Information for Those Interested in Becoming an MBCP Instructor

Since the founding of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program by Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center over 35 years ago, mindfulness courses and programs intended to teach people practical life skills for working with a wide variety of physical and mental health challenges have increased exponentially. The Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting (MBCP) Program is one of these programs.

There is a growing interest by health professionals from a variety of backgrounds to gain training in mindfulness-based programs and applications in order to decrease suffering and enhance wellbeing in the populations they serve. This includes professionals who provide care for expectant parents and young families, some of whom are finding their way to the MBCP program. In addition, there is a robust field of research regarding stress in the perinatal period which can be informed by the research on the physiological and psychological mechanisms that underlie the practice of mindfulness.

In response to requests for training to become an MBCP Instructor, formal MBCP Teacher Training Programs, including online trainings, are being developed both in the US and abroad. For those who would like to prepare to enter a formal MBCP Teacher Training program, please see the suggested guidelines below. As space in the trainings are limited, any training beyond what is suggested will only strengthen your application.

Please keep in mind that becoming a Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting (MBCP) Instructor is a process that by its very nature asks for a kind of commitment, dedication, individual responsibility, creativity, imagination and patience that may not have been asked for in training programs one has experienced before. MBCP teacher training is firmly grounded in the principle that the authenticity and effectiveness of one’s teaching can only come through one’s own personal mindfulness practice, both formally and in daily life. Embodying the practice both inside and outside the classroom is key.

Our hope is that the educational experiences outlined here will be helpful in exploring whether becoming an MBCP Instructor is indeed a path you would like to take at this time. Many of these educational experiences will enable you to begin or deepen your own mindfulness practice and this way of teaching, and support you in providing ethical and effective service to the population you wish to serve.
Suggested Background for MBCP Instructors

Some of the experiences detailed below may be gained prior to beginning formal training as an MBCP Instructor while others may be completed alongside of or after the MBCP Teacher Training course. Some of the training, such as group facilitation skills and familiarity with the scientific underpinnings of mindfulness in general and MBCP in particular may eventually become part of the formal MBCP training course. Exploring some or all of these experiences before applying to the MBCP teacher training is advised, as they will help you determine whether training to become an MBCP Teacher is the right path for you and will strengthen your application to the MBCP Teacher Training Program.

- Completion of an 8/9-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) or Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting (MBCP) course.

- A personal daily mindfulness meditation practice including both formal and informal practice (6 months to 1 year optimal)

- Attendance at least one (or more) 5-10 day silent, teacher-led mindfulness meditation retreat(s). This requirement is essential before one begins to teach

- An ongoing mindful movement practice, such as yoga or qigong

- A recognized core professional training in physical or mental healthcare (for example in medicine, nursing, midwifery, psychology, childbirth education, infant development or a related field). Subsequent specialist training in perinatal health if this was not integral to the core professional training.

- Knowledge and experience of working with women and families during pregnancy, childbirth and early parenting beyond one’s own personal experience

- If you intend to teach MBCP within a specialist group of expectant parents (e.g. those experiencing clinical levels of anxiety or depression, drug or alcohol use, high-risk pregnancy, teens, etc.), knowledge, experience of, and professional training in working with the particular population is essential

- Attendance of women and families during the birth process: 3-5 births within the last 3 years optimal.

- Experience of and/or training in group facilitation, including an understanding of group dynamics and processes
• Some familiarity with and understanding of the scientific research that provides evidence for the effectiveness of mindfulness practice and mindfulness-based programs. For a helpful resource, see American Mindfulness Research Monthly https://goamra.org/ You can sign up for a monthly newsletter.

• An ongoing commitment to one’s own meditation practice sustained by yearly attendance at a 5-10 day silent retreat for as long as one is actively engaged in teaching classroom teaching

Training to be an MBCP instructor is fundamentally different from other professional trainings where one ‘ticks-off’ accomplishments as one progresses through a set curriculum. Mindfulness is a way of being and ultimately, the curriculum is your life. No matter how long you have been meditating, we are all always beginners. In that sense, completing certain learning experiences prior to, during and following training is seen as an advantage--and sometimes a necessity-- as each experience is an opportunity to deepen your mindfulness practice and inner knowledge. If and when you decide to undertake formal training in MBCP, there will be the opportunity to explore your own personal mindfulness mediation practice and your development as a mindfulness teacher with experienced teacher-trainers who will support and mentor you as you navigate this path.

Recommended Learning Experiences

• Mindful Birthing: 6-Day professional training retreat with Nancy Bardacke, CNM offered by University of California, San Diego Center for Mindfulness http://cme.ucsd.edu/mindfulness/index.html. This will provide an introductory experience in Mindful Birthing methodology and practices

• Attendance at a Mind in Labor weekend workshop for healthcare professionals and/or a 9-week MBCP course http://www.osher.ucsf.edu/classes-and-lectures/meditation-and-mindfulness/mindfulness-based-childbirth-parenting/

• Professional Foundational Trainings offered by the University of California, San Diego, Center for Mindfulness http://cme.ucsd.edu/mindfulness/index.html

• Professional Trainings offered by the Center for Mindfulness (CFM) at the University of Massachusetts (UMass) Medical Center. Home of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program established in 1979 by Jon Kabat-Zinn. Now under the directorship of Saki Santorelli, PhD http://www.umassmed.edu/Content.aspx?id=41252
• Foundational trainings through the Oxford Mindfulness Centre at University of Oxford http://oxfordmindfulness.org/science/projects/what-is-mbcp/ MBCP Instructor trainings may be available

• Foundational trainings through the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice at Bangor University are highly recommended https://www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness/

• Foundational trainings through the Mindfulness Training Institute Australasia (MTIA) http://www.mtia.org.au/training-pathway-in-brief

• Mindfulness meditation retreats are offered in numerous locations throughout the US. Two options are Insight Meditation Society (IMS) in Barre, MA http://www.dharma.org/ or Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, CA https://www.spiritrock.org/home

Recommended Reading


Additional recommended readings http://www.mindfulbirthing.org/resources2/

Publications:


Online Resources:

Mindful Birthing http://mindfulbirthing.org/
Home website for the Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting Program

Mindfulness for Pregnancy iPhone App: http://itunes.apple.com/app/id504778562

UCSF Osher Center for Integrative Medicine: http://www.oshers.ucsf.edu/
