

Session 6

MINDFULNESS FOR COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP

Topic Overview

There are two related topics for this session: communication and leadership. In the past five sessions, mindfulness-nonjudgmental moment-to-moment awareness has offered ways to help students acknowledge difficult emotions and sensations, build tolerance for them, and offer the self a sense of loving kindness and compassion. In today's session, mindful awareness and practices are designed to extend beyond the individual and into relationships and interactions with others. We can bring mindfulness to how we relate, converse, and help others.

Ultimately, students will explore means of building compassion for others with healthy boundaries. The goal is not to lose the self in an attempt to offer compassion. Nor is it to see communications with a desired outcome of "winning." Mindfulness with others encourages acceptance, empathy, compassion, and truly serving the person and the situation.


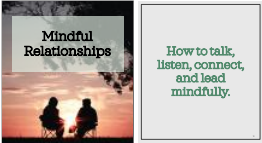


Student Goals



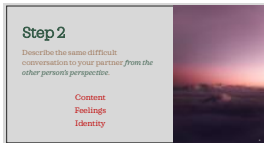
- Understand the distinction between "compassion" and "empathetic distress"
- Practice a guided mindful conversation
- Practice mindful listening
- Understand the 3 levels of a difficult conversation
- Understand and apply methods to prepare for difficult conversations
- Practice a compassion and "just like me" meditation for empathy and healthy boundaries



Teacher Goals



- Engage students in guided inquiry
- Reflect on in-class practices with the goal of gaining new knowledge from experiences
- Providing adequate pre-knowledge and learning support for safe guided inquiry
- Encourage connection among the group with reflection sharing

Lesson Script

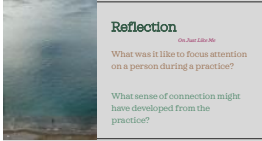
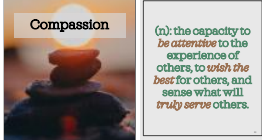


Slide	Script	Min.
	Welcome students, complete necessary paperwork, allow the class to settle in comfortably.	0
	<p>Welcome to Session 6. Today, we are covering 2 related topics: Mindfulness for Communication and Leadership.</p> <p>Often, we can think mindfulness is a solo practice, something we do on our own, for individual benefits. But mindfulness extends to our relationships. And those relationships are built on communication. Today we'll explore how we can talk, listen, relate, connect, and lead mindfully.</p>	1
	<p>We've all been inside difficult conversations. They can feel strained, stressful, or conflicted. Sometimes conversations are difficult because of the topic. Other times, it can be because of what we bring.</p> <p>Have you ever been in a conversation where you're not giving authentic answers or saying what you really mean?</p> <p>Have you been in a conversation where you feel you are hiding your true feelings, opinions, or self?</p> <p>Have you been in a conversation where one or more people are not feeling heard?</p> <p>If we can stay mindful and present during difficult conversations, instead of avoiding them, we can develop resilience, enhance connections, and expand our capacity for discomfort.</p> <p>Take a moment and bring to mind a difficult conversation you've had. It can be recent or past. It can be with anyone. Put yourself back inside the conversation—the topic, the feelings, the setting, the words.</p> <p>Try to articulate to yourself what made it difficult. [Allow 1-2 minutes for reflection.]</p>	2
	<p>In the book <i>Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most</i>, Douglas Stone offers three different “levels” of difficult conversations. They are:</p> <p>Content level (what happened? What was said?)</p> <p>Feelings level (what emotions arose?)</p> <p>Identity level (what does this conversation say about who I am?)</p>	4

	<p>The identity level of a conversation is powerful. A conversation can affect how we see ourselves. Does the conversation make us feel seen, understood, reasonable, good, kind, fair, worthy of love?</p> <p>When you think of your own example of a difficult conversation, can you see these three levels operating? Did they feel like different “levels” or parts of the conversation?</p> <p>[Allow for 2 minutes of optional sharing or questions. Redirect students who wish to share details about their difficult conversation. Assure them that the next activity will allow them time and space to share those details with a partner.]</p>	
	<p>Let’s move into a partner exercise. You’ll work in pairs to further explore the three levels of difficult conversations.</p> <p>[Set up the room so that pairs are in comfortable positions to talk.]</p> <p>This activity will ask you to share and listen in this format:</p> <p>Step 1 Partner A speaks (3 min); Partner B speaks (3 min)</p> <p>Step 2 Partner A speaks (3 min); Partner B speaks (3 min)</p>	1
	<p>Step 1</p> <p>Think of a difficult conversation. It can be the same one you brought to mind a moment ago, or a different one. You may also think of a difficult conversation you wish you’d had, but never did.</p> <p>You are going to share your conversation with your partner, beginning with Partner A speaking first. Each will have 2 minutes to speak. When you share, speak from your perspective in the conversation.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was the content? 2. What feelings arose? 3. What did the conversation say about your identity? <p>[Allow 3 minutes for Partner A to speak, then ask for Partner B to speak for 3 minutes.]</p>	6
	<p>Step 2</p> <p>Thank you for sharing and listening. Now, we are going to put ourselves in the shoes of the other parties in our difficult conversation. Sit in the other person’s perspective, looking at yourself in the conversation now.</p> <p>Describe to your partner:</p>	6

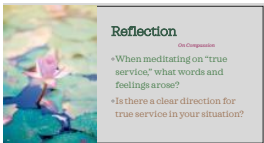
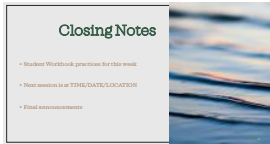

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was the content (what would the other person say about the topic and what was said?) 2. What feelings (in the other person) arose? 3. What would the other person feel the conversation said about their identity? <p>[Allow 3 minutes for Partner A to speak, then ask for Partner B to speak for 3 minutes.]</p>	
	<p>Let's debrief about that activity. You can write or just think about your answers to the reflection questions.</p> <p>[Allow 2 minutes for writing reflection, then 4 minutes for open discussion and sharing.]</p> <p>Questions to encourage guided inquiry with the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who else experienced something similar? • Can you name the emotions and locate them in the body? • What do you think about the identity level of the conversation now, with some distance gained? • What changed about any of the 3 levels when you put yourself in the other person's shoes? • What did your partner say that resonated with you? • What did partners have in common? What was different? 	6
	<p>Let's turn now to how we can apply what we just learned to our future difficult conversations by preparing for important conversations and holding the conversations mindfully.</p> <p>These are the 5 steps from Douglas Stone's book.</p> <p>Step 1: Walk through the Three Levels of the Conversation. We can do this with a conversation from the past or as preparation for the future. Name the content, feelings, and identification levels from your perspective and the other person's. Identify what is truly at stake in holding the conversation.</p> <p>Step 2: Check your intention. Decide whether to hold the conversation. Once the issue feels clear and we're able to see more than your perspective, name the intention for holding the conversation. Do we want to solve a problem, help ourselves or another, clear up a misunderstanding? Or do we want to prove who is right or make someone feel guilty?</p> <p>We may decide the conversation shouldn't be held at this time. If, however, we decide to move forward, Stone offers steps to holding the conversation.</p> <p>Step 3: Start from the objective "third story." The third story is how a neutral third party would see the situation, having considered both sides. When we begin a difficult conversation</p>	5

	<p>with this third story, it's more likely all parties will feel less defensive and even find common ground.</p> <p>Step 4: Listen with empathy. Share and listen, exploring both stories and the third story together. Explore points of difference and agreement, and ultimately attempt to reframe blame or accusation to responsibility for each person's contribution, emotions, stakes, and identities.</p> <p>Step 5: Problem solve. A solution for the moment might simply be how to keep communication open and continue the dialogue with empathy. Strive for solutions that meet each side's biggest concerns.</p> <p>As we take our break, we can call to mind a difficult conversation we may need to hold in the future, and how we can use these steps to be mindful, empathetic, and productive when we do.</p> <p>[Announce the break, time to return, locations of bathrooms and water.]</p>	
	<p>Break/Transition</p> <p>5-10 minutes, <i>depending on the conditions of the class</i></p>	
	<p>Welcome back. Let's jump into a practice to begin the next part of our session.</p> <p>This "Just Like Me" practice will be done with a partner and is intended to build compassion and empathy for others, so that we may hold difficult conversations well and simply connect to other humans.</p> <p>Let's set ourselves up for the partner practice. Sit facing your partner and introduce yourselves. [Pause]</p> <p>Be aware that partners will be asked during the practice to look at each other a few times and be present to each other.</p> <p>Find a comfortable seated position as the eyes stay open. Bring the awareness to the body with a deep inhale. [Pause] And a deep exhale. Feel the breath fill up the lungs [Pause] and flow out of the body. Breathe deeply. [Pause for 3 breaths]</p> <p>Become aware that there is a person sitting in front of us. A fellow human being [Pause] just like me. Partners take a moment to look at each other and acknowledge each other's presence. Now we can let the eyes close or look down.</p> <p>[Pause]</p>	10

	<p>Call the mind's attention to person sitting in front of us. We don't have to look at them to hold their humanity in mind. [Pause]</p> <p>This person has a body and a mind . . . just like me.</p> <p>This person in front of me has feelings, emotions, and thoughts . . . just like me.</p> <p>This person has at experienced sadness, disappointed, anger, hurt, confusion . . . just like me.</p> <p>This person has experienced physical and emotional pain and suffering . . . just like me.</p> <p>This person wishes to be free from pain and suffering . . . just like me.</p> <p>This person has experienced joys and times of happiness . . . just like me.</p> <p>This person wishes to be healthy, loved, and engaged in fulfilling relationships . . . just like me.</p> <p>This person wishes to be happy . . . just like me.</p> <p>[Pause]</p> <p>Now, allow some wishes to arise.</p> <p>I wish for this person in front of me to have the strength and resources to navigate the difficulties in life.</p> <p>I wish for this person to be free from pain and suffering.</p> <p>I wish for this person to be happy.</p> <p>Now let's look at our partners. [Pause for 3 seconds]</p> <p>This person is a fellow human being . . . just like me.</p> <p>You may now look down or close your eyes.</p> <p>[Pause]</p> <p>Let's invite ourselves to extend these wishes further.</p> <p>May everyone here in this room be happy, may they be free from suffering, may they be at peace.</p> <p>May our families and friends be happy, may they be free from suffering, may they be at peace.</p> <p>May our coworkers and neighbors be happy, may they be free from suffering, may they be at peace.</p>	
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	<p>May those I am holding difficult conversations with be happy, may they be free from suffering, may they be at peace.</p> <p>May everyone be happy, may they be free from suffering, may they be at peace.</p> <p>Finally, may I be happy, may I be free from suffering, may I be at peace.</p> <p>[Pause]</p> <p>Let's now return gentle attention to the breath. Become aware of the body seated in the chair, the feet on the floor. Breathe in and feel the spine lengthen, the head raise up. Slowly open the eyes.</p>	
	<p>Let's reflect with our partners on that practice. Take turns answering the questions on the screen.</p> <p>[Allow for about 2 minutes for each partner to speak. Ask partners to switch after 2 minutes. Allow for up to 4 minutes of group sharing.]</p>	8
	<p>The Just Like Me meditation is a first step in expanding our compassion. One definition of compassion is: "the capacity to be attentive to the experience of others, to wish the best for others, and to sense what will truly serve others."</p> <p>In our last session, we talked about self-compassion, which we'll now turn toward others.</p>	1
	<p>Let's make an important distinction here between compassion and what sometimes happens when we take on others' distress. "Empathetic distress" happens when we place another's distress onto ourselves. It feels unpleasant, weakens our sense of connection with others, focuses the attention on ourselves. We wonder, "How can I fix this?" We think, "This is hard on me."</p> <p>Empathetic distress is a way of over-identifying with someone else's difficulty and it often leads to burnout. Sometimes our fear of experiencing empathetic distress prevents us from engaging in difficult conversations at all.</p> <p>Instead of empathetic distress, we can offer compassion, which allows us to encounter other people's pain or distress without becoming activated ourselves, turns the attention outward, connecting with another person, and giving us more courage to take action.</p>	2
	<p>Let's move into a compassion practice. Begin by bringing the attention to the breath and the body in a seated position, comfortable and alert. [Pause]</p> <p>Sense into the body seated, the feet on the floor, the eyes closing or finding soft focus on the floor. Call the attention to the breath. [Pause]</p>	10

	<p>Sense the breath moving in through the nostrils and filling the lungs. Sense the breath leave the body slowly. [Pause]</p> <p>Allow the attention to remain on each deep breath. [Pause for 3 breaths]</p> <p>If the mind wanders, simply return the attention to the breath. [Pause]</p> <p>Now bring to mind a person who is experiencing a challenge. Notice their face and call to attention what is difficult for them at the moment. A health problem, a challenge at work, with family, with stress, with grief. Bring the attention to this person's experiences. [Pause]</p> <p>Name the emotions or thoughts this person is experiencing. [Pause]</p> <p>Name the needs this person has right now. [Pause]</p> <p>Consider all of this with compassion, without getting lost in empathetic distress. Hold space for the person. Hold the self intact. [Pause]</p> <p>What would it feel like to wish the best for this person without taking on the need to fix it ourselves? [Pause]</p> <p>Consider offering some of these phrases:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">May you be safe. May you be free from physical and mental harm. May you find fulfilling relationships. May you be happy.</p> <p>[Pause]</p> <p>Invite a feeling of wishing the best for this person, in any way that feels natural. [Pause]</p> <p>Explore what it would mean to truly serve this person. What would it mean to truly serve others? [Pause]</p> <p>Sit with the question for a moment. What would truly serve? [Pause]</p> <p>What will truly serve can look different in each relationship.</p> <p>Perhaps what would serve is setting a boundary or speaking a challenging truth.</p> <p>Perhaps safety or reassurance.</p> <p>Or, simply being with this person as they have this life experience.</p>	
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	<p>What would be of service? What does the voice of courage ask of me? [Pause]</p> <p>Simply listen for where the answer moves us. [Pause]</p> <p>Whatever came up, let that sink in gently. Let the best answer sit quietly. [Pause] It can be explored further over time. [Pause]</p> <p>And now, let's close the practice by returning attention to the breath, letting go of any thoughts, images, or emotions. Trusting that what's important from this reflection will still be there when we return to the moment. [Pause]</p> <p>With an inhale, feel the body and mind gaining energy and vitality. [Pause]</p> <p>With the exhale, feel the body and mind letting go. [Pause]</p> <p>Simply breathing. [Pause]</p>	
	<p>Thank you for that practice. Let's reflect for a few moments on the experience. You may write responses to the questions on the screen, or simply consider your answers quietly.</p> <p>[Allow for 2 minutes of individual reflection, then up to 4 minutes of group discussion.]</p> <p>Questions to facilitate guided inquiry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did anything about the words or feelings arising surprise you? • How does meditating on what it means to "truly serve" change your understanding of your own situation? • How have you discerned what it means to "truly serve" in the past? • How did today's method of finding how to "truly serve" compare with previous things tried? • How do other people in your life view and understand what it means to "truly serve?" 	6
	<p>[Answer any last questions, announce the next session date/time, offer contact information.]</p>	1
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Assessment

Student	P	D	NI
Attempted guided practices with effort and engagement. <i>Notes:</i>			
Sought new connections, new knowledge, or new strategies for future action through guided inquiry.			
Used personal experience to understand new terms and concepts.			
Teacher	P	D	NI
Engaged in guided inquiry with openness and support.			
Asked engaging questions to foster connection, new knowledge, and self-understanding.			
Provided adequate support for exploring experiences and engaging in safe, guided inquiry.			

P = Proficient. Attempted and completed with demonstrated mastery, success, ability, or required skill.

D = Developing. Attempted with strong effort and partially demonstrated mastery or success. The basic concept is understood, and the individual requires minimal/some additional coaching or practice to enhance ability, develop skill, and achieve mastery.

NI = Needs Improvement. Attempted with partial or incomplete understanding of the basic concept. Additional instruction, repetition, research, discussion, coaching, and/or practice is required to strengthen understanding, promote ability, confer skills, and/or approach mastery.

Journal

Session 6 reflections, questions, and thoughts.

Teaching

Students

Practice

Other