



Why Mindfulness Instructors Need Their Own Regular Practice

Mindfulness is an experiential skill

Mindfulness is an experiential skill, like swimming, playing a musical instrument, playing chess or rock climbing. Anyone teaching these skills is in fact a coach. To teach an experiential skill (to coach) requires some mastery of that skill.

Creating an invitational stance

The coach's experience creates an invitational stance because of the continuity between the experience of the instructor and the student.

Tuning in & tailoring teachings

This continuity of experience allows the instructor to tune into the subtleties of the student's mindfulness experience. The instructor can then tailor their coaching to the specific requirements of the student.

Non Verbal Congruence

Moreover, experiential information is often conveyed non-verbally. This can be done skilfully if the instructor carries the information at an experiential level, within the body. So if instructions about staying non-judgementally with the contents of consciousness are based on the instructor's own experience, then tone of voice, gesticulations and affective expression will all be congruent. This will enhance the verbal message being conveyed.

Confidence in the instructor enhances modelling

The student needs to know the instructor has skill and experience. They then sense that their instructor embodies a way of practising mindfulness. This makes it easier to learn by modeling, just as a rock climbing student might do with an instructor. An example of where this might manifest would be the ability of the instructor to competently relate to unpleasant affect.

