

Session 9

MINDFULNESS FOR WORK AND CAREER

Topic Overview

Depending on one's workplace, mindfulness for work and career can mean many different things. Your students may bring a mix of work experiences that include corporate settings, job sites, classrooms, in-home, volunteer venues, and many others. Their place of work isn't so much the focus as their communication, relationships, and self-awareness among others.

Too often, we work with a sense of black-and-white thinking about right and wrong, good and bad, powerful and powerless—all this can lead to judgement rather than mindful awareness of the present. The focus for students in this session is how they relate to others in their particular work role, whether that be parent, manager, server, or others. You can adapt language like "coworkers" or "colleagues" as needed to "family members," or "care recipients."



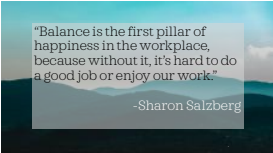
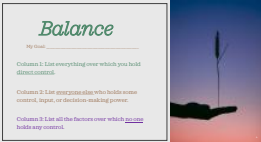
Student Goals



- Recognize the areas we control and areas we do not control.
- Practice finding balance in body posture, breath, alertness, and positive/negative external experiences.
- Understand the negative effects of distraction.
- Practice finding interconnectedness with others.
- Practice mindfulness of speech.
- Practice saying "yes" and "no" with integrity.


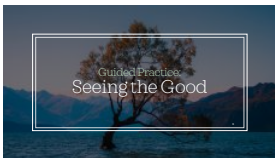
Teacher Goals


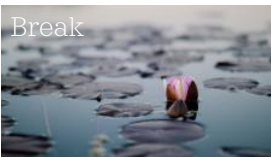

- Assess yourself and students with intention and compassion.
- Encourage students to assess their own mindfulness growth and the course.
- Facilitate student pair discussions, reflection, and interpersonal relationships.

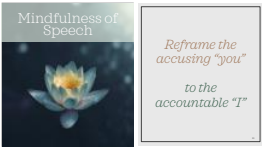
Lesson Script


Slide	Script	Min.
	<p>Welcome students, answer questions, fill out paperwork.</p>	<p>0</p>
	<p>Sometimes, mindfulness is seen only as a personal practice—something we do in private, at home, or alone on a walk. But mindfulness, Sharon Salzberg writes, “is a relational quality, in that it does not depend on what is happening but is about how we are relating to what is happening.”</p> <p>Neither does it depend on where we are. At home, work, school, in the car, at the store—mindfulness can apply and be useful in every place or situation.</p> <p>Today, we’re focusing on the workplace, whether that means an office, job site, classroom, home office, home care for others, or any number of places where we perform tasks, contribute our knowledge, exercise our skills, and work with and for others.</p>	<p>2</p>
	<p>Because we spend so much time at work (a quarter to a third of our entire lives), we can find ourselves over-identifying with our work obligations, successes, and failures. This first exercise will help us identify our realm of control at work, as well as our dependencies, relationships, and all the things that lie outside our control.</p>	
	<p>On a sheet of paper, name a big, new accomplishment you would like to complete at work. It can be a project, promotion, final grade, reorganization, trip, renovation, new hire, structure or policy change, etc.</p> <p>Now, divide the paper into 3 columns.</p> <p>In column 1, list all the areas over which you hold direct control in achieving this goal. Things like, my time, my attitude, my finances. And things like regulations, direct-reports, schedules, or decisions you directly control. [Pause for 1-2 minutes]</p> <p>In column 2, write down the names of other people who would have some control, input, or decision-making power in achieving your goal. People like your supervisor, customers, partners, direct reports, family members, neighbors, elected officials, etc. [Pause for 1-2 minutes]</p> <p>In column 3, write down all the things over which you have absolutely no control, but could impact how and whether you achieve your goal. Things like weather, sickness, accidents, other people’s emotions, laws, etc. [Pause for 1-2 minutes]</p>	<p>7</p>



 <p>Reflection</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does it feel to compare our direct realm of control with all the people and things outside our control? 2. How often do we feel responsible for the people and things in columns 2 and 3? 3. How does taking on all that responsibility feel? 	<p>Let's examine our lists and see what we can take away from this exercise.</p> <p>Discuss the following, in any order, with a partner sitting near you. Take turns sharing and listening.</p> <p>[Allow for 3-4 minutes of partner sharing]</p> <p>This exercise can hopefully remind us that there is only so much within our direct control, and that we are interconnected, dependent, vulnerable, and in need to good relationships and communication.</p>	<p>6</p>
 <p>Guided Practice Balance Meditation</p>	<p>One thing that is within our realm of control is our own posture toward work and others. This meditation practice helps us foster balance-alert and calm, relaxed and attentive, tranquil and energetic. It can be performed sitting at your desk, but with a focus away from any screens.</p> <p>For now, find a comfortable, seated position. Allow the eyes to close or focus softly ahead. [Pause]</p> <p>Take a deep breath in and feel the body fill with air. Exhale slowly and feel the body release the breath fully. Take a few more deep inhales and exhales. [Pause]</p> <p>Bring the attention to the balance in the posture. The back is straight, not resting or leaning, but not stiff or tense. The back is not slumped, just relaxed and alert. Take a moment to bring the back and spine into balance. [Pause]</p> <p>Begin to scan the body for other areas to bring more balance. Start with the breath. Take each inhale fully, slowly, and evenly. The body fills with air gently. The body releases the air gently as well. [Pause]</p> <p>The lungs fill with air fully, but not overly full. The exhale cleanses but does not deplete. Each breath is in balance. [Pause]</p> <p>Bring to attention the mind. Distractions are normal. We can respond to distractions with balance. When a distraction enters the mind, hold the body loosely, calmly. Don't tense up at a distraction. It will pass. Find balance in the physical response to distracting thoughts or feelings. [Pause]</p> <p>Bring the attention to the emotions. Any feelings that arise can be met with balance-open acceptance, awareness, curiosity, and nonjudgement. [Pause]</p> <p>Feelings don't have to throw the body out of balance. Feelings can be acknowledged with soft shoulders, with resting arms, with planted feet. [Pause]</p> <p>Allow feelings to be met with the body in balance. [Pause]</p>	<p>10</p>

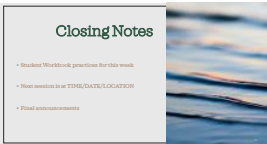

	<p>Our thoughts and feelings are like a delicate glass orb. We hold it with care and balance. Not too loose or it will fall out of our hands. Not too tight or it will shatter. [Pause]</p> <p>Cradle the thoughts and feelings with a balanced body and balanced energy. [Pause for 4-5 breaths, offering feedback or direction as needed]</p> <p>At any time, readjust to find balance. Bring more calm or more alertness as needed. Bring more or less of whatever is needed. Back to balance. [Pause for 3-4 breaths]</p> <p>Carry this balance back into alertness, back to the body seated, the feet on the floor. Balance in the breath energizing and awakening. Balance to the spine lifting. When ready, open the eyes.</p>	
	<p>Thank you for that practice. Let's take a moment and reflect on the experience. Feel free to write answers to the questions on the screen, or just reflect on them quietly.</p>	4
	<p>Balance <i>outside</i> the body is equally important. In the next practice, we can find balance between good and bad, positive and negative. Rarely is a "bad day" entirely bad. Rarely is a "good day" completely free from frustration, conflict or disappointment.</p> <p><i>Seeing the Good Meditation</i></p> <p>When our perceptions of "good" and "bad" are out of balance, more often we skew toward the bad—we remember more mistakes than successes, more embarrassments, failures, conflicts, slights, and frustrations.</p> <p>We can broaden our attention to include the good and intentionally cultivate seeing the good more often—in ourselves, others, and situations.</p> <p>Find a comfortable seated position. Take a few deep grounding breaths. [Pause]</p> <p>Scan the body for where to bring more balance-balanced energy, balanced relaxation, balanced calm. [Pause]</p> <p>Bring the attention to one good action at work yesterday. Something given or done for others, a contribution, a smile, an offer of help, a compliment. Allow for delight in the good action, delight in the self for doing it. [Pause]</p> <p>Sitting with the good and the delight helps us befriend the self, showing gratitude and appreciation for the self as for any other. Sitting with the good encourages more good today and tomorrow. [Pause]</p>	8

	<p>Now, think of yesterday and any receiving of good. When help was offered, or a compliment, a smile, a thank you, a gift. Find one good given to us yesterday at work. [Pause]</p> <p>Sit with appreciation and gratitude for the gift. See the person who offered us good and focus on the good within them. [Pause]</p> <p>Now, bring to mind someone at work who is having a difficult time, whether with a task, a relationship, a personal issue, their health. [Pause] Focus on their good. See the person as more than their challenges. Try and recall a good between yourself and this person. Appreciate this memory. [Pause]</p> <p>Now think of someone with whom there is conflict, tension, disagreement, or stress. Without denying the difficulty, find some good in this person. A good they have done for you. A good they offer to others. A good you have done for them. See the person as more than the difficulty. [Pause]</p> <p>Let's end this practice by wishing us all well. Say:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>All beings want to be happy, safe, loved, and appreciated. May we all be happy, safe, loved, and appreciated.</i></p> <p>Slowly bring the attention back to the breath and the body. When ready, open the eyes.</p>	
	<p>Thank you for that practice. Let's reflect on the experience.</p> <p>[Announce the break, time to return, location of water and bathrooms.]</p>	<p>5</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Break/Transition 5-10 minutes, <i>depending on the conditions of the class</i></p>	
	<p>Welcome back. Let's talk about our next practice, which will help us with focus and attention.</p> <p>We are more distracted than ever, anxious and ruminating, procrastinating, and trying to multitask despite evidence that it's impossible and damaging to our capacity for deep focus.</p> <p>At work, lack of focus doesn't just have the expected consequences of lowered productivity. Poor concentration can also increase anxiety, lower our work satisfaction, and impede our relationships. We end up feeling and acting disengaged, distant from others.</p> <p>Distraction can leave us feeling fragmented, split among worries, anxieties, memories, the present. Mindfulness can help</p>	<p>15</p>

	<p>integrate our different parts and experiences and remind us how interconnected we are with others.</p> <p><i>Interconnectedness Practice</i></p> <p>Find a comfortable seated position. Take a moment to scan the body for balanced energy. Scan the body for balanced attentiveness and tranquility. [Pause] Start with the head and move downward. Continue to breathe deeply. [Pause for 1-2 minutes]</p> <p>Bring the attention to the clothes and shoes and accessories we're all wearing today. Consider how many hands have touched these outfits. How many hands grew and harvested the materials, transported, refined, and sold each piece? [Pause]</p> <p>Bring the attention to the building we're in right now. Consider the bodies that labored to create this space. The people who clean and maintain it for our ability to gather here? [Pause]</p> <p>Think about all the people who have given us their time, resources, energy, and love. [Pause]</p> <p>Think about all the people whose work we need to do our own work. The partners, coworkers, maintenance workers, food workers, repair technicians, city workers. [Pause]</p> <p>Let all of these people who impact our lives sit with us for a moment. Let's feel how intertwined we are. Acknowledge how interdependent we are, how much we need others. [Pause]</p> <p>Feeling part of something greater can bring joy and celebration. [Pause]</p> <p>We can feel less alone when we recognize the lives that are constantly touching ours. [Pause]</p> <p>Consider how many lives we touch each day by our presence, our gifts, our needs. We are the center of our own web of networks, and we are part of many others' too. [Pause]</p> <p>Take a moment and bring real faces into the consciousness. Names, if possible. Recognize not just vague groups or positions, but the real people that make up our interdependent lives. Allow the attention to rest on each face with warmth and gratitude. [Pause for 1-3 minutes]</p> <p>When ready, open the eyes.</p>	
	<p>Thank you for that practice. Let's move into a few exercises and practices focused on communication at work. Interconnected as we are, communication is crucial for work, productivity, respect, and mindful presence.</p> <p>How we frame our language impacts the way we feel about and see ourselves and others.</p>	<p>6</p>

	<p><i>Mindfulness of Speech Exercise</i></p> <p>First, think of a prior “negative” at work. A personal mistake, failure, disappointment, conflict, etc. Something that was your responsibility.</p> <p>Next, write down what happened in the second-person voice (“You” voice). “You missed that deadline. You were late. You forgot to track that invoice. You lost the contract. You made the customer angry. You covered up your mistake.”</p> <p>Then, take that same phrase and re-write it in the first-person voice (“I”) and make it active. “I missed that deadline. I was late.”</p> <p>Finally, write down what is needed to keep this from happening again (what is needed from yourself or others).</p> <p>Notice how it feels to use the accountability language of “I” instead of the accusatory language of “You.” Does the framing change the way the incident feels?</p> <p>[Allow for 4-5 minutes of group sharing and discussion]</p>	
	<p>At work, we talk a lot about <i>integrity</i>. Typically, we mean honesty, transparency, and taking responsibility. But the etymology of the word <i>integrity</i> is “whole” and “complete.” Integrity involves showing up at work as your whole and complete self, with your values, needs, desires, limitations, strengths, and flaws.</p> <p>When we’re able to show up fully and authentically, many benefits follow, including saying what we mean. Specifically, saying “yes” and “no” when we really mean them instead of agreeing to take on too much or pushing away something because we may be afraid of it.</p> <p>We can say “yes” and “no” quickly and automatically, without actually checking in with ourselves and asking where our answer is coming from.</p> <p><i>Yes or No Practice</i></p> <p>Let’s begin the practice by taking a few deep, grounding breaths. Find a posture of attentiveness and relaxation. [Pause]</p> <p>Bring to mind a question or a request under consideration. Something yet unanswered. It may be a favor, an obligation, a query. Bring to mind other requests that may be under consideration. [Pause]</p> <p>Consider answering each one. Check in with the body about where the answer is coming from. Is it a place with tension? Is it a place with softness? Is a “yes” or “no” coming with any physical discomfort? [Pause]</p>	<p>8</p>

	<p>Consider the stories being told in the mind around each answer. Is it a story that uses words like “never” or “always”? Are there thoughts of doubt, negative self-talk, and rumination? [Pause]</p> <p>Check in with the body. Check in with the mind and feelings. Where are the answers coming from? Know that the questions don’t need to be answered now.</p> <p>When ready, bring the attention back to the breath, filling up the lungs and then releasing. Bring the spine and head back to alertness. When ready, open the eyes.</p>	
	<p>Let’s take a moment to freely reflect on the Yes/No Meditation with movement. Feel free to stand, take a stretch, walk around the room, find a window, or go outside.</p> <p>[Allow for 2-3 minutes of independent reflection, and up to 4 minutes of group sharing or discussion.]</p>	6
	<p>Our final practice for the day is a Forgiveness Meditation. It helps our balance and work life if we can practice mindful forgiveness and bring the attention to processing conflicts. There are and will be many occasions for forgiveness, especially during times of stress, pressure, or overwhelm. This exercise can be for forgiving others and the self.</p> <p>Find a comfortable and relaxed position. Let the body and mind find a balanced relaxation and steady breath [Pause for 3 breaths]</p> <p>Call to mind a difficult emotion felt recently. It can be anger, envy, fear, loneliness, rejection, etc. Choose something that will not overwhelm. Recall the situation, people, actions associated with this emotion. [Pause]</p> <p>Now, sense the emotion arising <i>in response</i>. Is there shame at feeling angry? Is there dislike for feeling envy? What is the feeling <i>about</i> the difficult feeling? [Pause]</p> <p>What is the story the mind tells about the difficult emotion? That it’s bad or wrong? That you shouldn’t feel this way? That there is something wrong with you? Tune into the language of the story about the feeling. [Pause]</p> <p>Try to substitute language now. When a judging word arises, substitute it with “pain” or “painful.”</p> <p>Instead of “bad,” “terrible,” “awful,” “embarrassing,” or “stupid,” say “painful.”</p> <p>Instead of “I’m bad” or “I’m terrible,” say, “I’m hurting.”</p> <p>Instead of “rage” or “fear,” say “pain.” Recognize that states of rage or fear are painful.</p> <p>Forgive the self for feeling difficult feelings.</p>	10

	<p>Change the language of difficult feelings now. Keep breathing. Notice the feelings and language arising, and when you need to change it. [Pause for 3-4 breaths, offering feedback or help as needed]</p> <p>Find another difficult emotion. Bring it to mind. Feel it in the body. Where does the emotion live in the body? What does it feel like? Tightness, stiffness, heat?</p> <p>Notice again what the feeling makes you feel. Ashamed, resentful, afraid? [Pause]</p> <p>How does that second emotion feel in the body? More tightening? More heat? Cold? Tension? [Pause]</p> <p>Can we offer kindness and compassion to the emotion? Find the space in the body where the emotions are arising in sensations. Breathe into those places in the body. Offer kindness. "There is pain and suffering here." "This is difficult." "All feelings are okay." [Pause, repeating as necessary]</p> <p>We can't control when feelings arise. We don't always invite them or want them. But when they arise, we can handle them without being overwhelmed. We don't need to be defined by feelings. We can meet them with compassion for ourselves. We can forgive ourselves and others. [Pause, repeating as necessary]</p> <p>Remember that anger, hatred, fear, envy—these are all painful states. We can have compassion for ourselves and others feeling this way.</p> <p>[Allow the practice to continue as long as students are engaged in letting difficult emotions arise and repeating the practice, approx. 3-4 min.]</p>	
 <p>Closing Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Workbook practices for this week • Remind students to set TIME/DATE/LOCATION • Final announcements 	<p>[Answer any last questions, announce the next session date/time, offer contact information.]</p>	<p>1</p>
 <p>Wish each other and ourselves well.</p> <p>CLOSING</p>		<p>0</p>

Assessment

Student	P	D	NI
Distinguished among areas within our control and outside our control. <i>Notes:</i>			
Grew in awareness of our interconnectedness.			
Practiced recognizing emotions in response to other emotions.			
Teacher	P	D	NI
Facilitated formal or informal student assessments of progress, growth, and skill.			
Facilitated formal or informal self-assessment of teaching, relationships, preparation, and class dynamics.			
Accommodated and adapted the lesson to multiple kinds of work environments.			

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 9 reflections, questions, and thoughts.

Teaching

Students

Practice

Other