from Australia is to simply and honestly offer the view that is emerging in the authors. Our paths converged in 2009 and a mutually respectful working relationship began due to shared views on teaching. This view focused on what matters in teaching participants in MBI courses, and what matters in training and supporting the next generation of mindfulness teachers here. In essence, this is an overview of Australian causes and conditions, particularly in relation to the topic of pedagogy in the MBIs.

In this way, we might capture something of the three Cs described by McCown (2013). The **Corporeality**—what is immediate, and embodied in us; the **Contingency**—responding to what is arising here, now, in this Aussie scene, while recognizing that some of it will have little to do with being in Australia; and the **Cosmopolitanism**—naming many of the ideas and processes that are arising here and globally, but not presuming to capture the whole (McCown, 2013).

Availability of MBIs for the General Population

In many Australian towns and cities now, there is MBSR and MBCT in health and community settings, mindfulness interventions in education (primary, secondary and tertiary), and mindfulness programs in corporate settings and organizations.

There are other approaches that use mindfulness, too, e.g., Mindfulness Integrated Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (Cayoun, 2011), Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (Linehan, 2014), and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Hayes et al., 2011), which are provided both individually and in groups. And there are therapists and counselors who combine elements of all of these models in their work with people. In this way, we are like any other country where mindfulness has proliferated rapidly.

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We often have the work springing up in various settings, not because of any policy, but usually because there are individuals trained in MBIs being in the right place at the right time—an unplanned, vibrant and sometimes chaotic unfolding of its development which can make it challenging for potential participants and referrers to find and access. Unlike some places in the UK and in Europe, the MBIs have not been taken up strongly in the public health system. When offered in institutions, courses are often organized around a research focus on a grant by grant basis, with little stability for teachers or participants. In private settings, teachers can struggle to find an economically viable way to generate numbers for their courses.

In rural areas, the provision of any service (including health, education, and mindfulness courses) is yet more challenging, as is supporting the providers of those services in remote places. There is no doubt that technology has helped, but even so, there are limits in what it can overcome.

It is clear that demand is high and the uptake across all walks of life is surprising. What started as an "intervention" for the kinds of suffering arising out of a hospital population in the USA has spread rapidly, and sometimes well ahead of its evidence base. Now there are courses for ambitious corporates, stressed professionals, tired and anxious students, the physically disabled, the socially isolated, and the old and the young, with a variety of physical and mental health issues. People with a range of issues and from a variety of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds may find themselves in a mindfulness class meditating together. In those precious moments, all barriers dissolve and the spirit of Aussie mateship and deep democracy arrives.

Training in the MBIs

In the early days of MBIs in Australia, many of the emerging MBI teachers had some background in Buddhist practice (Tibetan Mahayana, Theravdin and Zen traditions), had attended silent meditation retreats in those traditions, had read some of the modern Western dharma teachers, such as Jack Kornfield, or were influenced by the new wave of secular Buddhist teachers emphasizing democracy and openness in practice, such as Jason Siff and Stephen Batchelor. Therapists were often delighted to find there was a way to teach others the benefits they had discovered in their own meditation practices, and were relieved that it was now accepted as a legitimate evidence-based intervention.

Many who came later began their interest as a result of reading about the MBIs in scientific journals or hearing about them in professional conferences and trainings, so their pathway into teaching mindfulness was very different.

As a result, we have all the usual issues associated with passionate and dedicated meditation practitioners taking up this work, alongside of those offering mindfulness interventions with little training or experience of the practice.

As mirrored in the authors' own training pathways, it is not uncommon for those teaching MBSR to have been heavily influenced by Buddhist teachings and practices, and the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn and his colleagues at the Centre for Mindfulness. Some have even made the pilgrimage to the CFM and undertaken training there.

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Those teaching MBCT are more likely to have been exposed to this approach through the research findings emerging from the work of Teasdale, Williams, and Segal (e.g., 2002) who developed this program in mental health settings. And as they were deeply influenced by Kabat-Zinn and the CFM, the connectedness of these two interventions becomes clear. However, this vital interconnectedness may get lost over time as mindfulness interventions move more and more into mainstream scientific literature and into various health care and other settings, which have their own beliefs, policies and structures that inevitably influence how mindfulness courses are offered and evaluated.

As connections with the MBIs' origins, intentions, and Buddhist underpinnings are lost, there is risk they will become diluted, thus ineffective, and soon passed over for the next emerging fashion or fad. Holding to the emphases on both long-term personal practice, and immersion in certain training and supervision experiences, is non-negotiable.

But of course, there are already a plethora of brief workshops that promise to rapidly train health professionals in mindfulness interventions for all sorts of conditions, with little respect for the fundamental concept that we need to teach from our own deep practice with authenticity and embodiment in order to convey an appreciation of what is possible (and not). Rigorous training is also required to assist in working with the complex paradoxes that arise as we both practice and teach—a rich topic that we expand on later in this chapter.

Indigenous peoples

In trying to capture something of the mindfulness context in Australia, it is clearly a work in progress, including finding a way to offer it to our indigenous peoples so that it resonates with them and their ways of seeing and being in the world. Yet the practice of non-doing has been known intuitively by those whose ancestors have lived close to the land for many thousands of years. One term for it is "dadirri" or deep listening. Aboriginal writer, Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, describes dadirri as an "….inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness. Dadirri recognizes the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us. This is the gift that Australia is thirsting for. It is something like what you call 'contemplation'…" (Ungunmerr-Baumann, 2012).

Living Inside Paradox: The Necessary Quandary In Teaching Mindfulness

Everything changes

You can make a fresh start with your final breath.
But what has happened has happened.
And the water you have poured into the wine cannot be drained off again.
What has happened has happened.
And the water you have poured into the wine, cannot be drained off again.
But everything changes.
You can make a fresh start with your final breath.
—Bertolt Brecht (2013)

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This poem offers a deeply optimistic view, and is also grounded in the reality of the moment. If we can see and hold a paradox lightly, act within its profound constraints and still know and breathe freedom in each breath, then here is a wholesome practice—but it takes some doing and some being. Here Brecht articulates something at the heart of the MBI process, and also at the heart of some of the wisdom traditions that inspired it: the discovery that things open up and moments of freedom and spaciousness arise when something is known and accepted as *neither this nor that*. This knowing involves an ongoing process of dissolving our conceptions about how things are as we keep on looking deeply.

A paradox is a statement that apparently contradicts itself—where both elements of the contradiction might be true, and not true. In the next part of this chapter, we will look at some of the paradoxes that emerge as we consider the origins of the MBIs, and in teaching and training in these processes.

* * *

We can clearly remember (and are frequently reminded when practicing, teaching, and training and supervising others), that the seemingly simple definitions and practices of mindfulness, and the leading of an MBI curriculum, are often quite perplexing and confounding.

Mindfulness can be understood as method, a process, an outcome, a trait and a state; as a form of awareness based on "non-doing" but involving a great deal of effort and commitment; a practice of abiding in the present moment, but which also opens us up to noticing patterns and making choices about how we live; and a practice which emphasizes the training of attention in a one-pointed way (concentration) but also offers a developing awareness of all phenomena and how they are conditioned (insight).

Mindfulness interventions span two powerful paradigms. One is the Western scientific approach with its emphasis on objectivity, cost-effectiveness, generalizability, and evidence-based practice outcomes. The other is the paradigm of Buddhist psychology with its emphasis on experiential, embodied and phenomenological learning, and on values such as wholeness, integrity, ethics, wisdom and compassion. These two different paradigms translate into different values about teaching and learning which the teacher is negotiating at any moment in the class.

The Early Vision of Jon Kabat-Zinn

Stepping back a little, perhaps this demanding pedagogy also lies in Jon Kabat Zinn's original vision in constructing an eight-week program so closely expressive of the "dharma" as he experienced it. Jon Kabat-Zinn writes that for him the word "mindfulness" is a placeholder for the whole of the "dharma" (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). His vision for Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction was laid out in an early article in which he wrote a frighteningly long sentence about the choice he made in including both concentration and mindfulness (insight) in the MBSR program:

> "This has been the approach taken within the context of Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction, in part because the flexibility of attention characteristic of mindfulness lends itself to the immediate needs of people living highly complex lives within a secular rather

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> than a carefully controlled monastic society, and in part because the training can be made more interesting and more accessible to large numbers of people within the mainstream of society if the "wisdom" dimension characteristic of mindfulness (the capacity to discern differences non-judgmentally and to see relationships between objects of observation in a rapidly changing field of activity; and more traditionally, the cultivation of insight into the nature of suffering, into the impermanence of all phenomena, and into the question of what it means to be a "self" and a "self-in-relationship") is included from the very beginning of their exposure to meditation training." (Kabat-Zinn, 2011)

Hence, the approaches that have emerged from this vision can therefore be complex, rich and profound. But again, all depends on the depth and strength of the teacher's own practice, insight and capacity to communicate and embody this vision. We are teaching an application and view of mindfulness that will potentially alleviate immediate stress and distress but which also opens participants to a new way of living with the growing awareness of the three marks of existence: the nature of suffering, impermanence, and non-identification with the self.

In the MBIs, these realizations have sometimes been captured by the pithy phrase:

Life sucks!
Everything changes.
Don't take it personally!

To add to the challenge, much of this can only be communicated non-didactically. It is learned by facilitating experiences and relationships in which this can be discovered by participants in their own lives over time while we hold the paradoxes gently and with curiosity.

It is interesting to note that the most quoted operational rather than defintivie view of mindfulness from Jon Kabat-Zinn, is that mindfulness involves *"paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgementally"* (Kabat-Zinn, 1996).

For many with little training or practice, this simple, succinct and iconic definition is taken as the sum of it. Armed with this kind of summary, people feel ready to teach others mindfulness in the context of therapy, coaching and corporate training, and even in mindfulness-based eight-week courses. In this way, by not examining and coming to know the rich and deep elements of this kind of "mindfulness," so much may be left out. And if no indication is given that difficulties (often rich in learning opportunity) can arise, then the potential for a deeper knowing is lost, or worse the participant is put off, feeling that they are failing to achieve some desirable state or are failing in the practice in some way or just failing again at something that promised to be a nonjudgmentally accepting refuge.

Central in the MBI pedagogy *is* the present moment focus where immediate experience in the here and now is both the starting place and the place to return, over and over again. Loud and clear, and seemingly unparadoxically, mindfulness is understood as an invitation to pay attention, in the present moment, nonjudgmentally. This attention to the present moment is how students in the classes are encouraged to approach their experience. This attention is also what teachers are invited to embody—a sense of deep trust in the present moment, a confidence that all the resources one needs are available in just being present to what is here, now.

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Yet also central in the pedagogy is the structure and length of the eight-week program, and an openness to bringing the practice into the rest of one's life during and after the program has finished. This is a program that unfolds over time, involving significant home practice, and a deepening awareness (assisted by inquiry and reflection) of body reactions, hedonic tone, interpersonal communication patterns, various mind states and ways of thinking, feeling and reacting that cause or maintain or ameliorate suffering. This challenging and ongoing immersion may allow the capacity for insight and thereby give glimpses of the possibility of freedom from suffering. This investigation into the nature of things over time is needed in order to do so. So, with this slightly confusing message, it is little wonder that participants get perplexed and irritated at times, and hence want to "spit the dummy" with the whole project (Aussie for giving up in an exasperated way!)

What might be useful here is to draw on the perspectives of two authors who described two broad traditions of practice within Buddhism: the Innateist and the Constructivist paths of awakening.

Dunne, in "Non-dual mindfulness", writes of Jon Kabat-Zinn's deliberate choice to place the Innateist perspective (found in Zen and some forms of Tibetan and Indian Buddhism) centrally into the MBSR pedagogy. In this understanding of non-dual mindfulness, there is a seamless continuity between ordinary consciousness and a liberated state. Hence sudden realization is possible within present moment experience held with a non-evaluative and non-striving attitude (Dunne, 2011).

However, we would argue that also implicit in the pedagogy is the Constructivist view outlined by Dreyfus (Dreyfus, 2011) in his article "Is mindfulness present-centered and non-judgmental?". Here he argues against the non-dual understanding of mindfulness, saying that the main point of mindfulness:

> "is not to obtain a calm and focused state, however helpful such a state may be, but to use this state to gain a deeper understanding of the changing nature of one's bodily and mental states so as to free our mind from the habits and tendencies that bind us to suffering."

This understanding is also strikingly similar to Jon Kabat-Zinn's vision of what the eight-week program can offer. It is hopefully obvious to all who have a sustained practice but perhaps it is not so clear to those who have come to mindfulness interventions more recently. For without a longer immersion in the practice, familiarity with the patterns of the mind and body that give rise to insight is not known experientially, and therefore cannot be explored effectively with participants.

Dreyfus goes on to argue that it is a simplistic definition of mindfulness which has, to some extent, dominated the research into the therapeutic value of mindfulness. Grossman and Van Dam have also articulated the danger when researchers not immersed in a longer-term practice attempt to make operational definitions which therefore do not and cannot capture the ethical, cognitive, and affective processing aspects of this practice (Grossman and Van Damm, 2011).

An attempt to summarize these ideas in the table below likewise runs the risk of oversimplification, especially as there are many different schools of Buddhism with different emphases on practice and definitions of mindfulness (and as our expertise does not lie in Buddhist scholarship).

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We have also borrowed the terms Innateist (or "Sudden") and Constructivist (or "Gradual") from Ruegg (1989), and Dunne (2011).

Present-moment focus	Cultivation-over-time focus
Innateist tradition (non-dual mindfulness)	Constructivist tradition
Tibetan and Zen practice	Theravadin practice
Sudden transformation is possible	Gradual development leads to transformation over time
All qualities of awakening are present in ordinary minds	Special qualities of mind are distinctive of the awakened state
Mindfulness involves present moment awareness	Mindfulness involves remembering and recollecting past experiences and deliberately shaping future experiences, i.e., discerning between wholesome and unwholesome states and making choices
Mindfulness involves a nonjudgmental quality of mind	Mindfulness involves discerning, comparing, analyzing, and reflecting on practice experience
Emphasis on nonconceptual knowing as a prerequisite to awakening	Emphasis on use of concepts to cultivate awakening

Teachers of MBIs may come with explicit experience in one or other, or both, or neither of these traditions. But inevitably they need to deal with the implicit tensions that exist in the program between these two ways of relating to practice, and to the emergent possibilities in the eight-week course.

The pedagogy again and again asks the student to keep looking into, and living into, present sensory experience of the moment, with an open curious mind rather than foreclosing the exploration through premature judgments. It also engages students in noticing patterns of thoughts, emotions, bodily reactions, and behaviors. Thereby, they begin to become able to disengage from unskillful states and to choose to engage with more skillful actions and responses as a way of looking after one's life, and the lives of others too.

Sustained practice is central in the course, whether it is underpinned by Innateist or Constructivist ideas.

The use of working memory is also implicitly and explicitly emphasized as students are invited to hold unpleasant experiences "in mind" and "in body" while bringing attitudes of acceptance, patience, compassion, trust, openness and curiosity to them.

Active cognitive and emotional processing is involved. This work involves a deep engagement with the body and affect in terms of body awareness as a central ground of investigation (Teasdale and Chaskalson, 2011).

Language is often invited to name, explicate and understand experience. Often through language, and the dance of language and silence, new meanings and possibilities are generated within the group. In this way, we can see that these meanings and possibilities are not just discovered as bare bodily experience in the present. A

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conceptual framework embodied by the teacher and sometimes brought alive with explicit teaching points at salient moments is necessary to facilitate and enable this emergence.

In the classes, thoughts can be extremely useful objects of exploration—seeing into how we construct ourselves with our thinking and how different ways of thinking can both open up or limit our next experience in the moment. And we use concepts from the realms of science, literature, and poetry to open to new experience and to relinquish old perceptual frameworks which may no longer serve us. Beginning teachers can often forget this in their enthusiasm for a body-based, non-judgmental focus on "how things are," and perhaps imply that thoughts and their historical origins are not important. Participants may also be confused by the relentless inquiry into "how is that in your body?" when a bridge to understanding why this inquiry is salient has not been provided.

In summary, inherent in the unfolding eight-week program there are both views: (1) a present moment emphasis with an understanding of transformative awakening as a capacity of each person and congruent with the kind of ordinary mind that ordinary people have (the Innateist view), *and* (2) the idea that awakening requires quite a lot of practice, learning, recollecting of experience, reflection and cultivation of different qualities of mind (the Constructivist view). It seems that both ways of understanding mindfulness are implicit in the pedagogy of the MBIs, and the tension between them may explain some of the tensions or paradoxes which emerge as teaching and learning dilemmas for participants and teachers.

Working with Paradox in the Class

While the previous section and its implications are challenging enough, we also encounter a wide range of paradoxical "teaching moment" dilemmas emerging in our own experience, and when training and supervising others. Some of these are outlined in Table 10.1.

The beginning teacher is often filled with a sense of responsibility for this precious offering, and wants to "get it right" so these questions are pressing. They arise as seeming oppositions as this is one way that a human mind tries to figure things out, and work out what to do next.

The attempt to find rules for "what to do next" can become a very constricting and dull way of relating to the moment, and can close down the possibility of encouraging our participants to approach these dilemmas in an engaged way on their own.

We would like to propose that the paradox in each of these moments is exactly what is skillfully held. The holding of these dilemmas, in collaboration with the group (as best they can), causes things to open up in a way that allows old constricted patterns to dissolve, with moments of freedom then arising. It also makes the exploration of these polarities something that participants and the group and the teacher can be engaged in.

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Table 10.1 As teachers, do we …

Answer questions directly and fulsomely through stories, science, etc.	Inquire into the experience present in the question
Encourage practice (as this is the heart of the learning)	Encourage people to take their own authority in approaching the practice
Allow people freedom in the group to be as they are	Contain individuals to take care of the whole group process
Encourage acceptance of present moment experience	Encourage people to bring strong intentions and willingness to explore and make effort over time
Emphasize adult education aspects of the program	Explore "therapeutic" moments/responsibilities that may arise
See this as "pure" mindfulness	See this as a form of therapy
Explore a pattern to discover insights	See this as a phenomenological unpacking of present moment experience
Emphasize non-striving	Encourage making an effort
Use research outcomes to encourage practice and involvement	Accept and be open to outcomes (even uncomfortable ones for the teacher like people not practicing and not benefitting)
Explore process	Explore individual meanings
Encourage the concentration practice	Focus on open awareness practice
Approach this as an investigative practice	Encourage generative practices (e.g., the loving-kindness practice)
Contain our own personal experience	Employ skillful self-disclosure
Respond flexibly to different groups needs speak with one's own voice as a teacher	Offer a stable curriculum

The deep pull for all of us, but especially for beginning teachers, is to step out of paradox into having something definitive and "correct" to offer.

However, the likelihood is that the teacher has trodden this path for a while, and maybe does know something helpful about the practice and the beneficial and difficult experiences that arise. We do have responsibilities to open up the practice, to bring conceptual and affective understandings to the group so that they can continue to engage in a way that feels meaningful and manageable to them.

To offer the idea that the dilemma which is arising is not to be solved, nor even resolved, but rather lived inside of, will seem perplexing and frustrating, not only for the participants but also for the beginning teacher. These paradoxes need to be worked with inside the teacher's own practice.

Daniel Seigel points to the importance of ambiguity in helping the brain literally learn something new (Seigel, 2007). He outlines the idea that ambiguity offers the brain the best opportunity to engage and learn. The value of ambiguity is deeply present in the pedagogy of the eight-week MBI courses, and we need to bring this quality into the supervision and training of teachers too.

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We need to make things workable and salient at the same time. How do we hold ourselves and participants in an exploratory space that is relevant to the moment and facilitative?

We are interested in what sort of conversations in supervision (and training) are helpful to allow space for both sides of these "teaching moment" dilemmas to be known and learned from? Some of these issues include:

Mindfulness or Therapy?

A common area of exploration for the beginning teacher, clinician or non-clinician, is the difference between "pure" mindfulness and therapy.

We have found that this either/or way of framing the dilemma is perhaps false. It is complicated further because Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy has the word therapy in clearly in its name and in its intention for preventing relapses of depression. Yet it still holds to most of the pedagogical ground of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, which is based on the premise that "people are not broken and don't need to be fixed" (Kabat-Zinn, 1996).

Furthermore, there are many different kinds of "therapy," some of which occupy very similar ground to the MBI pedagogy, with an emphasis on investigation and "non-fixing," a non-reductionist cosmopolitanism regarding meanings, an attempt at a nonhierarchical relationship, an emphasis on present moment focus, and the sharing of such values as self-responsibility, empathy, compassion and the possibilities of growth and connectedness.

So beginning teachers often struggle with the distinction between mindfulness and therapy, and they make statements like: "I didn't want to go too deep, because it is not therapy." Or "I didn't want to ask too many questions about what was going on in the relationship, as it is not therapy." Or even, "I didn't want to ask about anything in the past, because it is not therapy."

We find that this kind of uncertainty is more likely to arise when teachers and their participants are working with strong emotions and accompanying distressing patterns of thought and impulses within the practices in the course.

Perhaps, rather than get caught in ideas of "depth" or areas of exploration that are out of bounds, it might be best to get more clarity about what we *are* offering in the MBIs: a method and practice of mindfulness grounded in a theory of how human suffering and transformation of that suffering works.

We are offering a well defined method of getting to know one's own body and mind in a vivid, rich and open-ended way, that enables one to recognize, accept, investigate and non-identify with our inner experiences in ways which are potentially liberating and even "symptom reducing" (Stahl and Goldstein, 2010).

As teachers immerse themselves in their own practice in a sustained way, and bring it to the fore when they are dealing with intensities in their own life, there grows a confidence that this practice can hold strong processes. And so they need not automatically revert to other models of "therapy" to help. It also clarifies that we

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need not fear that we are moving into "therapy," just because the material arising for processing in the practice pertains to developmental hurts, current painful relationships, and even trauma. When anxious or depressed participants are distressed and overwhelmed, something active may need to be offered which meets the needs of the present moment with discernment, kindness, and wisdom, yet which can allow the participant to continue with the course as well.

However, all of this needs to be held in a wider awareness that some people are struggling with mental states and conditions that may be inappropriate to be worked with within an MBI class at this stage of their journey, and that referral to a qualified health professional may be the wiser action. This particular dilemma underlines the need for high quality training of MBI teachers, as well as the importance of grounding their teaching in a robust and applied personal practice. Supervision is also important in helping with the ethical and professional decisions sometimes required during an MBI course.

Present Moment Experience vs. Learning About Patterns Over Time

When a participant with a history of recurrent depression notices a lot of negative thinking has appeared during a practice, a choice point arises for the teacher. We can choose to stay with investigation of this rumination experience: how this thinking arose; what else is here; and what happened next. We can leave it there, hoping that insight spontaneously occurs, and that skillful action follows that reduces the likelihood of further suffering. This option would be working within an Innateist approach.

From a Constructivist stance though, other possible questions arise—"Is this experience familiar to you?" or "Does this kind of thinking normally lead onto low mood or depression?" or "Is there anything you have learned in the course so far that suggests another approach?"

The latter questions are attempting to draw links between experiences that have occurred over time as a way to enhance insight and to prompt skillful action.

In this inquiry, there is tension between Innateist and Constructivist approaches. Some teachers might again experience this tension between "mindfulness" and "therapy", especially if they feel they must continually emphasize or adhere to the "present moment" as some special state that we from which we cannot stray.

Each moment needs to be met with awareness so that inquiry does not become formulaic but skillfully responds to where the individual and the group are in each moment and over the course of the 8 weeks. The approach in class 1 will be different from class 6, which can look contradictory to a new teacher. But the present moment in week 6 is different from the present moment in week 1 in many ways. One of these ways is the unfolding nature of the pedagogy. When viewed through the lens of intention, offering an MBCT course to people with recurrent depression is clearly about applying the knowledge gained through paying attention to the present

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moment, and then using that knowledge to prevent future relapses. The way we inquire into practice in the early weeks is grounded in drawing awareness to the immediate sensory experiences in the mind and body. Later in the course, there is a way of inquiring that brings memory and recollection into the field of awareness. This memory is used to cultivate wisdom and choice that may allow a more skillful way of responding in each moment. It can be confusing if spelled out didactically to participants, so it is best to let it unfold experientially so that this rich and complex process, with its seeming contradictions and paradoxes, actually becomes a useful approach to the different conditions that people are seeking relief from. For some, this experience will also become a transformative approach to the whole of life itself.

To Move or Not to Move

A "simple" question that often arises in an MBI group from a participant is about whether to move or not in the body scan. Of course, it depends. The participant might be asking a question about what is the "proper" technique. She might be suffering from chronic pain. She might be very anxious and feeling trapped about the assumed stillness of the practice.

So this question cannot be "answered" outside the person's experience. There are some fruitful lines of inquiry here: "What happened for you? What was it like to move? Or, What was it like not to move? What did that offer you? What happened then?". There is a tension, right away in week one, about self-agency and the freedom to respond to discomfort, and the freedom inherent in cultivating equanimity in the face of unpleasant stimuli. We can begin by holding the wisdom in both sides of the paradox that is inherent in the question to move or not to move.

There is good reason to make space for both kinds of freedoms. People are encouraged to do the best they can, stay curious, and work gently with their edges. Then, even over two weeks, there can be growth in equanimity towards strong intense sensations as they dance with the paradox and don't opt too quickly for one option over another.

This dilemma belongs to the participant, not to the teacher. It is an inquiry in which we can engage the whole group—an experiment which will unfold gradually anyway throughout the eight weeks. During and after the eight weeks, this experiment is their practice; they are finding their relationship to it, and to the possibility of responding more skillfully to pain of various kinds.

Meeting What Is Here in the Practice vs. Generating Compassion

A potential tension may be emerging in the MBIs related to the recent proliferation of courses that highlight compassion-based practices as a predominant way to reduce suffering.

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Of course, the bringing of kindness and compassion is radically, implicitly present in the MBIs from the first phone call and in the way practices are led, poems offered, inquiries opened up, permissions given, and in the embodiment of the teacher. So, these qualities become qualities of the approach in quite a subterranean, yet powerful, way.

Within this context of *friendliness*, there is a strong emphasis in the MBIs of meeting, accepting and investigating experience in the moment without any attempt to change it too quickly through a generative compassion practice. Much can be learned from this investigative stance, especially opening up to the reality of constant change, and the possibility of not identifying so strongly with what is arising.

In being faced with the participant's pain, confusion, or struggle, sometimes the beginning teacher can feel uncomfortable, and prematurely offer a kindness or compassion practice instead of helping the person explore what is going on and hold it as gently as possible in awareness. We have found that this urge to immediately offer compassion practices in the face of someone's distress may be arising out of the teacher's own lack of understanding and confidence in investigating their own pain and difficulties, and therefore in assisting participants to approach and explore the difficulty in the moment without attempting to fix it.

Recognizing this avoidance is important. What may be missed is powerful: the power of becoming familiar with patterns of reactivity, and an opportunity to see and open to aversive moments with more ease and confidence. And also to see into how impasses, constrictions, and difficulties arise and dissolve depending on our relationships with them.

This is not to say that a very skillful response early in an MBI might be: "And are you able to bring some friendliness to that…?" The dance between the various categories of practice is part of the learning in an MBI (concentration, open awareness, insight, investigative, generative). This dance will, of course, become the territory of exploration and choice for the participants over time. But it is important that teachers see into their own patterns of attachment and avoidance in their relationships with these practices. They need to become clear about the rationale for both investigative and generative practices and what is called for in response to a participant's distress.

Non-striving vs. Strong Intention and Goals

Both new teachers and course participants may notice an apparent contradiction between the attitudinal foundations of non-striving and acceptance, and the demanding nature of the practice and the program. Gentle acceptance of each moment can seem quite at odds with the considerable planning, changes in schedule, and sheer effort involved in taking the course. Undertaking an "evidence-based" 8-week course also implies there will be a worthwhile outcome, which again can certainly seem at odds with letting go of any goals or special states to be attained (or positive findings in research trials!).

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If the teacher holds too rigidly to some kind of stance about non-striving and acceptance, then he or she may be bringing an impotence to the discussions about home practice. If the teacher holds too rigidly to some ideal of a perfect regime of practice, then certainly the issue of failing at the practice can easily become an inhibition to participating in the group and the subtleties of the participants exploring this dilemma can be lost.

The challenge for the teacher is to hold both as a playpen of exploration in the group. A useful line of inquiry can be: "What would you have to tolerate and explore, if you were going to undertake the practice regularly this week?" The answers are wonderful and wide ranging: not being able to have a glass of wine when I get home, giving up my TV program, anxiety, boredom, loneliness, the lists in my head, feeling neglectful of my children and husband, feeling indulgent. Immediately, the relevance of the program and the practice is there in the moment, in the room, and a new possibility is there to "just do it" and tolerate these (unpleasant) thoughts, emotions, and sensations in the service of discovering something new.

Some people may find that they need to "loosen up" their striving attitudes, and some may find they could do well to "firm up" and bring some valuable discipline into their practices and their lives. It will vary for individuals over time as their mindfulness practice matures and changes.

The pedagogy asks that the teacher embodies a willingness to be with his or her own intentions and with a lightness and acceptance of whatever comes up in the group, including people not practicing and not benefitting. This requires a steady, kind and non-striving embodiment to be evident in the teacher, assisted by taking their own doubts and concerns to supervision and to the cushion.

Political and Social Paradoxes

Another dilemma arises as we bring this work into the world in our different contexts—the challenge of letting go of identifying with "I, me, and mine."

The very necessary work of making the MBIs accessible and effective means engaging with the active, sometimes entrepreneurial work of promotion of oneself and/or "the product." Whether one is teaching in the private sector, applying for research funding, implementing this in the public health system or attempting to establish an MBI within the workplace, it takes some capacity to "stand firm in that which you are" (Kabir, 1993) and to neither overpromise nor underplay the benefits.

It becomes a new part of one's mindfulness practice to ensure we are acting with power, authority and integrity, all the time working to undermine the tendencies of greed, hatred, and delusion with which we all have to live. These tensions cannot be avoided, however much we might like to. Unwanted issues of competition between colleagues can arise in these contexts too.

The same theme emerges in the development of mindfulness training organizations in different (and in the same!) countries across the world. There can be a sense of competition, and issues of inclusion and exclusion as we move towards a system

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of certification in local communities, and also move towards more regulation in the international community around standards and accreditation. We are in the flux of negotiating a sense of connectedness and community, and also in grappling with vivid experiences of the "I, me, my" configurations that constrict us.

Again, we must come back to our practices and the wider ethical space that it opens to us. Engaging in practice and mindful dialogue with our "competitors" may also assist with wiser responses within this rather challenging terrain.

Conclusion

We believe that opening these paradoxes in the training and supervision process can help cultivate embodiment in the teacher through:

- **Honoring the "dilemma" of the various paradoxes** as something not to be resolved, but to be explored with a gentle interest as part of one's practice and development.
- This framing can immediately relieve the teacher of the right/wrong split and more space is opened to see what is helpful and facilitative in the moment. These questions are often wisdom questions and depend on a fine level of listening at the time—to oneself and to participants—to find a path or a response that is salient. And of course, there may be many possible wise and workable responses.
- **Exploring the *experience*** of the pull of each "side" for the teacher.
- This exploration can be an interesting way to open up all kinds of theoretical and personal "knowings" and "unknowings" for the teacher. Teachers can begin to get to know their meditation habits, interests and beliefs, their personal strengths and weaknesses, as well as their assumptions about what will help, arising from their current and past roles as a "helper."
- **Examining the context** of the arising of the dilemma. Context is central and involves all manner of inquiries. As described in the MBI-TAC (Crane et al., 2013), it can be helpful to consider:
  What is happening right now for this person?
  What is happening for me now as the teacher?
  Where are we in the program?
  What is happening right now in the group?
  What has already happened in this group?
- **Drawing on the experience of the supervisor** who, when needed, can be relied on to take authority and hold firm to the curriculum and the spirit of the MBI pedagogy. This experience is important as not everything goes in an MBI. Even with the best of intentions, we are blind to our blind spots. Having our teaching experiences listened to and observed carefully gives us the gift of another's perspective which can help steer the teacher and his or her group into calmer, clearer waters.

Coming back to the Australian context and the wisdom of the original people of this land, there is an inspiring Aboriginal educator, Chris Sara, who has worked in

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rural community schools to reduce absentee rates, and increase teacher, parent, and student engagement. His method is founded on the principle of "high challenge, high affection." When suffering is great, we need to make strong demands on people along with a great deal of *authentic* care, affection, and relationship (Sara, 2013).

His approach echoes the attitude we might bring to our own mindfulness practice, to our course participants, and to the way we train mindfulness teachers of the future, with the recognition of another paradox inherent in the word "challenge." For here, there is only the challenge of surrendering to the unfolding of each moment, and the challenge of letting go of the need to urgently achieve or resolve anything at all.

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