



# The Domains of Mindful Teaching

## How to use this document

The **Domains of Mindful Teaching** is an inquiry-based guide for teachers to use as they plan, implement, and reflect on teaching mindfulness to young people. The framework provided is intended to guide educators in creating intentional, relevant, and engaging mindfulness lessons that are inclusive, safe-enough, trauma-informed, and ultimately grounded in the teacher's own embodied presence.

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Since 2007, the faculty at Mindful Schools has taught mindfulness to thousands of children and adolescents worldwide, and we have had the honor of observing hundreds of teachers as they teach mindfulness to youth. Many things vary: the age group; the setting and geographic location; the backgrounds, personalities, and identities of students and teachers. Across these variations, **we have identified core elements of mindful teaching that contribute to an effective and empowering offering.**

We strongly believe that **effective mindfulness programs are not formulaic**; they must be **context-specific** and **intentionally designed to reflect the communities they serve**. As such, **this document does not provide one-size-fits-all answers** for how to teach mindfulness. Instead, in much the same way that each lesson in the Mindful Schools' K-12 Curriculum is based on a core inquiry, each teaching practice is offered here as a **question to explore**.

The questions in each of the five domains address the **choice points** that teachers encounter while leading a mindfulness lesson, and reflect the core outcomes for each lesson in the MS curriculum, which are:

1. To articulate the **relevance of mindfulness** for students and help them make connections about how they might **use mindfulness in their daily life**
2. To provide basic instructions and support to **empower students in their capacity for self-awareness and self-regulation**
3. To provide time for **direct experience with mindfulness** through formal practice
4. To create emotional safety sufficient for students to **share and explore their inner experience**

## The Domains of Mindful Teaching

### Domain #1: Embodiment

Embodiment	Container	Engagement	Lesson	Practice
<i>How can I use my presence to help anchor and regulate the space?</i>	<i>How does it feel to be a student in my class?</i>	<i>How are the students and I relating and connecting to the lesson and to each other?</i>	<i>How do my instructional choices and activities support my learning intentions?</i>	<i>How will I facilitate a mindfulness practice that meets students where they are?</i>

<b>EMBODIMENT: <i>How can I use my presence to help anchor and regulate the space?</i></b>	
<b>“HELDNESS”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do I need to do to convey the sense that I am holding the group knowledgeably, competently, and am familiar with the lesson?</li> </ul>
<b>PRESENCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will I model my own mindfulness practice as I teach, offering students a kind, curious, non-reactive, and non-judgmental presence?</li> </ul>
<b>ATTUNEMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will I resource myself to sustain an integrated awareness of my inner and outer experiences while teaching?</li> <li>• What can I do to ensure I name, incorporate, or address what is happening (in my body, inside or outside the room), in an appropriate manner, as it’s happening?</li> </ul>
<b>TONE AND PACING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is an appropriate tone and pacing for this group that I am teaching?</li> </ul>
<b>LANGUAGE (internal)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can I use non-evaluative internal language to move away from a sense of needing to “achieve” something, “get it right,” or “fix” students, and instead encourage exploration and openness?</li> </ul>

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### Domain #2: Container

Embodiment	Container	Engagement	Lesson	Practice
<i>How can I use my presence to help anchor and regulate the space?</i>	<i>How does it feel to be a student in my class?</i>	<i>How are the students and I relating and connecting to the lesson and to each other?</i>	<i>How do my instructional choices and activities support my learning intentions?</i>	<i>How will I facilitate a mindfulness practice that meets students where they are?</i>

<b>CONTAINER: <i>How does it feel to be a student in my class?</i></b>	
<b>INCLUSION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What elements of facilitation can I use to create a sense of belonging, community, and safety for all students?</li> <li>• How can I actively validate and welcome all bodies and all lived experiences in my classroom?</li> </ul>
<b>PHYSICAL SPACE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can I set up the room or virtual setting to support the container, encourage student engagement, and incline the various systems (individual nervous systems, overall classroom system) toward regulation?</li> </ul>
<b>RITUALS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What rituals (opening, closing, or otherwise) can I include to support inclusion, equity, relationships, student engagement, and/or instruction?</li> </ul>
<b>NORMS AND BOUNDARIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What agreements/norms will support a healthy classroom climate?</li> <li>• How can I make these agreements evident, and how can I support them?</li> <li>• How can I handle unexpected moments when these agreements are broken or challenged?</li> </ul>

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### Domain #3: Engagement

Embodiment	Container	Engagement	Lesson	Practice
<i>How can I use my presence to help anchor and regulate the space?</i>	<i>How does it feel to be a student in my class?</i>	<i>How are the students and I relating and connecting to the lesson and to each other?</i>	<i>How do my instructional choices and activities support my learning intentions?</i>	<i>How will I facilitate a mindfulness practice that meets students where they are?</i>

<b>ENGAGEMENT: <i>How are the students and I relating and connecting to the lesson and to each other?</i></b>	
<b>AUTHENTICITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can I bring my whole self into the room as a basis for authentic and honest relationships? What elements of my own identity/experience am I still growing comfortable with?</li> <li>• As I engage with students, what will support me to notice and skillfully navigate the biases &amp; judgments that may arise?</li> </ul>
<b>FACILITATOR ENGAGEMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can I demonstrate my interest in this material and in the experiences of my students?</li> <li>• How can I use non-evaluative language to move away from “achieving” something or “getting it right” and encourage student inquiry &amp; observation?</li> </ul>
<b>STUDENT VOICE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what ways can I provide opportunities for student participation, feedback, and discussion to ensure that all voices come into the room, even if not out loud?</li> </ul>
<b>STUDENT ENGAGEMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can I support students in connecting to the lesson activities, to me, and to each other?</li> </ul>
<b>CLASSROOM TEACHER (if applicable)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will I engage the classroom teacher in the practice and the lesson?</li> </ul>

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### Domain #4: Lesson

Embodiment	Container	Engagement	Lesson	Practice
<i>How can I use my presence to help anchor and regulate the space?</i>	<i>How does it feel to be a student in my class?</i>	<i>How are the students and I relating and connecting to the lesson and to each other?</i>	<i>How do my instructional choices and activities support my learning intentions?</i>	<i>How will I facilitate a mindfulness practice that meets students where they are?</i>

<b>LESSON: How do my instructional choices and activities support my learning intentions?</b>	
<b>RELEVANCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will I establish real-life connections between students' experience and identity and the topics and practices I will teach?</li> </ul>
<b>INQUIRY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can I frame questions and engage students so they can understand and make meaning of their practice experience?</li> </ul>
<b>INCLUSIVE DESIGN AND INSTRUCTION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What combination of instructional elements and techniques can I incorporate to create a lesson that is culturally humble, relevant, and sustaining to best meet the needs and learning styles of this group?</li> <li>In what ways might my background and unique positioning have influenced how I structured this lesson? What can I do, and with whom can I check in, to help uncover my blind spots?</li> </ul>
<b>CLARITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What language/words can I use when explaining the concepts and practices in this lesson to ensure it is understandable and appropriate for this group?</li> </ul>
<b>FLOW</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can I transition my students from each part of the lesson in a way that supports cohesion and greater understanding?</li> </ul>
<b>SECULARITY AND SCIENCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can I ensure my lessons are secular and not advancing or inhibiting any religious beliefs?</li> <li>How can I ensure my lessons are informed by, supported by, or make reference to relevant research findings?</li> </ul>

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### Domain #5: Practice

Embodiment	Container	Engagement	Lesson	Practice
<i>How can I use my presence to help anchor and regulate the space?</i>	<i>How does it feel to be a student in my class?</i>	<i>How are the students and I relating and connecting to the lesson and to each other?</i>	<i>How do my instructional choices and activities support my learning intentions?</i>	<i>How will I facilitate a mindfulness practice that meets students where they are?</i>

<b>PRACTICE: How will I facilitate a mindfulness practice that meets students where they are?</b>	
<b>SET UP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What can I do to prepare students for the practices that I share? What do they need to know or hear ahead of time?</li> </ul>
<b>GUIDANCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For any given practice, what balance do I strike between guidance/instruction and silence in order to meet this group's needs?</li> </ul>
<b>LENGTH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is an appropriate duration of practice, given the capacity of this particular group to sustain attention and regulation?</li> </ul>
<b>SAFETY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will I facilitate an experience that is safe-enough for students experiencing dysregulation (e.g. hyper- and hypo-arousal)?</li> <li>• How can I welcome and normalize various responses students may have (e.g., eyes open, movement, giggles, etc.)?</li> </ul>
<b>LANGUAGE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can I use invitational language that encourages students to explore their experience and also leaves them <b>in choice</b> about how they practice?</li> </ul>