



Online Offerings

Guidance and Resources for MBCP Teachers

The MBCP Faculty has compiled some guidance and resources from what we have learned over the many years of training MBCP Teachers online. Our hope is that this guide will serve you in responding to the immediate needs of expectant parents in your community during this time of great distress and uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This will undoubtedly be new territory for many and we have created a Ruzuku Discussion Board for you to share with other MBCP teachers your questions, specific challenges, successes and new discoveries in teaching online: [Providing MBCP Online](#) Discussion Board

Preparing the Technology: Finding an Online Platform

- We use [Zoom](#) as a platform for providing our MBCP Teacher Training online. It is a secure and stable platform and quite user friendly. There may be other tools available in your region.
- HIPAA - Most people don't need a HIPAA compliant system to teach Childbirth Education (CBE). However, if you are working within a system (i.e. through a hospital) that expects HIPAA compliance even with CBE, then you may need a higher level of technology which includes a Business Associate Agreement (BAA) signed between the company (i.e. Zoom) and the hospital system. Talk to your hospital administrator to see if [Zoom for Healthcare](#) is relevant to you.

Preparing Yourself for Teaching Online: General Guidelines

- Create an outline of the class you will be teaching, including the number of minutes for the meditation practices and other activities. See the MBCP Teacher Manual for guidance around time estimates.
- In your outline, remember to include time for a snack break during each class.
- If at all possible, practice all the skills you will be using on your online platform during the class with another MBCP teacher or colleague. For example, guide a meditation online, share your screen, practice an inquiry session. This will allow you to become familiar with all the technical skills you will need for the class to run smoothly.
- Make sure that you know how to create break out rooms for small discussion groups and how to let people know when their time together is almost over. If you are using Zoom, this video provides a good [tutorial](#).



- Close down all other apps on your computer, especially emails or other notifications, before starting the class.
- Make sure to have your poems, meditation bells and water or tea easily within reach. Take care not to ring the meditation bells too close to the microphone, as this can make for an unpleasant hearing experience for the participants.
- Having an easily visible clock that is separate from your online screen clock can be helpful.
- Before each class, take time to do some practice yourself, perhaps a brief Awareness of Breathing or a 3 Step Breathing Space for grounding and to touch into your intentions for the class.

Preparing Participants

- Have a pre-class Intake interview with your potential participants, just as you would for an in-person course. Email the Intake form to them before your interview and review it with them during the interview. Use a telephone, FaceTime or your online platform if the participants have the technological skills to connect in that way.
- Before the online class begins, send a simple document to participants with information about how to use the platform, how and when to use mute, PC requirements such as Internet speed and possible backup telephone numbers to log onto the platform by telephone if necessary.
- Consider setting up a Facebook group or another online space before the class begins so that participants can connect with each other between classes.
- Working with a tech person who can handle tech problems in case they appear can be a wonderful support for you, especially while you are learning to navigate the skills needed for teaching online. If you are able to have someone who can fulfill the tech person role, give out their email/phone number in case participants experience problems logging in or other issues. Once you begin teaching a class, it can be very difficult in the moment for you to also try to take care of technological problems. You may need the tech person only for the first few sessions until everyone learns how to navigate the platform you are using.

Guidance for Participants during the First Class for Managing the Online Learning Environment

- Protecting the classroom learning environment is important. Ask participants to close the door of the room they are using to create a quiet, secluded space. Request that they turn



off/silence their iPhones if at all possible so everyone can have the opportunity to drop in to this special time together. Follow these guidelines yourself.

- Acknowledge the challenges of using online technology and that there are perhaps different levels of expertise (or lack thereof) including your own that participants may have. Everyone is learning together. This acknowledgement can lessen tension with this format for everyone.
- Instruct participants that if they seem to be having difficulty getting a turn to speak, consider waving or raising their hand. You as the instructor need to be alert to these signals. One of the challenges of online teaching is that you, the teacher, have fewer body language clues available to “read the group”. Know that you may miss something and bring kindness to the situation, for yourself and the participants.
- A very important guideline for participants is the direction to suspend the use of the chat function during class. Share the rationale for this guideline as a teaching around stress and multitasking; the chat function encourages multi-tasking. It is very distracting for the person writing the chat, for the participants, and for you, the teacher. That being said, the chat function could be used for particular activities, for example, a horizontal inquiry.
- Ask participants to support their wellbeing and the wellbeing of the group as a whole by being as fully present during class time as possible. To facilitate this, request participants keep their video ON unless something urgent needs to be attended to. Keeping the video on helps reduce the temptation to multi-task.
- Ask participants to put themselves on mute when not speaking unless they are in a small group. It takes time to learn to unmute before speaking, and that’s okay. Experiment with using the “mute all” function to help block out extraneous noise.
- Encourage participants to let their voice be heard. Their experiences and observations are valuable and important and when they share, they are contributing to the good of the whole class.
- For some, speaking in a group can be challenging. In an online setting, this may be more challenging. Noticing self-judgement and the comparing mind when it arises after speaking is a practice. Practicing self-compassion before and after speaking can be very helpful.
- Participants can either respond to the urge to speak when it arises or choose to just notice the urge as it arises and passes away.
- When reactivity arises for a participant, if it does, offer that they might consider practicing a 3 Step Breathing Space: Noticing the body, thoughts and emotions. Noticing the breath, and then expanding out to the larger group.



- For those speaking in a language other than their mother tongue, acknowledge that it could be a challenge for them and thank them for their courage. Encourage them to take their time when speaking. What they have to contribute is important. In this learning environment, every person matters.

General Teaching Guidelines and Suggestions

- There is a learning curve for everyone that can at times be stressful. However online learning allows for the possibility of reaching many in need at this time. And it offers multiple opportunities for the teacher to practice patience and equanimity, as well as kindness for oneself and others.
- Start each class with a roll call using one word or short sentence about how the participant is doing now, in the present moment. This roll call can be very helpful for you to keep track of who is attending and making sure everyone's presence is acknowledged.
- Starting and ending on time, just as you would in an in-person class, is a way of showing respect for the participants and is recommended.
- At the beginning of class, share in a very general way what you expect the flow of that particular class to be. Though you know how much time you will have allotted to each activity, it is helpful not to be too specific about exact times with the participants. This will allow you the flexibility to change plans in the present moment in order to respond to needs or issues that may unexpectedly arise during the class.
- When you break into small groups, teach a bit about mindful speaking and listening and encourage this practice among participants. Unlike an in-person MBCP course, partners will be together for breakout groups, assuming they are logged in on one computer for the class.
- When leading a meditation online, open your eyes every now and then to make sure the WiFi connection is still working!
- Options for the whiteboard or didactic sessions could include using PowerPoint slides in a particular way: A question appears on the slide: What is pain? (just the question). Participants can then speak and share. The answers can be written directly into the PowerPoint slide so everyone can see them. Microsoft Powerpoint / Apple Keynote / Google Slides are useful applications for presenting slides.
- A possibility worth exploring is the use of a [digital drawing tablet](#) to make teaching the whiteboard more dynamic.
- Consider creatively using the [images](#) from Mindful Birthing for didactic presentations.



- Allow time for participants to adjust their device so that they can see you for yoga practice or a body scan.
- Using a Bluetooth headset when teaching is recommended for movement practices (yoga, walking meditation).
- Regarding your teaching space, consider lighting, decluttering the background participants will see, and/or hanging a drop.
- In order to communicate your presence, attention and deep listening in online teaching, it is important that participants be able to see your facial expressions. To this end, the camera distance/angle is important. Do your best to arrange your camera so that it is about 18in (45cm) from your face. Make sure your line of sight is aligned with the camera so that you appear to be looking into participants eyes.
- If you have a quiet group or your group is reluctant to share, experiment with building in a little time for a writing reflection after a meditation practice before moving into inquiry. Ask participants to write down in a journal or notebook what came up for them or what they noticed. Open the inquiry by asking participants to share what they wrote. Having written something down before being asked to speak seems to help quieter groups open up online.
- Foster community as much as possible. Experiment. Be creative. Find ways to make the class fun.
- Do remember that your own embodied presence makes a difference.

And finally...ENJOY YOURSELF!

- You will learn a lot, which means you probably will experience mistakes.
- You'll probably not be perfect and that's more than okay, because you are perfectly human. Remember, good enough is in fact, good enough.
- Teaching online feels different than teaching an 'in person' class. It takes time to get used to it. Notice attachments, liking and not liking.
- Watch out for that self-judgement when it arises; bring gentleness and kindness to yourself.
- Learn from your participants. Ask the group what is working for them.
- Pay attention to process as much as to content.
- Share what you learn about teaching online with others



Resources

1. Jon Kabat-Zinn's online MBSR course from Sounds True
<https://content.soundstrue.com/opening-to-our-lives>
2. "Finding Peace in a Frantic World" practices
<http://franticworld.com/free-meditations-from-mindfulness/>
3. See "Nancy's Guidelines for Practice" <https://www.mindfulbirthing.org/resources-1>
4. See Eluned's "Nurturing Parents" meditations
<https://www.mindfulnessforfamilies.net/services-1>
5. You might consider using the 40:10 min video of Nancy teaching the whiteboard:
<https://www.mindfulbirthing.org/classes>
6. There is another short video 02:53 of Nancy teaching here:
<https://www.mindfulbirthing.org/teach>
7. You might consider creatively using the [images](#) from Mindful Birthing for didactic presentations
8. [Zoom](#) is an easy to use online video communication platform.
9. [Zoom for Healthcare](#) offers a standard feature set for healthcare enterprises and providers, enabling reliable, HIPAA-compliant communications between organizations, care teams, and patients.
10. Zoom has [tutorials for new users](#)
11. Zoom has tutorials for [Getting Started with Breakout Rooms](#)
12. Ruzuku [Providing MBCP Discussion Board](#)
13. The digital drawing tablet for the white board teaching is available here:
<https://www.amazon.com/StarG640-Ultrathin-Graphics-Battery-Free-Pressure/dp/B078YR2MTF>