

MINDFUL SOCIAL WORKERS

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Welcome

This 15-week curriculum is designed to seamlessly integrate mindfulness practices into your social work course.

This guide provides an overview of each week's goals, mindfulness practice, and reflection prompts that are used to deepen understanding and application.

The 15 videos are built progressively, fostering personal growth and resilience as students navigate the challenges of their social work education

Course Structure

The course is structured into three sections to provide a progressive learning experience:

1. Foundations:

Introduces basic mindfulness techniques to help students build a solid practice base.

2. Emotional Awareness:

Develops skills for managing emotions and cultivating positive mental states.

3. Advanced Practice:

Challenges students with more complex techniques and encourages long-term integration of mindfulness.

Weekly Session Structure

Each week:

- ☐ begin class by playing the video that can be found on the website
- ☐ if possible, turn off/dim the lights
- ☐ play the videos in number order, as each concept builds on the last
- ☐ when feasible, offer time for students to complete the reflection prompt

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Week 1: Intro to Mindfulness

This session introduces students to the foundational concept of mindfulness. Through a guided mindfulness of breathing practice, students will learn to cultivate breath awareness, establishing a fundamental skill that serves as a cornerstone for future mindfulness exercises.

Objective: introducing mindfulness and anchoring back into the moment using the breath

Meditation: mindfulness of breath

Video Length: 9 minutes

Reflection Prompt:

- What did you notice when focusing on the breath?
- Was the mind busy, was attention focused on the breath, or a mix of both?
- Is this familiar or was this a new experience?

Week 2: Present Moment Awareness

This week emphasizes the importance of regular mindfulness practice. Students will learn the three-minute breathing space, a practice designed to step out of auto pilot and reconnect with the present moment.

Objective: increasing capacity to be in the present moment

Meditation: 3-minute breathing space

Video Length: 8 minutes

Reflection Prompt:

- What did you notice about your thoughts, feelings, or physical sensations?
- Did your experience shift in any way from the beginning to the end of the practice?
- In what ways might you integrate this practice into your daily life?

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Week 3: Body Awareness

This session encourages students to explore their physical experiences with curiosity. Through the body scan meditation, students will develop a heightened awareness of their bodily sensations, allowing them to better understand and respond to their body's subtle cues.

Objective: developing a connection to the body

Meditation: brief body scan

Video Length: 11 minutes

Reflection Prompt:

- What did you notice about your thoughts, feelings, or body sensations?
- Did you notice any repeated patterns in how your attention moved during the body scan?
- How might regularly practicing the body scan affect your awareness of your body in daily life?

Week 4: Mindfulness in Daily Life

This week explores bringing mindfulness into daily activities. Students are guided through a mindfulness practice focused on the body in motion, encouraging them to observe and experience physical sensations while engaging in everyday activities.

Objective: integrating mindfulness into everyday actions

Meditation: mindfulness of the body in motion

Video Length: 7 minutes

Reflection Prompt:

- What sensations did you notice in your body as you moved through the exercise?
- Did you notice any repeated thoughts, feelings, or physical sensations during the movements?
- How might you incorporate mindful movement into your daily life?

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Week 5: Mindful Listening

This week emphasizes mindful listening as a tool for deeper awareness. Students will shift their attention to hearing to enhance their awareness of the sounds around them.

Objective: improving communication through mindfulness

Meditation: mindfulness of sounds

Video Length: 6 minutes

Reflection Prompt:

- What did you notice about your experience of listening during this practice?
- How did your attention move between different sounds, or between sounds and other experiences (like thoughts or body sensations)?
- How might paying attention to sounds in your daily life affect your overall wellness?

Week 6: Emotional Awareness

This session guides students through a mindfulness of emotions practice, focusing on observing and labeling emotions without becoming overwhelmed. Students will learn to recognize, identify, and accept their emotional experiences.

Objective: observing emotions without becoming overwhelmed

Meditation: mindfulness of emotions

Video Length: 7 minutes

Reflection Prompt:

- What physical sensations or emotional experiences did you observe during the practice?
- What thoughts or feelings came up during the meditation, and did you notice any patterns in them?
- How might this practice of observing emotions mindfully help you manage stress in daily life?

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Week 7: Awareness of Thoughts

This session guides students through a mindfulness practice focused on observing thoughts without judgment. By cultivating a non-reactive awareness, students will learn to acknowledge thoughts as they arise, without labeling them as good or bad, allowing them to pass freely without becoming entangled in their narratives.

Objective: observing thoughts without judgement

Meditation: working with thoughts

Video Length: 8 minutes

Reflection Prompt:

- What did you notice about your experience of listening during this practice?
- How did your attention move between different sounds, or between sounds and other experiences (like thoughts of body sensations)?
- How might paying attention to sounds in your daily life affect your overall wellness?

Week 8: Mindfulness for Stress Reduction

This week introduces students to the mindfulness practice of RAIN, a powerful tool for managing stress and difficult emotions. Through the RAIN method, students will learn to approach their experiences with greater awareness and compassion, fostering resilience and emotional balance in the face of stress and uncertainty.

Objective: managing stress with mindfulness

Meditation: RAIN

Video Length: 11 minutes

Reflection Prompt:

- What did you notice about your inner experience during the RAIN meditation?
- How did your relationship with your thoughts and emotions evolve throughout the practice, if at all?
- In what ways might this practice influence your approach to challenging situations in your life?

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Week 9: Gratitude and Appreciation

In this session, students will discover how gratitude can deepen their mindfulness practice through a guided reflection on the things they're thankful for. By focusing on the people, experiences, and moments that enrich their lives, students will learn a more mindful and compassionate way of living.

Objective: how gratitude supports mindfulness

Meditation: guided gratitude reflection

Video Length: 9 minutes

Reflection Prompt:

- What did you notice during this practice?
- As you focused on gratitude, were there any shifts in physical sensations or emotions?
- How can you bring more gratitude into your daily life?

Week 10: Self-Compassion

This session invites students to cultivate self-compassion through a loving-kindness meditation. Guided by gentle affirmations and heartfelt intentions, students will learn to extend kindness and understanding to themselves.

Objective: introducing self-kindness

Meditation: loving-kindness

Video Length: 9 minutes

Reflection Prompt:

- What arose as you offered lovingkindness to yourself?
- Did you notice an openness, resistance, indifference, or any combination of these when directing lovingkindness towards yourself? How did these patterns unfold?
- How might the insights you gained from noticing your response during the meditation inform your approach to cultivating lovingkindness?

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Week 11: Resilience and Difficult Emotions

This session invites students to deepen their resilience through mindfulness. Guided by a sitting with difficulty meditation, students will learn to navigate challenges with greater ease and equanimity, fostering a stronger connection to their inner strength.

Objective: cultivating resilience through mindfulness

Meditation: sitting with difficulty

Video Length: 11 minutes

Reflection Prompt:

- What sensations, thoughts, or emotions did you notice as you brought attention to the difficulty?
- How did you relate to the difficulty as it arose? Did you notice any patterns in your response to it?
- How might this practice of working with difficulty be relevant to managing stress in your daily life?

Week 12: Grounding Techniques

This week focuses on grounding through sensory awareness. Students will engage in a meditation that emphasizes tuning into their inner senses, cultivating a deeper connection to the present moment and enhancing their ability to remain centered amidst life's distractions.

Objective: grounding in the present moment

Meditation: sensory awareness meditation

Video Length: 9 minutes

Reflection Prompt:

- What did you notice as you shifted attention from one sensation to the next?
- Were there any thoughts, body sensations, or emotions that arose in response to what you noticed? If so, how did you work with them?
- How might bringing this kind of awareness to your sensory experiences in daily life help you stay grounded during stressful times?

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Week 13: Developing Patience

This session encourages students to cultivate patience through the practice of silent meditation. By embracing stillness and quiet contemplation, students will explore "being" rather than "doing."

Objective: exploring patience

Meditation: silent meditation

Video Length: 7 minutes

Reflection Prompt:

- What did you notice during the silent meditation? Was there an urge to "do," were you able to "be," or was there a combination?
- How did you respond to what you noticed during the silence?
- How might this practice relate to managing stress in your daily life?

Week 14: Mindful Self-Reflection

This week, students will be guided in a mindful self-reflection meditation, reflecting on their journey throughout the semester. By exploring their mindfulness progress and personal growth, students will turn toward their signs of progress.

Objective: reflecting on mindfulness progress and growth

Meditation: self-reflection

Video Length: 9 minutes

Reflection Prompt:

- What sensations, thoughts, or emotions did you notice in your body and mind as you reflected on this semester?
- Were there any differences or similarities to how you related to today's meditation compares to meditations earlier in the semester?
- How might this reflection on your mindfulness progress contribute to your overall well-being and personal growth beyond this semester?

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Week 15: Sustaining Practice

This final session empowers students to sustain their mindfulness practice beyond the academic setting. Through a meditation focused on integrating mindfulness into their future careers in social work, students will explore practical ways to apply mindfulness principles in professional settings, enhancing their resilience and effectiveness as they embark on their professional journeys.

Objective: sustaining a personal mindfulness practice

Meditation: reflection of course and intentions for continued practice

Video Length: 7 minutes

Reflection Prompt:

- As you reflected on your journey through this course and set intentions for your future practice, what physical sensations, emotions, or thoughts arose in your body and mind?
- Did you notice any shifts in body or mind as you reflected?
- As you consider sustaining your mindfulness practice beyond this course, what attitudes or beliefs do you notice about your ability to maintain this practice?

Thank you!

Thank you for joining me in helping provide this new generation of social workers with valuable tools to manage stress, improve self-care, and develop essential social work skills. I hope you had a great semester!

Contact

For questions, feedback, or to connect please reach out!

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