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## **Introduction to Mindfulness Practice Participant Agreement**

I am so happy that you will be participating in this learning experience! Although it will be via Zoom, I think that you will find that a sense of belonging in this group will come through, and provide support as we progress through the classes and learn, practice, and share our experiences with each other. I always look forward to teaching this class as it continues to be a learning experience for me (and thus I am also a student). I also benefit greatly from engaging in mindfulness practices together with everyone in the group!

Please read the following, sign the last (signature) page to indicate your understanding and agreement, and return the signature page via e-mail to: [drmarianneherzog@gmail.com](mailto:drmarianneherzog@gmail.com). Be sure to complete the registration form and return that, as well.

### **Description**

Introduction to Mindfulness Practice can be of benefit to someone who is new to mindfulness and is interested in gaining an introduction to the basic skills and a variety of specific practices. It is also appropriate for individuals who have been introduced to mindfulness and those who engage in mindful or other forms of meditation already, and are looking to gain further understanding of mindfulness in general and in developing a more regular practice.

Participants meet in 8 weekly sessions where I will introduce the basic concepts and philosophy that underlie mindfulness practices, and you will have the opportunity to learn and practice various formal and informal practices, including mindfulness meditation, lovingkindness and compassion, and mindful movement. The goal is for you to develop a regular mindfulness practice during the training, which is cultivated through instruction, practice and discussion during sessions, regular practice during the week, setting personal goals and recording progress, and the support of other students through sharing their observations and experiences with each other in class.

In addition to the didactic and experiential learning during each session, I will provide homework for between-session practice (via e-mail that I will do with blind cc, so that that information will be private), which will include practicing what we have learned in sessions, and additional practices to try. Along the way, I may provide reading and other materials that you can choose to utilize, if you wish, in order to enhance learning.

### **This is an Educational Class**

Introduction to Mindfulness Practice is an educational class. It is not group therapy, although practicing mindfulness regularly has been shown to result in relief from various forms of emotional and physical suffering. Through regular practice, individuals develop a different way of relating to changes in mood, interpersonal interactions, experience of pain, and stressful life challenges which can lead to perspectives and strategies for coping more skillfully with their struggles.

This class does not provide psychotherapy, medical examination, assessment, diagnosis, or treatment. The class is not designed to treat any specific condition but rather, to help you develop a different relationship with the stressors in your life.

## **Self-Care and Personal Responsibility**

It is important that we each take care of ourselves and that you determine what is right for you at any given moment. Your participation in this class and in any of the activities that are part of it is voluntary. During the course, we will work together to create a safe and supportive environment to learn and grow together. You may experience emotional or physical discomfort at times during this class. I will provide invitations to engage in mindful practices, and you will take responsibility for assessing the level of discomfort you are experiencing and choosing to engage in any practice OR to modify it or not engage/dis-engage from it altogether, as necessary to maintain your emotional and/or physical safety at that particular time.

In addition to various meditation practices, you will be invited to engage in some mindful movement which could involve walking and/or yoga stretches. It is your responsibility to take care of yourself and mindfully maintain awareness and pay attention to the effects on your body to prevent injury.

Emotional distress can increase when learning to be more aware of what is happening in our mind and body in a given moment. This can lead to momentary increases in anxiety or depressed mood or increased worry or rumination during or after practice and may last for a time following practice. Research indicates that, in an introductory course such as this, these changes are generally mild and temporary, as a result, perhaps from coming into greater awareness of the habitual ways you think and behave and things that perhaps are now coming to the service that you have not previously acknowledged or processed. The overwhelming majority of any potential (and rare) major adverse effects occur during engagement in long retreats with extended periods of meditation, and not in introductory trainings such as this one.

**That said, if you are experiencing** distress that is troubling to you during this course, you agree to let me know so that we can discuss it and take any necessary measures to address this. Generally, understanding how the practices, themselves, can be used to limit discomfort is helpful, and there are ways to modify practices or switch to different ones that are helpful. In rare cases, our consultation could result in, for your best interest, my withdrawing you from the course and discussing the possibility of a referral to a mental health provider to address your concerns.

## **Confidentiality**

All group members are asked to refrain from disclosing information shared by other members to people outside of group, or to discuss shared information with other members outside of class.

As a psychologist, even when not providing psychotherapy, I follow the ethics of the American Psychological Association and state laws regarding the practice of psychology. You should be aware that, included in these are some limits on my ability to maintain confidentiality. In the case of child or elder abuse or intent of physical harm to self or others, I am bound by law to report or seek additional help for the person(s) involved, even when it means that, in so doing, I am disclosing confidential information.

## **Group Agreements**

These will be discussed in our first session. Members are asked to agree to maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of information shared by others. You are also asked to be accountable and make a commitment to the group with the recognition that you and your participation is an integral and important part of our development as a group as we learn and grow together. This makes attending all sessions to the best of your ability and engagement in the practices and sharing your experiences an important part of your own learning as well as contributing to the learning of others. We also agree to not assume we know the answers and to refrain from giving advice or engaging in discussion of someone's shared experience. We are focused on our own present-moment experiences and observing these with curiosity and non-judgement and listen to the experiences shared by others with these same attitudes, trusting that we all have the inner capacity and wisdom for growth and healing.

## **Termination**

You understand that, at my sole discretion, either in the interest of you or of the group, I may withdraw you from the course. In that case, you would receive a full refund of the course fee.

Marianne Herzog, Ph.D.

Your signature below is your acknowledgment that you have read, understand, and agree to the information in the **Introduction to Mindfulness Practice Participant Agreement:**

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**Your printed name**

**Your signature**

**Date**