

Evaluation and Feedback of Mindfulness Teaching Skills

This process involves two people: a **mentor**, who is carrying out the evaluation, and a **learner**, the person receiving feedback. Ideally, a mentor will be a qualified mindfulness supervisor, or at any rate someone who is significantly more experienced than the learner in teaching mindfulness-based courses.

Purpose

- Developmental process for the learner
- Vehicle for mentor to give feedback and guidance
- Ensure that learner has the essential skills for teaching mindfulness
- Achieving this in a way which recognises the time constraints on both learner and mentor.

After attending a Mindfulness Teacher Development Training, a new teacher should run a course jointly with a more experienced teacher, who will act as mentor, and the new teacher as learner.

During this course, the learner keeps a **reflective log**. This can include anything that occurs to the learner e.g. reflections and learning points both from the course, and personal practice. Entries should be written after every session. It should include a “critical incident” during the course, where the learner experienced a difficulty, and how they responded to this. The cycle of reflection by Christopher Johns can be used for this (appendix 1). In addition, the log should include daily entries reflecting on personal practice for 1 month. The reflective log is not seen by the mentor.

At the end of the course, the reflective log is used as the basis for a **reflective essay** of around 500 words. Again, this should include reflections on the course and personal practice. This is seen by the mentor and can form the basis of a discussion where the mentor explores with the learner some the issues raised in the essay.

During the course, the mentor and learner agree on one **formal practice**, led by the learner, which is used as the basis for feedback. The best way for the mentor to evaluate this is to follow the practice from the “inside” i.e. how it feels when being led by learner.

The **feedback** can most effectively be done as an inquiry with the learner, led by the mentor at the end of the session or soon after it. It is best be done on a one-to-one basis rather than in a group. The tone of the feedback should be supportive, with some learning points woven into the inquiry. This can be done for more than one practice.

Other areas for the mentor to consider and provide feedback on during the course are:

- Embodying mindfulness – being open and present in the way the course is delivered.
- Relational skills – including expressing compassion in a natural way.
- Keeping boundaries e.g. time, confidentiality
- Inquiry skills – noticing, dialogue linking [2].

The Mindfulness Practice Teaching Scale (Appendix 2) can be used for this purpose. The MBI-TAC is another useful resource, and includes guidance on levels of proficiency (<http://mindfulnessteachersuk.org.uk/pdf/MBI-TAC-AUG2015.pdf>). However, grading proficiency is not required in this evaluation and feedback.

This process can also be used for **existing teachers**. The procedure is similar to the above, except that the reflective log & essay can be done on any 8 week course led by learner, and the mentor

evaluates practice using either DVD or sitting in. The mentor should observe the learner, so an audio recording is not suitable for this.

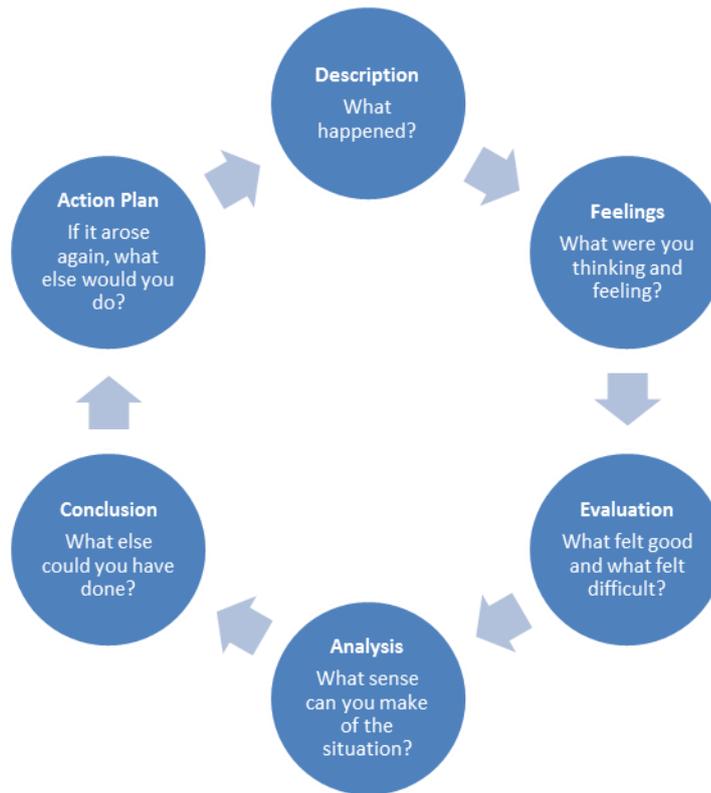
It can also be used for learners on a **peer supervision** basis for any course, as a form of CPD. In this case both learners could potentially take the role of mentor and learner for each other. It can also be done in other settings e.g. a follow-up session or staff practice group.

In the great majority of cases, evaluation and feedback will empower the learner to teach mindfulness courses in the future. For the process to be fully meaningful, it is important that the mentor is willing to raise **significant concerns** about the teaching of the learner. A useful question to ask is “would I be happy for this person to teach mindfulness to a relative of mine?”. In some instances, this may mean the learner suspending their mindfulness teaching in order to have further personal development.

A slightly more formalised version of this evaluation and feedback process is expected to provide the basis for accreditation of NHS mindfulness teachers in the future.

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Appendix 1 - Reflective Cycle Prof Christopher Johns



Description <i>What Happened</i>	
Feelings <i>What were you thinking and feeling</i>	
Evaluation <i>What felt good?</i> <i>What felt difficult?</i>	
Analysis <i>What sense can you make of the situation</i>	
Conclusion <i>What else could you have done</i>	
Action plan <i>If it arose again what would you do</i>	

Appendix 2 - Mindfulness Practice Teaching Scale (Based on MBI-TAC) for use in observation and feedback (Lisa Graham)

Skills	Skills Elements	Are these skills demonstrated appropriately (tick one)					The Good Points
		1. Hardly at all	2. Some of the time	3. Half of the time	4. Most of the time	5. Nearly all of the time	
Relational skills	Acceptance, Warmth, Curiosity, Respect, Authenticity.						<u>Constructive Comment</u>
Embodiment of mindfulness	Present, Calm, Alert, Responsive, Focussed.						
Guiding mindfulness practices	Precise language, Pacing and Key learning for particular practice/stage.						
Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching	Layers of inquiry, Experiential focus, Links to key learning points						