THE ART OF ALLOWING: CO-ACCOMPLISHING MEANING IN MINDFULNESS TRAINING

by

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Abstract

In this thesis I explore how Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) teachers and learners co-accomplish a therapeutic setting, drawing on ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. My focus is the reflective dialogue called 'inquiry', where participants share their subjective experiences following a guided meditation. Meditation is typically considered an internal practise. I show how meaning is co-accomplished in 'inquiry' in a collaborative process I call the 'art of allowing'. This describes how a participant's experience is jointly explored with the teacher and repositioned as a learning opportunity. For example, a participant might share that they were distracted during a mediation. This experience is then positioned as a subject for exploration rather than a problem to be fixed. The participant's account then becomes the basis for a teaching, e.g. how mindfulness is more about *noticing* distractions, not eliminating them. Thus the subjective experience becomes a shared insight and the basis of a mindfulness lesson. The structure of 'inquiry' shows recurring patterns of interaction, which I describe in terms of sequence organisation, phenomenological mapping, objectives, preference organisation, and embodying mindfulness. My data collection consists of audio recordings from an MBSR course (24 hours), an MBSR teacher training course (82 hours), and a focus group with student teachers (3 hours). I selected transcripts for analysis from each site. A key part of my analysis focuses on a breaching incident in which a student teacher blows a whistle during a meditation. The disruption is collaboratively repaired by reframing it as a learning opportunity. This shows how robust these conversational and interactional practises are. This thesis contributes to mindfulness research by offering an analysis of the transformative process in 'inquiry'. It also demonstrates the value of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis for studying the collaborative accomplishment

of an inner practise.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

I was sitting on a meditation cushion in a circle with the other participants, my eyes closed, my whole body relaxing more and more with every breath, just as Mark's meditation guidance suggested. I was a participant-observer in a teacher training course for mindfulness teachers. I was more participating than observing—the only thing I was observing was my own inner experience, how my thoughts came and went, how my muscles let go with every out-breath, how the air that went into my nostrils was slightly cooler than when it went out. I was already an experienced meditator and a teacher myself. This exercise was deeply familiar to me and at the same time I met each moment anew, with a beginner's mind. Mark's voice was calming and soft. He spoke slowly and and left long pauses in his instructions: *"find a safe position for the entire body, for the hands (2.7) and then (1.1) just connect (0.6) with your posture (5.0) just observe (0.7) how breathing happens automatically (6.6)*[1]*"*. After about five minutes of these instructions and a particularly long stretch of silence, a loud shrill whistle pierced through the quiet room. Heat flushed my body and I jumped in my seat. Other participants in the group also reacted startled, groaning, laughing, and shifting their seats. Unimpressed by the reactions in the group, Mark continued with his guided meditation, loudly blowing the whistle again and again without warning in between his soft-spoken meditation instructions. Some participants covered their ears. The situation escalated further after the meditation when participants shared

[1]The numbers in brackets indicate pauses in seconds. Mark's full guided meditation is analysed in chapter 6 (transcripts 6.1 and 6.2).

how Mark had 'destroyed their safe space' and 'broken their trust'. Yet, somehow, everyone—course leaders, participants, and Mark—collectively repositioned and resolved the incident in a way that was again deeply familiar to me from MBSR. It was no longer a disruption but an opportunity to learn mindfulness and how to teach mindfulness.

This situation was intriguing to me and I wanted to be able to understand and describe it. What is so disturbing about blowing a whistle in the middle of a silent sitting meditation? Perhaps even more interestingly, how is it possible to restore order and integrate the incident into a normal flow of events in a relatively short amount of time? In my quest to explore these questions, I turned to ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, which allowed me to describe interactional and conversational processes in detail, including otherwise hidden but taken for granted social rules and expectations (Garfinkel, 1967). In this thesis, I aim to describe how MBSR teachers and learners co-accomplish a therapeutic setting through talk and embodying mindfulness. It was this setting that became visible during the disruptive whistling, as participants made their expectations of what constitutes a 'safe place' explicit. It also became visible in the resolution of the incident which demonstrated the robustness of certain conversation and behavioural patterns that are unique to MBSR.

In the remainder of this chapter, I provide a short overview of each chapter of my thesis. Briefly, I motivate my research question in my literature review (chapter 2), explain my methods and methodology (chapter 3), provide two foundational findings chapters (chapters 4 and 5) and a third findings chapter that focuses on the 'whistle incident' (chapter 6), and finally discuss and situate my research within existing literature (chapter 7).

Chapter overview

In my literature review (chapter 2), I examine foundational literature for this thesis to introduce my research question. Mindfulness has become mainstream over the past decades, especially in the format of the secular eight week course Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). In Germany for example, the program is widely available to the general public across the country with hundreds of certified teacher who have current courses (MBSR-MBCT Verband e.V.,

2025a). In April 2025, there are 133 MBSR course offers at German adult education centers at a low cost (Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband, 2025). The program is also subsidised by statutory health insurance for stress prevention (MBSR-MBCT Verband e.V., 2025b). Moreover, MBSR and related programs are offered in various corners of German society such as education (Kraft, Kaltwasser, and Kohls, 2021), higher education (Sandbothe and Albrecht, 2025), caregivers and nursing staff (Henne, 2023), and even rehabilitation for Bundeswehr soldiers (Thun-Balsche, Vetter, and Krick, 2024) just to give a few examples. There is a large evidence base for the effectiveness of mindfulness-based approaches for different groups (e.g. Khoury et al., 2013, Conversano et al., 2021, Fisher, Li, and Malabu, 2023). However, research on what actually happens in mindfulness-based course classrooms is still scarce, both in psychological fields and in the social sciences (American Mindfulness Research Association, 2024), although there is a growing body of qualitative studies on mindfulness (e.g. Stanley and Kortelainen, 2019, Eisenmann, 2022, Eisenmann and Mitchell, 2024, Arat and P. Hemming, 2025). The mindfulness trend is aligned with a broader trend within Western societies, that of a psychologised society or 'therapeutic culture'—a culture in which psychological ideas have a large influence (Nehring and Frawley, 2020). 'Therapeutic cultures' encourage individuals to look within and emphasise self help and personal responsibility (Nehring, Alvarado, et al., 2016).

In this thesis, I contribute to the qualitative body of mindfulness research and explore the group-based dialogue in MBSR called 'inquiry'. Mindfulness involves cultivating a certain relationship with an inner experience in the moment it is happening, for example through the practice of meditation. Meditation is an inner practice that is not visible from the outside. How do you teach this inner practice? Teaching mindfulness in the context of MBSR involves talk—such as guided meditations, psycho-educational teachings, and 'inquiry'. 'Inquiry' is a reflective dialogue between the teacher and a participant in which the participant shares their inner subjective experience during meditation and the teacher supports them in relating to this inner experience 'mindfully'. Teaching mindfulness also involves that teachers embody certain qualities of mindfulness themselves.

My research question and the focus of my thesis is: *How MBSR teachers and learners co-accomplish a therapeutic setting in 'inquiry' through talk and embodying mindfulness?*

When I refer to *therapeutic setting*, I am referring to the practises, communicative and embodied strategies through which teachers and learners collaboratively accomplish the MBSR classroom as a therapeutic setting. This means my focus is specifically on how this social setting is actively produced by members in the moment and how they understand and experience the space as therapeutic and beneficial. This means I examine how members interactively negotiate meanings, ideas, beliefs, definitions, etc and make the space meaningful as therapeutic from their perspective—I am not arguing that MBSR objectively has clinical therapeutic benefits.

In chapter 3, the methods chapter, I outline the approach I have taken to answer my research question. As an inner practice, meditation is difficult to study and the social sciences have shied away from researching it (Eisenmann and Mitchell, 2024). Ethnomethodology offers the opportunity to study mindfulness as it is actively accomplished in the moment, rather than relying on what people say about their experience retrospectively. Chapter 3 is divided into two parts: methodology and methods. In the *methodology* section, I describe the philosophical foundation and rationale for my study. I discuss an ontological framework that combines phenomenology and Buddhist principles. This offers a lens through which to understand the nature of reality as experienced in MBSR and supports my ethnomethodological research strategy. The *methods* section focuses on the practical aspects of data collection and analysis. In it, I describe the process of gaining access, ethical considerations, recruitment of participants, and data collection methods, including audio recordings and focus groups. I also explain my iterative process of data selection and analysis.

The findings are presented in three core chapters, each addressing a different perspective of the therapeutic setting. In the first findings chapter, chapter 4, I explore the role of 'inquiry' in MBSR, that is how 'inquiry' allows participants to share and make sense of their experiences during meditation. I highlight how a teacher scaffolds these exchanges. I call this the *art of allowing* because ultimately MBSR 'inquiry' is about creating a space where experiences can unfold 'as they are', meaning as naturally as possible. *Allowing* refers to *what* is talked about—

such as welcoming all experiences, and to *how* it is talked about—such as using silences for reflection. *Art* refers to how 'inquiry' is a creative process that has a recognisable structure but is still improvised in the moment. At the heart of this process is a 'transformation of experience' (Peräkylä, 2019), which is similar to what happens in psychotherapy. For example, a participant might express a difficulty with a guided meditation, such as feeling distracted. This difficulty is then jointly repositioned as an opportunity for learning and used as a foundation to teach mindfulness to the group.

In the second findings chapter, chapter 5, I explore the role of embodying mindfulness in MBSR teacher training, particularly in 'inquiry'. This builds on the insights from the previous chapter. I show how the embodiment of mindfulness is understood as a way of being in the world by MBSR student teachers. I further introduce an MBSR teacher training context in which the embodiment of mindfulness in teaching moments is made explicit—both, from a first person perspective of someone teaching a group, and from a second person perspective in the form of feedback for the student teacher. With this, I show how embodiment is at the core of 'inquiry', as understood by the members themselves. I also demonstrate how mindfulness is co-accomplished through the foundational elements of 'inquiry'—the *art of allowing*—and the transformative process described in the previous chapter. In the teacher training context, this same transformative process of repositioning participants' accounts as a basis for teaching *mindfulness* applies for teaching *how to teach mindfulness*.

In the third findings chapter, chapter 6, I address the 'whistle incident', the breaching situation that I described at the beginning of this chapter. Building on the *art of allowing*, the transformative process of 'inquiry', and the embodiment of mindfulness, I explore the disruption itself and its collective repair. This chapter shows how robust these interactional and conversational patterns are, as the disruption itself serves as a basis to teach *mindfulness* and *how to teach mindfulness*. Emphasis is placed on self responsibility and learning about oneself rather than addressing potentially problematic behaviour at a systemic level.

Finally, in my discussion, chapter 7, I show how my thesis makes three key contributions to the literature: first, I offer a detailed analysis of the transformative process within MBSR 'in-

quiry'; second, I show how this same process unfolds in response to disruption which illustrates the robustness of the process; and third, I demonstrate the value of applying ethnomethodology to meditation research which adds to the body of qualitative mindfulness research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The focus of my thesis is an analysis of a group dialogue called 'inquiry' in a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) context. In this chapter, I will introduce the key literature for my study. Firstly, in section 2.2, I will situate my study within a broader societal context. I will discuss current literature that highlights the prevalence of mindfulness in Western society (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2011). I will talk about how the mindfulness movement fits in with the view of a 'psychologised society' or "therapeutic culture" (J. O. Madsen, 2014a, p. 1965). A major critique of a 'therapeutic culture' is that the individual can be left alone to cope with issues that could be addressed at a systemic level (Nehring, Alvarado, et al., 2016, p. 163).

Secondly, in section 2.3, I will introduce the mindfulness context of my research. This means that I will talk about what mindfulness is, its Buddhist origins, and in particular its most popular secular adaptation, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). In particular I will discuss literature about the role of the MBSR teacher and a group dialogue called 'inquiry'. In this thesis, I will analyse MBSR 'inquiry' and its context, describing how teachers and learners co-create a therapeutic setting through their interactions (chapters 4 to 6).

Thirdly, in section 2.4, I will explain why MBSR 'inquiry' is the best place for data analysis. I will discuss Susie Scott's concept of "re-inventive institutions" (Scott, 2011), which posits that

institutions can exist without physical walls, relying instead on shared interactions and language. Similarly, in MBSR there are no traditional institutional structures. Instead it is shaped by its distinctive language and practices. To establish a foundation for my analysis, I will introduce conversation analysis for researching institutional talk.

Lastly, in section 2.5, I will introduce and contextualise my research question "How do MBSR teachers and learners co-accomplish a 'therapeutic setting'?".

2.2 Mindfulness and the psychologisation of society

In subsection 2.2.1, I review the rise of mindfulness in Western societies and then talk about the broader societal context of a 'therapeutic culture'. Mindfulness has gained popularity in the West through its secular adaptations such the eight week course Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). Mindfulness research is dominated by quantitative studies in the psy-disciplines that tend to focus on its health effects. This type of research neglects the role of the teacher and the interactional practices in the course. There are only a few qualitative research that show what actually happens in an MBSR classroom. In subsection 2.2.2, my focus is on the societal context in which mindfulness has flourished. I discuss the concept of a 'therapeutic culture', including its background, definition, and most common critiques. A 'therapeutic culture' is one in which individuals are influenced by psychological ideas and practices. It is critiqued because it creates a narrative that promotes self-responsibility over social responsibility. An individual might be left alone to cope with stress rather than addressing the issue at a systemic level. Another critique is that suffering is framed as an inevitable part of a healing journey. In this view, breakdowns can be understood as necessary venture points for insights and life transformations.

2.2.1 The spread of mindfulness in society

In the last 35-45 years, the provision and practice of mindfulness has grown exponentially. Starting in the US and UK, the trend has spread to other Western countries (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2011). In the German-speaking world, mindfulness has been a trend for about a decade (Heschel,

2018). While it would be easy to dismiss mindfulness as another New Age phenomenon, comparable to the rise of transcendental meditation in the 1970s or the rise of yoga in the 2000s, there are fundamental differences. For one, there is enormous cross-disciplinary body of research on mindfulness with academic research and immediate applications taking place mostly in the fields of medicine, neuroscience, psychotherapy and clinical psychology, that suggest positive effects of mindfulness practice on health (e.g. Khoury et al., 2013). This growing academic interest is illustrated by the exponential growth of publications in academic journals that include the term "mindfulness" in the title until the year 2023 (see figure 2.1; American Mindfulness Research Association (2024)). The distribution of mindfulness literature has developed and diversified

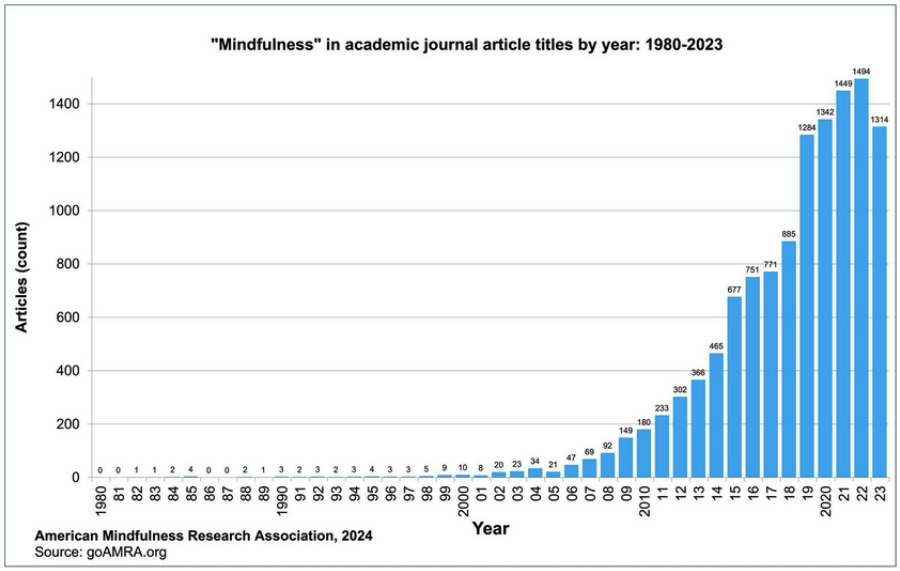


Figure 2.1: Count of journal publications by year with "mindfulness" in title, 1980-2023, (data obtained from ISI Web of Science search, source: American Mindfulness Research Association, 2024, goAMRA.org American Mindfulness Research Association, 2024)

over the years. A bibliometric analysis of mindfulness publication of 55 years up until the year 2021 showed that publications appeared mostly in psychology (47%) and in psychiatry (20.8%) (Baminiwatta and Solangaarachchi, 2021, p. 2101). Another analysis by Lee et al. (2021) considered mindfulness research over the span from 1916 to 2019. They found research was initially more focused on theoretical and spiritual conceptualisation of mindfulness. From the year 2000 the focus shifted to the study of mindfulness-based interventions and from 2010 to validating the efficacy of therapeutic mindfulness programs. They concluded that the overwhelming majority

of these publications were quantitative with qualitative research methods only contributing about 3% to the current research. The authors find this low percentage in qualitative research remarkable, considering that mindfulness is an introspective practice (Lee et al., 2021, p. 1858). It is inherently difficult to quantify and measure mindfulness, given that there is not even an agreement in the literature in terms of how mindfulness is defined (Baer, Walsh, and Lykins, 2009; Chems-Maarif et al., 2025). The dominance of mindfulness research in the fields of psychology and psychiatry is interesting considering that the most prominent and most widely researched mindfulness-based intervention MBSR is positioned as *educational*, not therapeutic (Santorelli and Kabat-Zinn, 2014, p. 2).

Another reason that suggests that mindfulness has arguably become a transnational movement is that it has found its way into a variety of public domains (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2011), such as politics (e.g. Cook, 2016, Mindfulness Initiative, 2015)), economics (e.g. Magnuson, 2011), corporations (e.g. Google, 2024) and popular culture (e.g. Headspace, 2018). The UK Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group (MAPPG) lobbied for the inclusion of mindfulness-based approaches (Mindfulness Initiative, 2015), including in the public sectors of health, education, workplace, and criminal justice. In October 2017, the UK even hosted an international conference in the House of Commons to explore the benefits of mindfulness in the political arena (Booth, 2017). Similarly to the developments in the US and the UK, mindfulness has become a household name in Germany as well. Mindfulness-based approaches are found in the public sector, including health care (Berking, 2007), primary school education (Altner, 2017), higher education (Bruin, 2017), and the workplace (Becke et al., 2011). De Bruin, who has integrated mindfulness into higher education in Munich, calls these developments ”a silent revolution” (Gatterburg, 2016).

This widespread interest in quantitative research and adaptations of mindfulness in society reflect its contemporary significance. However, while there are many proponents of mindfulness, there are also those who criticise this development. In fact these two opposing positions can often be quite polarising. On the hand, research provides overwhelming evidence of how beneficial mindfulness is (Khoury et al., 2013). Mindfulness is marketed as a panacea for everything that

potentially makes us suffer (Kucinskas, 2019, p. 9), often using scientific discourse to sell it to institutions (P. J. Hemming and Arat, 2024). On the other hand, mindfulness research is exposed as positively biased and as too heavily focused in the psy-disciplines. Its spread within society is labeled as 'McMindfulness' because it allegedly feeds into the neoliberal agenda and enables capitalist goals (Purser, 2019; Kelly, 2023).

The fact that mindfulness also means big business reflects for example in the increased downloads of meditation apps that "help users stay calm, control their emotions during stressful periods and focus on the moment" (Statista, 2023). According to the Statista market trend prognosis, by the end of 2023, there will 123 million users of free meditation apps plus 96 million users of fee-based meditation apps who will generate a worldwide revenue of 4.43 billion US dollars. These numbers are predicted to increase by 2028 to 161 million non-paying users and 120 million paying users generating 7.08 billion US dollars (Statista, 2023). Apparently, millions of people across the world feel a need to "control their emotions during stressful times" and regard meditation an adequate tool. These numbers are an example of one specific trend within therapeutic cultures: the growing trend of using meditation to cope with stress.

Kabat-Zinn (2017b) sees in this expansion the potential of saving human civilisation against the background of global warming and the instability of politics in the Western world. He points out that with mindfulness becoming mainstream at such a fast pace, it is inevitable that big business exploits it without much concern about the inherent wisdom of the teachings. Counteracting this threat, Kabat-Zinn puts trust in the global community of MBSR and MBCT teachers to establish and uphold standards for teacher competence (Kabat-Zinn, 2017b, p. 1131).

2.2.2 Psychologisation of society

Psychological ideas and practices have permeated many aspects of life in contemporary society (Rose, 1990). They influence how individuals understand themselves, interact with others, and navigate institutional life–even without our explicit awareness. This phenomenon is often referred to as the 'psychologisation of society' (De Vos, 2014) and "therapeutic culture" (J. O. Madsen, 2014a, p. 1965). For example, consider how mindfulness has been firmly situated

within therapeutic cultures (e.g Nehring, O. J. Madsen, et al., 2020).

Century of the self

At the turn of the 19th century, Sigmund Freud brought about a change in society by establishing a new theory of human nature. In this theory, called psychoanalysis, Freud described how peoples' actions are greatly influenced by their unconscious mind. In his view, the 'unconscious mind' contains unconscious thoughts, desires and memories that are often sexual and/or aggressive in nature. Because of this, they are repressed to the point where they cannot be perceived consciously. However, if left unexplored and uncontrolled, the unconscious mind may cause psychological issues. As a therapeutic approach, psychoanalysis helps individuals to examine these hidden inner forces (e.g. Freud, 1923/2000). With the help of psychoanalysis inner psychological conflicts and individual processes can be externalised and made public.

Until the arrival of Freud, the inner world of thoughts was at most accessible to a priest during a church confession, and now also to psychotherapists. It did not take long for this knowledge of the human psyche to gain greater social influence. Freud's nephew, Edward Bernays, was the first to use his uncle's ideas to manipulate the democratic public in America (Curtis, 2002). In his 1928 essay "Manipulating public opinion: The why and the how", Bernays described how introspective psychology can be used to understand inner motives and how these principles can be used towards "changing the attitude of whites toward Negroes in America, changing the buying habits of American women from felt hats to velvet, silk, and straw hats, changing the impression which the American electorate has of its President, introducing new musical instruments, and a variety of others" (Bernays, 1928, p. 958). Bernays introduced the mechanism for selling products and ideas to people based on their unconscious desires rather than based on their conscious needs. Politically, this fostered a new idea of controlling people: mass compliance could be achieved by catering to peoples' selfish desires because happy people have no reason to revolt. This marked the beginning of the "century of the self" as the BBC Two documentary by Adam Curtis with the same title has shown (Curtis, 2002).

Psychologisation and therapeutic cultures

The popularity of psychoanalysis has contributed to the trend of using psychological theories to explain and manipulate human behaviour—not just individually but on a societal level. The impact of psychological thinking on culture and society in terms of shaping how people think and act can be described as 'psychologisation' (see e.g. Rose, 1991, Lasch, 2019). "Minimally defined, psychologization is the spreading of the discourse of psychology beyond its alleged disciplinary borders" (De Vos, 2014, p. 1547). There is a reflexive relationship between psychology as the 'field of psychology' and psychology as the 'way people understand their everyday lives'. In other words, each type of psychology can influence and inform the other. Research on psychologisation explores this relationship, namely it "analyzes how the discourse of the Psy-disciplines penetrates other social fields and/or shapes everyday feeling, experience, and action." (Ruck et al., 2022, p. 270). The impact of psychological discourse and knowledge on society is by no means limited to the United States. De Vos (2012, p. 134) provides examples of case studies that show that "the becoming global of psychologisation is an established fact". Ruck et al. (2022) show how psychologisation has travelled from the United States to German-speaking countries using the example of the women's movement. O. J. Madsen and Brinkmann (2011) have argued that the term psychologisation is possibly redundant in the sense that psychology has so deeply penetrated late modern Western societies that there is no alternative and we have in fact become 'psychological beings'. They note that a much needed critique of psychologisation is made ever more difficult as "even the critical tools themselves are psychologised", alluding to the reflexive nature of the endeavour as well as to the ubiquity of psychological thinking (O. J. Madsen and Brinkmann, 2011, p. 196).

Psychologisation describes the impact of psychological ideas and practices on different areas of society and culture. A related term is *therapeutic culture* which J. O. Madsen (2014a, p. 1965) defines as:

> "As therapeutic culture is a collective term, there are no clear definitions around in the strictest scientific sense. The essence of the notion points to the presence of a psychological mindset, a therapeutic way of thinking and speaking that is appar-

> ent outside the traditional spaces of psychology, like the therapist office, the clinic, and the academic departments. Thus, therapeutic culture both involves a certain psychological outlook on the world and is to be found in society exterior to psychology's traditional and expected separate localization. The sociological idea of a therapeutic culture is not to be confused with the clinical perception of therapeutic culture which is sometimes used to describe the relational atmosphere between the patient and the therapist."

Contemporary critiques of therapeutic cultures are often especially concerned with the omnipresence of a self-help and self-optimisation trend and its influence in shaping behaviours and attitudes (see Illouz, 2008, J. O. Madsen, 2014b, J. O. Madsen, 2015, Cabanas and Illouz, 2019, Nehring, O. J. Madsen, et al., 2020). For example, typing 'self help' into the book search on Amazon.com yields a total of twenty-eight subcategories such as 'abuse self help', 'personal time management', 'self help for eating disorders and body image issues', 'happiness self help' or 'personal transformation self help' (www.amazon.com, n.d.). In Germany, the share of self help books of the total German book market in 2014 was 5.7 per cent with a revenue of 531 million euros. In 2020 the market share was 6.2 per cent with a revenue of 577 million euros[1]. Self help books sell well and generate a sizeable revenue on a global scale (Nehring, Alvarado, et al., 2016, 34ff.). People who are looking to help or improve themselves are not limited to books. They can also read self help magazines or use other media such podcasts, youtube videos, phone apps, online courses on platforms such as Coursera, or attend in-person seminars with life coach gurus like Anthony Robbins.

Critiques of therapeutic cultures

So far I have explained the sociological concept of psychologisation and therapeutic culture. I have shown that the understanding of people's inner motives is used beyond the context of a ther-

[1]For the 2014 market share Nehring, Alvarado, et al. (2016, p. 38) summed up the advice books categories 'spirituality', 'health', 'life help' and 'law and career' as *self help* and provided the market share of 5.7 per cent. The 2020 market share was calculated using the same categories as Nehring with data provided by Statista (2023). The revenues for both years were calculated with data provided by Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels (2021).

apist's office to influence peoples' behaviour on a societal level. I have shown the scale and ubiquity of the transnational self help market. Reaching for 'self help' or 'self optimisation literature implies some type of suffering or suboptimal state that might be eased by self-administering the tools that those books (or other media) suggest. In simplified terms, self help tools typically involve some combination of looking inwards, understanding your unconscious patterns regarding difficult thoughts, feelings, or behaviour in another light, and possibly changing them. It might also apply to understanding inner motives or behaviour of other people that we interact with. In itself the notion of self empowerment appears to be a positive one, so what might there be to criticise? I will discuss critiques that broadly fall into four categories. (1) Neoliberal agenda, self responsibility, (2) Pathologising normal behaviour, and (3) normalising suffering. A fourth concern regarding the commodification of well-being will and the consumerist approach to mental health will not be discussed at this point (see e.g. Purser (2019) to learn about the potential societal impact of mindfulness as it is criticised with regards to commercialisation and ethical concerns).

(1) Neoliberal critique. One insight of Nehring, Alvarado, et al. (2016)'s book on the global self-help industry is that there is on the one hand a discursive diversity and on the other hand a relative neoliberal agreement. This means that whilst the Anglo-American sphere, specifically the US and the UK, can be regarded as the birthplace of the self-help narrative, it is adapted to regional peculiarities when imported into other nations. According to the authors, this results in a "transcultural process" that may be understood as a "multidirectional hybrid formation" (Nehring, Alvarado, et al., 2016, p. 155). At the same time, the underlying political-ideological message within the self-help genre seems relatively homogenous on a transnational level. "[S]elf-help's overwhelming political-ideological homogeneity can be described as a neoliberal recipe for atomised, individual survival in the rat race of the early 21st century" (Nehring, Alvarado, et al., 2016, p. 163). It is this message, namely that self-help promotes a neoliberal idea that people must survive the competitive world of the 21st century on their own, that is critically evaluated by a number of authors for its political implications (see i.e. Rimke, 2000). Basically, because self help promotes individualistic autonomy, authors such as

Rimke fear that it ultimately leads to a society where everyone fends for themselves and a sense of communal responsibility is lost. In this scenario, all issues are basically private and within the responsibility of the individual. Using mindfulness as an example, Nehring and Frawley (2020, p. 1195) describes this as *psychological imagination* where public issues are private troubles. For example, someone who suffers from burnout at work might just blame themselves and seek ways to manage stress better. They might fail to consider how long hours or the workplace culture might contribute to their burnout. 'Psychological imagination' is opposed to Mill's notion of *sociological imagination* where private issues are public troubles. For example, a lack of childcare for a working mother might be due a lack of affordable childcare in a society, the lack of flexibility of her employer, and the societal expectation that parenting is mainly a woman's job—all issues that she cannot solve on a personal level.

(2) Pathologising normal behaviour. A second critique is concerned with the 'paradox of health' (Barsky (1988) in O. J. Madsen and Brinkmann, 2011, p. 182) which says that to the degree that a population can cure diseases, its citizens become increasingly unhealthy. Barsky argues that the more the ability increases to frame everyday concerns in a psychological context, the more psychological diagnoses increase in society. For example, normal stress responses could easily be interpreted as symptoms of a psychological illness. Consider a student who is nervous before a test. They might get diagnosed with an anxiety disorder rather than just seeing it as part of a normal reaction to stress. Similarly, a student who daydreams in class might get an ADHD diagnosis rather than considering lapses in inattention as normal behaviour in childhood. The more diagnostic categories are expanded, the more this could lead to diagnosing aspects of normal life as unhealthy. Barker (2014) shares this concern in her article "Mindfulness meditation: Do-it-yourself medicalization of every moment". Conducting a discourse analysis of mindfulness texts, Barker comes to the conclusion that mindfulness broadens the understanding of what is considered a 'disease' in mainstream medicine. Mindfulness suggests that inattention makes us unwell, according to Barker (2014, p. 171) it "portrays our failure to pay attention as the principal reason we are *dis-eased*" . With this perspective, potentially any moment in which we are inattentive becomes pathological.

(3) Normalising suffering as inevitable. By not only normalising suffering but making it a central component of the (individualistic) healing journey, there is a risk of simply accepting any outside conditions with no motivation to change them. On a societal level, this might lead to a disengagement regarding political or environmental issues (J. O. Madsen, 2015, p. 162). On a personal level, this might lead to an acceptance of unfavourable circumstances, such as difficult relationships, or a failure to seek help for medical issues. The experience of suffering plays such a central role in therapeutic cultures that might even play into the definition of the self. Illouz (2008, p. 173) points out the contradiction that therapeutic culture is meant to heal and at the same time makes suffering a necessity to understand oneself: "[W]e arrive here at an extraordinary paradox: therapeutic culture—the primary vocation of which is to heal—must generate a narrative structure in which suffering and victimhood actually define the self". In order to to heal, the therapeutic narrative needs life failures and there might be an exaggeration what might be considered as such. In the context of mindfulness meditation, healing means accepting all of life's challenges, including pain, disability, and death (Barker, 2014, p. 173). Jon Kabat-Zinn's book version of the MBSR course is aptly titled "Full catastrophe living". He explains his choice in the introduction, with how mindfulness can be healing and transformative when we embrace life as it is, "even in the face of the full catastrophe of the human condition" (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. xxvi).

In summary, the three critiques of therapeutic culture that I addressed are concerned with potential downsides of therapeutic cultures. The neoliberal critique argues that the self-help industry promotes individualistic solutions to problems that could be addressed socially. This might lead to a reduced social responsibility in a society. This is particularly relevant in the context of MBSR because its main practice, mindfulness meditation, is an individualistic and private practice. I will discuss mindfulness, MBSR, and its practices in detail in the next section 2.3, which will make this link more understandable. Related to this is the critique that normalising suffering as inevitable could lead to an acceptance of adverse conditions, rather than changing them. Again, as we shall see in the next section, the acceptance of suffering as part of life is deeply engrained in the Buddhist philosophy, which is at the basis of MBSR. Lastly, in therapeu-

tic cultures, normal behaviour might be pathologised and considered unhealthy. In the context of mindfulness, and arguably a major misunderstanding of mindfulness, a moment of inattention might already be considered pathological. Mindfulness practice entails the cultivation of present moment awareness, according to Jon Kabat-Zinn, "[m]indfulness is the awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). It is arguably difficult to be mindful at all times, and when inattention is the main culprit for a state of "dis-ease" (Barker, 2014, p. 171), then a state of 'ease' or health is more and more out of reach.

2.3 Mindfulness as a manifestation of therapeutic cultures

In the previous section, I provided the societal context for my study. I began by highlighting the prevalence of mindfulness in Western society and introduced the concept of a 'therapeutic culture' (J. O. Madsen, 2014a, p. 1965). Mindfulness is a prominent manifestation of therapeutic cultures (e.g Nehring, O. J. Madsen, et al., 2020). There is a risk in therapeutic cultures of promoting individual responsibility for issues that could be addressed systemically (e.g. Nehring, Alvarado, et al., 2016; Rimke, 2000). This is possible in a context where suffering is widely accepted as inevitable or even as part of a 'healing journey' (e.g. J. O. Madsen, 2015; Illouz, 2008).

In this section, my aim is to provide a brief overview of the field of mindfulness and introduce 'inquiry', a group dialogue in MBSR, that is the focal point of my study. Mindfulness practices originate in Buddhism and emphasise self-regulation and individual responsibility. I aim to rationalise why I selected it as a focal point for understanding how these practices are embodied and co-accomplished in specific interactions, particularly in 'inquiry'. This contributes to the broader conversation on therapeutic cultures by exploring how mindfulness practices, especially in structured formats like Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), reflect and perpetuate the values and assumptions of therapeutic culture. In subsection 2.3.1, I situate mindfulness within its historical and cultural origins in Buddhism. I discuss key Buddhist concepts such as the

Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and traditional meditation practices, which form the foundation of contemporary mindfulness. In subsection 2.3.2, I narrow the focus to one of the most influential adaptations of mindfulness: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). I describe the central elements of MBSR. This includes the structured eight-week course format and a description of the formal and informal mindfulness practices. Finally, in subsection 2.3.3, I highlight the role of the MBSR teacher and of the group dialogue practice known as 'inquiry'. During 'inquiry', participants discuss internal experiences from their meditation practice with the MBSR teacher. This allows for a shared exploration of personal insights and challenges. 'Inquiry' is a unique opportunity to study the co-accomplishment of meditation practices in MBSR because it is where internal experiences are made explicit.

2.3.1 What is mindfulness?

'Mindfulness' has Buddhist roots, involves attention to the present moment, and in its Western adaption is used to cope with stress. In the following sections some background to the origins of mindfulness is described in order to help further understand its contemporary contexts. In Buddhism, mindfulness is embedded within a larger framework of what is known as the *Noble Eightfold Path*. This path consists of three domains, namely wisdom, moral value and meditation, of which mindfulness is an element. In the Buddhist traditions this path is deeply intertwined with the *Four Noble Truths*, the former represents the teachings, the latter the practice. The main intention of practice is to transform greed, aversion and illusion (Loy, 2003). Mindfulness in the Buddhist understanding cannot be singled out as more is needed for wisdom and insight to arise than meditation (Monteiro, Musten, and Compson, 2015, p. 3).

Buddhist traditions

Buddhism is one of the world's major religions. It is based on the teachings of Siddharta Gautama who lived in India around the 6th or 5th century B.C. and later become known as the

Buddha (the awakened one)[2]. His teachings (dhamma) offer a way of overcoming suffering by escaping the cycle of death and rebirth (samsara) and attaining enlightenment (nibbana). Two major Buddhist traditions are generally distinguished: Theravada (Pali: "The School of the Elders"), prevalent mainly in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, and Mahayana (Sanskrit: The Great Vehicle"), common in East Asia. The main difference between these two schools is that for Theravada Buddhists the attainment of enlightenment through personal experience is of greater importance whereas Mahayana Buddhists value the liberation of all sentient beings over personal enlightenment. Common elements include the understanding that there is no God who created the world, thus differing fundamentally from the other world religions and placing Buddhism more in the realm of philosophy. Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism also agree on their understanding of suffering, as it is expressed in the *Four Noble Truths*, and the practice necessary to overcome it, as it is presented in *Noble Eightfold Path*. These two principles may be considered the core of the Dhamma (Bodhi, 1994, p. v). The Four Noble Truths can be seen as representing the doctrine of the Buddha's teachings and the Noble Eightfold Path as the discipline. Together, doctrine and discipline form a unity that inform each other. Mindfulness is the seventh element in the Noble Eightfold Path. In what follows, the core principles of the Dhamma will be discussed in order to contextualise and situate mindfulness within Buddhism. It is an attempt to focus on the most basic common elements of the Buddhist traditions.

Three marks of existence

The three marks of existence are considered inherent in all physical and mental phenomena. Humans have a tendency to be deluded about the existence of these existential characteristics which leads to suffering. Overcoming this delusion brings about the end of suffering (c.p. MN 35; Bodhi, 2005).

- Impermanence (anicca). All that exists is subject to change.
- Suffering or unsatisfactoriness (dukkha). Everything is subject to suffering.

[2]Buddhist concepts are often denoted in Sanskrit or Pali in the West. Unless otherwise stated, Pali translations will be used in what follows.

- Non-self (anatta). All things and phenomena exist without an unchanging essence. There is no separate, permanent "I" and no eternal soul. Everything arises dependent on something else.

Four Noble Truths

The Four Noble Truths represent the heart of the Buddhist teachings (cp. Bodhi, 2005; Pali Canon: Samyutta Nikaya LVI, 11).

- Suffering or unsatisfactoriness (dukkha). The truth that every existence is at its core full of suffering.
- Origin (samudaya). The truth that the reason for this suffering is to be found within the beings themselves.
- Cessation (nirodha). The truth that there is a way out of this suffering.
- Path (magga). The truth about the path that leads out of this suffering, namely the Noble Eightfold Path.

The final one of these truths points to the discipline necessary to achieve liberation from suffering. This indicates that practice and insight are interrelated.

Noble Eightfold Path

The Noble Eightfold Path (ariya atthangika magga) is the path that leads to the cessation of suffering or dukkha and ultimately to the experience of enlightenment or personal transformation. It can be organised in three domains that depend on each other. (1) Wisdom (panna), right view, right resolve; (2) Ethics (sila), right speech, right action, right livelihood; and (3) Meditation (samadhi): right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration (see table 2.1; cp. Bodhi, 1994).

Just as the last of the Four Noble Truths points to the Noble Eightfold Path, the first element of the path, **right view**, is concerned with the understanding of the Four Noble Truths. Both principles hence contain one another. Right view also involves the insight into the three marks

I. Wisdom	1. Right view	samma ditthi
	2. Right resolve	samma sankappa
II. Moral virtue	3. Right speech	samma vaca
	4. Right action	samma kammanta
	5. Right livelihood	samma ajiva
III. Meditation	6. Right effort	samma vayama
	7. Right mindfulness	samma sati
	8. Right concentration	samma samadhi

Table 2.1: The Noble Eightfold Path

of existence of impermanence, suffering, and non-self. The second element, **right resolve**, describes the intention or aspiration of one's thinking. What is considered "right" in the Buddhist sense is that which does not harm. Right resolve hence also hints at the ability to differentiate wholesome and unwholesome thoughts. Both, right view and right resolve, are part of the first domain of wisdom within the Noble Eightfold Path, referring to conducive knowledge and attitude. The second domain of moral virtue contains right speech, right action, and right livelihood, respectively. This group contains rules for virtuous behaviour, in the broadest sense a rejection of unwholesome or vicious deeds, as this is believed to lead to suffering. **Right speech** avoids lying, denial, insult, and gossip; **right action** avoids killing, stealing, and living in debauchery; **right livelihood** avoids practising a profession that involves trade of weapons, living beings, stockbreeding, meat, or intoxicants. The last group of meditation, involving the elements of right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration, details the practice necessary to focus the mind and, more broadly, carry out good deeds. The most common meditation practices associated with this domain will be discussed in this subsection (see 'Buddhist meditation practices' on page 24). **Right effort** means controlling the mind when unwholesome thoughts, intentions, or emotions arise, such as ill will, hatred, or anger. **Right mindfulness** or sati can be translated as "memory". This does not mean merely remembering the past but encompasses an awareness pointed to the present moment, clear consciousness and thoughtfulness. The paragraph below will provide more detail regarding the understanding of mindfulness within Buddhism. **Right**

concentration or one-pointedness is achieved through meditative practices that involve focusing the mind on one object, such as the breath.

Right mindfulness

The definition of mindfulness has been subject of much debate (Nilsson and Kazemi, 2016). For now, the interpretation of choice is that of the Buddhist scholar Bhikkhu Bodhi, who is a Theravada Buddhist monk and has translated many discourses of the Pali Canon into English. According to Bodhi (1994, 70 ff.) right mindfulness can be understood in the following way: "The mind is deliberately kept at the level of *bare attention*, a detached observation of what is happening within us and around us in the present moment. In the practice of right mindfulness the mind is trained to remain in the present, open, quiet, and alert, contemplating the present event. All judgments and interpretations have to be suspended, or if they occur, just registered and dropped." (Bodhi, 1994, p. 70). This involves training the mind to simply notice what is happening in the current moment without being distracted by thoughts our judgements. The aim is to be present with the moment as it is. The cultivation of right mindfulness involves practice of the four foundations of mindfulness, namely body, feelings, states of mind, and phenomena. These four contemplations are all interdependent and cannot be separated from one another. The centrality of the practice of mindfulness becomes clear in a quote in the Satipatthana Suttas[3], basically saying that enlightenment can only be reached through the contemplation of these four foundations: "The only way that leads to the attainment of purity, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the end of pain and grief, to the entering of the right path, and to the realization of Nibbana is the 4 foundations of mindfulness." As was discussed earlier, Buddhism is comprised of interrelated worldview and practice. Mindfulness as the core element of the meditation domain of the Noble Eightfold Path is also not a theoretical construct but something that can be understood only through one own's experience (Bodhi, 1994, p. 70).

In my introduction, I said that the focal point of my analysis is MBSR 'inquiry', which I will explain in detail in subsection 2.3.3. Please note that MBSR 'inquiry' involves the same

[3]http://www.palikanon.com/english/wtb/s_t/satipatthaana.htm

contemplation of the four foundations of mindfulness, namely body, feelings, states of mind, and phenomena, as we shall see in my findings chapters 4 to 6.

Buddhist meditation practices

The two main meditation practices in Buddhism are insight meditation (vipassana-bhavana) and concentration on a meditation object (samatha-bhavana), besides other practices. The combination of vipassana and samatha meditation will be from now on be referred to as mindfulness meditation, as it is taught in the West through the eight-week course Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction. Samatha summarises meditative tools that calm the mind through focusing on a meditation object. The nature of the objects may differ and consist most commonly of the contemplation of the breath but may also include i.e. other bodily experiences, a mandala, or a Buddha figure. Arising, distracting thoughts are noticed but not engaged with, instead the attention is gently brought back to the meditation object. The ultimate goal of samatha is the development of prolonged concentration and stability of mind. As such it is often considered the foundation for vipassana or insight meditation. In vipassana, insight refers to an experience-based understanding of the Four Noble Truths and the three characteristics of existence of impermanence, suffering and non-self. In its highest form this "clear seeing" results in attaining liberation from suffering. The meditation practice consists of the contemplation of the four foundations of mindfulness of body, feelings, states of mind, and phenomena and seeing things as they really are. However, the way vipassana is practiced may differ between different Buddhist traditions, especially when it comes to American Buddhists such as Jack Kornfield or Joseph Goldstein, whose teachings are characterised by a syncretism, that is a merging of traditions. In any case, Bodhi (1994, p. 70) asserts that in order to practice these meditations certain requirements should be met, specifically practice in an ethical way, learn from a qualified teacher, and choose a peaceful place without distractions for practice.

2.3.2 What is Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)?

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is a more formal and structured course used in various secular settings. The original vision when developing MBSR was two-fold (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, 148f). Firstly, the intention was to *relieve suffering* in patients who could not be helped sufficiently by traditional medicine and secondly, should the program work, MBSR could *serve as a model* for other hospitals. In addressing the former of these aims, in 1979 the Stress Reduction Clinic in Massachusetts was established and MBSR was offered as an outpatient program, thus introducing mindfulness meditation and mindful hatha yoga practices into the domain of preventive and behavioural medicine. Mindfulness teachings and practices originate in Buddhist traditions but within mainstream medicine could not be communicated as such. The challenge was thus to offer the essence of the dharma free from its Buddhist roots (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 149). Kabat-Zinn refers to "dharma" with a lower-case "d" as a universal set of laws in the universe, more specifically as "the lawfulness of things in relationship to suffering and the nature of the mind" (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 283). This is to distinguish it from the "Dharma" with a capital "D" that denotes explicitly Buddhist teachings. MBSR was originally developed as a complement to treatment with the purpose of giving patients the competence to explore what is already present within them and thus take responsibility for their own well-being. Jon Kabat-Zinn never concealed the Buddhist roots of MBSR and mentions them explicitly in the introduction to his book "Full Catastrophe Living" that was first published in 1990 and described the curriculum of MBSR for a mainstream audience (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). However, he paid careful attention not to use any Buddhist terms in his application of the dharma in order to make it universally accessible. This approach according to (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 283) was not to "de-contextualise" but rather "re-contexualise" it in order to bring together science and dharma, two seemingly opposing epistemologies, and to reach a large, secular, Western audience. The Buddhist core of MBSR has been met with some controversy (e.g. C. G. Brown, 2016; Berna et al., 2024).

This expansive and adaptive character of MBSR is also addressing the second aim of the original vision in its development, that of creating a program that could be modelled and adapted by other hospitals and institutions. To this end, the Stress Reduction Clinic has trained and

continues to train MBSR teachers following rigid teaching standards. The teaching standards as laid out by Santorelli and Kabat-Zinn (2014) do not mention the words "Buddhism" or "dharma" at all but rather require teachers to "embody the practice". I will return to the subject of MBSR teachers embodying the practice at length in chapter 5. Today, MBSR programs have spread first to other English-speaking countries, most notably to the UK where a close cousin to MBSR, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) was developed, to most European countries, and also to countries in Asia. Teacher associations exist in most countries and are organised predominantly regionally.

Mindfulness in MBSR

The previous sections highlighted two perspectives on mindfulness: its origin within Buddhist traditions and the etymology of the term within Western culture. Mindfulness within MBSR accomplishes another developmental step in its understanding. As pointed out above, MBSR was constructed as a bridge between science and contemplative practices and the understanding of mindfulness within MBSR reflects this. It is an attempt to operationalise mindfulness as a type of awareness and an inherent human capacity. According to Kabat-Zinn (1994) mindfulness is defined as "paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non judgmentally". This makes it possible to measure mindfulness objectively which is a necessary to conduct scientific research. However, there is no agreement in the literature regarding a definition for mindfulness, in fact a review by Nilsson and Kazemi (2016) has found 33 different definitions of mindfulness in peer-reviewed articles between 1993 and 2016. Nevertheless, despite the lack of agreement, the definition offered by Jon Kabat-Zinn in the context of MBSR is the one most commonly cited in the literature when it comes to contemporary mindfulness.

MBSR participants

In the realm of cognitive behavioural therapies a trend that is described as the "third wave" (Öst, 2008), has brought about a number of *mindfulness-informed* therapies, most notably Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT; Hayes, 2004) and Dialectal Behavioural Therapy (DBT; Line-

han et al., 1992). In these therapies, although there is no focus on mediation, the therapist's aim is to relate mindfully to their patient and mindfulness may be taught as a skill. In this therapeutic realm, the receivers of mindfulness programs have received some type of mental health related diagnosis.

MBSR on the other hand is marketed to primarily healthy adults who are looking for ways to relieve stress. In fact, MBSR teachers actively discourage participants who might suffer from severe acute mental health issues. An exception to this occurs in cases where participants are in psychotherapeutic treatment for the duration of the MBSR course. The target group of healthy adults is interesting, considering the critique of therapeutic cultures, that normal everyday behaviours tend to get pathologised easily (see subsection 2.2.2 of this chapter). In Germany, MBSR is subsidised by health insurance as a stress prevention program (MBSR-MBCT Verband e.V., 2025b).

Basic structure of MBSR

MBSR is an eight week long psycho-educational group course that teaches people how to live healthier lives based on the principles of mindfulness (Santorelli and Kabat-Zinn, 2014). The structure of MBSR is very clearly defined and highly standardised (see Santorelli, Kabat-Zinn, et al., 2017 for the current MBSR curriculum). Before the program begins, the teacher typically conducts an orientation session that allows potential participants to meet the teacher, practice mindfulness, and ask questions. The intention is to give potential participants a tangible experience of what MBSR is. This includes learning about the general course structure, experiencing "mindfulness in an atmosphere of trust and non-judgemental awareness and exchange" (Santorelli, Kabat-Zinn, et al., 2017, p. 6), and committing to the time-intense engagement with the course over the next eight weeks. The orientation session is followed up by a brief screening interview in which each participant is made aware of physical risks related to practicing yoga, emotional risks related to cultivating a different relationship with difficult emotions, and other risks such as lacking time or lacking support of family. If there is a history of trauma, or severe symptoms of distress are present, participants may be referred to seeking additional psycho-

therapeutical support or participating at another time. The main intention is to assess whether the program is right for the participants. The course itself consists of 8 sessions à 2.5 hours, one full day of practice, and daily homework. Classes are typically conducted with 15-40 participants. The core principle of MBSR is that the teacher "embodies" the practice and uses the present moment to make appropriate teaching choices. Participants are expected to practice both "formal" and "informal" mindfulness meditation practices at home for the duration of the course. In many cases this requires immediate life changes because these home assignments often exceed one hour in length. Many participants cannot fit this into their schedule without altering their daily routine (or at least attempting to). After finishing the course, the teacher is again available for individual interviews if this is needed. This is mainly to discuss the experience of the course and the integration of the practice into daily life. In order to be called "MBSR", the course should follow the structure and methods:

Structure and Methods

a) Group Pre-program Orientation Sessions (2.5 hours) followed by a brief individual interview (5-10 minutes)
b) Eight-weekly classes 2.5-3.5 hours in duration
c) An all-day silent retreat during the sixth week of the program (7.5 hrs)
d) "Formal" Mindfulness Meditation Methods:
   Body Scan Meditation - a supine meditation
   Gentle Hatha Yoga - practiced with mindful awareness of the body
   Sitting Meditation - mindfulness of breath, body, feelings, thoughts, emotions, *and* choiceless awareness
   Walking Meditation
e) "Informal" Mindfulness Meditation Practices (mindfulness in everyday life):
   Awareness of pleasant and unpleasant events
   Awareness of breathing
   Deliberate awareness of routine activities and events such as: eating, weather, driving walking, awareness of interpersonal communications
f) Daily home assignments including a minimum of 45 minutes per day of *formal* mindfulness practice and 5-15 minutes of *informal* practice, 6 days per week for the entire duration of the course
g) Individual and group dialogue and inquiry oriented around weekly home assignments including an exploration of hindrances to mindfulness and development and integration of mindfulness-based self-regulatory skills and capacities
h) Incorporation of exit assessment instruments and participant self-evaluation in Class 8
   - Total in-class contact: 30+ hours
   - Total home assignments: minimum of 42-48 hours
   - Total group Orientation Session time: 2.5 hours

Figure 2.2: MBSR structure and methods outlined by Santorelli and Kabat-Zinn (2014, p. 4).

Formal meditation practices

The formal meditation practices (body scan, yoga, sitting and walking meditation) are successively introduced in the group and then regularly practiced at home. The *body scan* is considered

a foundational meditation that promotes awareness of the physical body (Dreeben, Mamberg, and Salmon, 2013). It is practiced in supine position. If the participant is physically not able to lie on their back it can be practised sitting down or even standing. What is most important is not the position but relating to the body and the experience of the body scan mindfully. Dreeben, Mamberg, and Salmon, 2013: 395) highlight that introducing the practice in the very first session of the course provides a "pedagogical basis" for all other practices in MBSR and in MBCT courses. However, critiques point out that this intense somatic focus early on might be contraindicative for individuals who suffer from trauma. When the formal meditation practices are practiced in the group, they are followed by a group dialogue about the experience with these practices. This type of group dialogue is referred to as *inquiry*. I will introduce 'inquiry' in detail in the next subsection 2.3.3.

2.3.3 'Inquiry' and the role of the MBSR teacher

In this subsection, I will address literature and teacher manuals with regard to MBSR 'inquiry' and the role of the teacher, which is the primary focus of my data analysis.

MBSR 'inquiry'

> *Inquiry doesn't mean looking for answers, especially quick answers which come out of superficial thinking. It means asking without expecting answers, just pondering the question, carrying the wondering with you. ... Inquiry is not so much thinking about answers, although the questioning will produce a lot of thoughts that look like answers. It really involves just listening to the thinking that your questioning evokes.* (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, 233ff)

During an MBSR course, participants are encouraged to practice mindfulness meditation daily, both in structured exercises and everyday activities. In class, the teacher guides a group dialogue called 'inquiry' about their home and in-class mindfulness practice (Kenny, Luck, and Koerbel, 2020, p. 2). 'Inquiry' is a core component of MBSR. In a teacher manual, Brandsma

(2017, p. 145) defines 'inquiry' as: "A conversation method aimed at exploring a personal practice experience–and reactions to that experience–by inviting participants to transcend their usual way of looking in order to assume a different perspective, one through which participants can acquire insight into unconscious patterns, enabling them to be less reactive in dealing with life's challenges." Brandsma emphasises that the focus of the conversation is on the experience itself which is supposed to interrupt associations that we would normally have. The goal of 'inquiry' is to explore the participants' thoughts, emotions and sensations *as they are*, without interpreting or judging them. The focus is not on the individual experience but on the way of relating to the experience. It is recognised by the teacher as something universally human by relating the experience back to the group (e.g. by asking who had a similar experience) and by linking the experience to a more general learning theme and addressing the entire group. In their teacher manual, Crane, Griffith, and Karunavira (2021, 54ff) describe this process clearly in a three-layer model of 'inquiry':

1. Layer 1 – Facilitating exploration of the detail of the participant's *direct experience* of a practice or exercise - i.e. direct experience of sensations, emotions, and thoughts.

2. Layer 2 – Facilitating dialogue *about* this direct experience to encourage personal meaning to emerge. This includes exploration of our relationship to experience (the felt sense that is associated with experiencing pleasant and unpleasant)

3. Layer 3 – Linking themes from inquiry dialogue to general themes in the programme.

Example questions for the first layer would be something like "What is present for you now?", "Sleepiness.. where did you feel that in the body?". Note that the noticing of sensations, emotions, and thoughts in MBSR 'inquiry' covers the foundations of mindfulness in Buddhism, namely body, feelings, states of mind, and phenomena that pave the way to enlightenment (see subsection 2.3.1, 'Right mindfulness' on page 23). Phenomena in the Buddhist understanding refers to noticing the interdependence of things and their impermanent and conditioned nature. This also reflects in the second layer of 'inquiry' which could include questions such as "What happened when you wanted the sleepiness to go away?". The third layer often establishes a link

to other participants, such as "Who else felt sleepy?" and then addressing the subject with the whole group in a way that incorporates a relevant learning theme. Even though this description may suggest otherwise, 'inquiry' does not have a specific structure. It is always based on contributions by participants in the moment which makes it unpredictable to a certain degree. Crane, Stanley, et al. (2015) refer to the process as "disciplined improvisation" because according to them it consists of observable interactional patterns but is at the same time completely dependent on the circumstances of the moment. During 'inquiry', the teacher embodies the qualities of mindfulness of non-judging, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-attachment, acceptance, and letting go. This way of relating is suggested to transfer to participants and support them in relating to experience more mindfully (Crane, Stanley, et al., 2015, p. 1105). In my analysis in chapter 5, I will show what this type of embodiment is understood by MBSR teachers themselves in the context of real classroom interactions.

Immersive MBSR teacher training

I have introduced mindfulness in terms of its Buddhist origins and its most prominent Western adaptation, MBSR. In the Buddhist context, mindfulness is part of the Noble Eightfold Path, deeply embedded in the Buddhist worldview and practice. In MBSR, the Buddhist understanding of mindfulness has been "re-contextualised" for a secular audience (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 283). However, whilst this may be mostly true for participants of MBSR courses, it is different for those who teach MBSR. Prerequisites to enter the teacher training program include (Kenny, Luck, and Koerbel, 2020, p. 6): "Minimum of 1 year of personal mindfulness meditation practice and study in mindfulness (wisdom traditions, Buddhism, and universal dharma, and a minimum of 1 year of mindful movement practice (eg, Mindful Hatha Yoga, Chi Gong, Tai Chi)" and "Minimum of 1 silent teacher-led retreat (Residential Meditation Practice Intensives) of 5 to 7 days". Also, "[a] silent retreat (Residential Meditation Practice Intensive) of 5 to 7 days should be part of the training trajectory and mandatory before one starts to teach". Hence, becoming an MBSR teacher includes a significant immersion in Buddhist and Buddhist-inspired traditions. As it is expected of MBSR teachers to "embody mindfulness" in order to teach MBSR it is important

to consider what that actually means in real classroom interactions. I will do so in detail in my analysis in chapter 5. The chapter also provides a description of how immersive MBSR teacher training is typically set up.

The role of the MBSR teacher

Regardless of the discipline, mindfulness research oftentimes factors out the role of the teacher, seeing mindfulness as something that people "acquire" or "take" like a pill. Deleting the teacher seemingly allows for objectivity—which is needed in randomised control trials (McCown, 2016). However, mindfulness practice is at its core a relational practice which relies on a teacher to deliver the course. This paragraph is a short review of qualitative research that focus on the role of the teacher and 'inquiry' in mindfulness-based interventions such as MBSR.

A study by Canby et al. (2021) found that social common factors, such as relationships with instructors and group members, were stronger predictors of improvements in depression, stress, and self-reported mindfulness than specific mindfulness practice-related factors. Formal meditation contributed to changes in anxiety and stress, but informal practice did not predict outcomes. These results suggest that the social context and relationships play a significant role in the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions. MBSR cannot easily be separated from the relational and social context in which it is practiced. Cormack, Jones, and Maltby (2018) used grounded theory to explore group processes in mindfulness-based interventions. They developed a model describing the group as a "vessel on a shared journey" and emphasised how teachers foster safety, cultivate a group culture, and facilitate shared experiences. Aalderen et al. (2014) has also focused on the role of the teacher in mindfulness-based interventions in their study. The authors highlight four key factors in the teacher-participant relationship: teachers embodying mindfulness, empowering participants to address challenges constructively, non-reactivity of the teacher and managing group dynamics. Notably, in their study, group processes were found to be undervalued by teachers. However, a study by Allen, Evans, and Wyka (2021), suggests, that group processes were considered helpful by participants. The authors found that participants valued both the personality of the MBSR teacher and the group discussion ('inquiry'):

"not only did participants rate these as very useful, they made many comments to express their appreciation for the group process and the benefits of "insightful discussions" with different group members (Allen, Evans, and Wyka, 2021, p. 264). The role of the teacher might be especially relevant when it comes to difficult situations within the course. Miller (2024) explored how MBSR teachers navigate difficulty in the group. The author described how teachers and participants collaboratively approach challenges with curiosity and compassion ("dancing with difficulty"). This involves turning *toward* moments of dysregulation or discomfort, rather than away from them. What might otherwise disrupt the group dynamic is used as an opportunity for growth. Miller (2024) suggests that MBSR teachers support participants to remain present with their difficulties by embodying mindfulness principles.

A study by Stanley and Longden (2016) suggests how MBSR 'inquiry' constructs a participant who is a "mindful subject". This "mindful subject" has two roles that seem to contradict each other: on the one hand, they actively try to change and improve themselves. On the other hand, they learn to accept things as they are. This means that participants are encouraged to both watch themselves closely and be kind to themselves. The role of the teacher is similarly contradictory. They act as an equal ("non-expert") but at the same time guide the learning process which is only possible because they hold a position of authority.

2.4 Institutional life under the microscope

An MBSR course can be understood as a form of 'institutional interaction' from a conversation analysis perspective. The course is structured and pursues a specific goal. The teachers and participants orient themselves towards this institutional context in terms of their discourse and conduct (Stanley and Longden, 2016, p. 309).

In this section, I would like to rationalise why I am analysing MBSR 'inquiry' and why I am using ethnomethodology (EM), and conversation analysis (CA). In subsection 2.4.1, I discuss MBSR as an institutional interaction and in terms of a 're-inventive institution' (Scott, 2011). I contrast the sociological perspectives symbolic interactionism (SI) and ethnomethodology (EM)

and explain why I chose an ethnomethodological perspective as an overall approach to my thesis. In subsection 2.4.2, I introduce conversation analysis with special attention to applied CA which is used to examine how talk is organised in institutional settings. This section lays the foundation for formulating and rationalising my research question, which I will do in the next section 2.5.

2.4.1 MBSR as an institutional interaction

My aim in this subsection is to show in what ways MBSR can be viewed as an institutional interaction. In section 2.3.2, I explained MBSR's structure and practices. An MBSR teacher undergoes extensive MBSR teacher training and then guides participants through a standardised curriculum. During the course, the teacher guides meditation practices, leads group discussions ('inquiry') and delivers relevant mindfulness and psycho-educational teachings to the group. All of these interactional patterns make MBSR recognisable and replicable, regardless of who teaches it or in which country it is delivered. Stanley and Longden (2016) have conducted a conversation analysis of MBSR 'inquiry' and they suggest to consider MBSR as an 'institutional interaction' because of its institutional talk. They follow Drew and Heritage (1992)'s definition of institutional talk:

> "In the terms of conversation analysis, a course in MBSR can be considered 'institutional interaction'. This does not mean that mindfulness courses necessarily need to take place within social institutions such as schools or hospitals. Rather, Drew and Heritage (1992), following Levin, suggest institutional talk can be characterised as: (i) goal-oriented in institutionally relevant ways; (ii) comprising special and particular constraints on allowable contributions; (iii) comprising specific inferential frameworks and procedures. These features, they argue, are to be found within talk-in-interaction itself as participants' orientations to institutional context." (Stanley and Longden, 2016, p. 309).

Re-inventive institutions

MBSR can also be seen as a *re-inventive institution*, a concept introduced by Scott (2011) to describe institutions that emphasise personal transformation and self-work. In sociological terms, institutions provide an organisational framework in which specific social functions are fulfilled. In doing so, they influence the behaviour, beliefs and interactions of the members. Goffman (2017) has introduced the concept of a *total institution* which leads to change of identity due to (physical) enclosure. In total institutions, "members are immersed and enclosed - physically or symbolically - for a long period of time, to the exclusion of other attachments, and which aims fundamentally to change their identities" (Scott, 2011, p. 1). Scott argues that Goffman's concept of a total institution has since been extended in the context of contemporary western societies because there is a growing demand for self reflection within 'therapy culture' (Scott, 2011, p. 2). People are no longer controlled by a strict, authoritative institution but choose to follow a self-regulating "institution without walls". So while still acting within a structured environment, people actively engage in shaping their own transformation. Scott defines this concept of *re-inventive institutions* (RI) as follows (Scott, 2011, 30f.):

> "a material, discursive or symbolic structure in which voluntary members actively seek to cultivate a new social identity, role or status. This is interpreted positively as a process of reinvention, self-improvement or transformation. It is achieved not only through formal instruction in an institutional rhetoric, but also through the mechanisms of performative regulation in the interaction context of an inmate culture."

In re-inventive institutions, power is not imposed externally but maintained through interactions. Members enact and reproduce a shared system of discourse, behaviours, and rituals. These all reflect a collective commitment to self-transformation. Scott reframes Goffman's institution-as-structure as an institution-as-interaction, highlighting how members enact and embody institutional goals in ways that are visible, self-evident, and collectively reinforced. Behaviours and beliefs are performed–a process Scott describes as "dramaturgical enacted" (Scott, 2011, p. 6).

Symbolic interactionism vs. ethnomethodology

Scott's work is grounded in symbolic interactionism (SI), a school of thought in which individuals create their social reality through shared symbols, definitions and interpretations (Fink, 2016). In Goffman's dramaturgy, one theoretical perspective of SI, social life is compared to a theatre in which people are seen as actors who perform roles on a stage and negotiate meaning with other actors: they are "playing their part, or role, in the drama of each situation, and presenting various different characters to the audiences they encounter therein" (Scott, 2016, p. 16). A number of the issues I aim to address in this thesis–such as the co-accomplishment of meaning and experience–are themes that could be explored in the tradition of symbolic interactionism. Foundational concepts of SI, such as the definition of the situation (Thomas, 1923, p. 41), interaction order (Goffman, 1983), and construction and negotiation of meaning (Blumer, 1986; Strauss, 2008) explore how reality is constructed within interactions between social actors. SI also allows to explore specific interactional patterns such as protective facework (Goffman, 1955), interaction rituals (Goffman, 1967/2017), and forms of talk (Goffman, 1981), or aligning actions (Stokes and Hewitt, 1976). Epistemologically, SI seeks to understand participants' subjective experiences rather than make objectivist claims about an external reality (Scott, 2016, p. 13).

Ethnomethodology (EM) is a related sociological perspective which I will discuss in detail in my methods chapter in section 3.2. Like SI, EM also rejects the idea that a social interaction can be 'objectively' described, prefers qualitative research methods, and does not rely on theories early on (Dennis, 2011, p. 349). However, EM differs from SI in three significant ways, namely meaning, actor, and context. Regarding *meaning*, SI's focus is more on interpreting actions in a symbolic sense while EM is more concerned with how actions become recognisable as meaningful with the interaction: "nothing is 'brought in' from outside the interaction" (Dennis, 2011, p. 351). In SI, *social actors* take on a role and make an interaction meaningful through their interpretation, whereas EM's only concern is the interactional process itself (Dennis, 2011, p. 352). This means for ethnomethodologists, 'internal' states are only of concern as a product of the interaction itself. This perspective also reflects in EM's use of the term 'member' rather

than 'actor'. Lastly, with regard to *context*, for SI context is seen as something that shapes how meaning is interpreted, while for EM context is an "interactional accomplishment" (Dennis, 2011, p. 353) – a product of members' methods of the interaction itself. EM is focused on what is relevant in a specific interaction to the members themselves and it is concerned with describing these observable methods which are understood to produce a shared social world. EM is specifically not talking about "construction" or "performing", but about "production" (Wiley, 2019).

So while I could have taken an SI perspective for my thesis, I chose to draw on ethnomethodology instead. There are three key reasons for my choice of EM. Firstly, as I explained above, from an EM perspective, meaning is not something hidden inside or added from outside–it is something people accomplish together through what they actually do and say. This suits my concern of how mindfulness is enacted in the moment and made observable in the interaction itself. Secondly, EM is interested in 'breaching experiments', disruptions of social norms that reveal expectations that would otherwise go unnoticed (Garfinkel, 1967). In my data, I came across a naturally occurring breaching incident where a student-teacher blew a loud whistle during a silent meditation and disrupted the classroom. Lastly, EM requires 'unique adequacy' (Garfinkel, 2002), that is a practical competence to be able to recognise and describe the settings and practises that are explored. I am a certified MBSR teacher and deeply familiar with the embodied practises and teaching methods of MBSR. Ethnomethodology provides a lens through which these practices can be treated as interactional accomplishments. MBSR takes place within a socially organised setting in which transformation is co-produced by its members. A key site where these institutional features of MBSR become evident is 'inquiry'. 'Inquiry' is not a free-form discussion but contains conversational patterns that are specific to MBSR (e.g. (Crane, Stanley, et al., 2015; Stanley and Longden, 2016).

2.4.2 Conversation analysis (CA)

"Conversation Analysis is the study of how social action is brought about through the close organisation of talk." (Antaki, 2011, p. 1). It is a method for studying the structure and organ-

isation of social interaction, with a focus on how people perform actions through talk (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974). Conversation analysis is rooted in ethnomethodology (EM), which was developed by Garfinkel (1967). EM investigates the methods people use to produce and make sense of social order in everyday interactions. I will outline EM in detail in my methods chapter in subsection 3.2.1. Conversation analysis extends EM's perspective and provides a systematic method for studying the sequential organisation of talk. A core concept in CA is the adjacency pair, a sequence of two related utterances where first pair part (FPP) (e.g., a greeting or a question) establishes an expectation for a specific type of response, or second pair part (SPP), (e.g., a return greeting or an answer). For instance, when one person greets another with "Hello," a reciprocal "Hello" is anticipated. These patterns are not random but reflect rules that

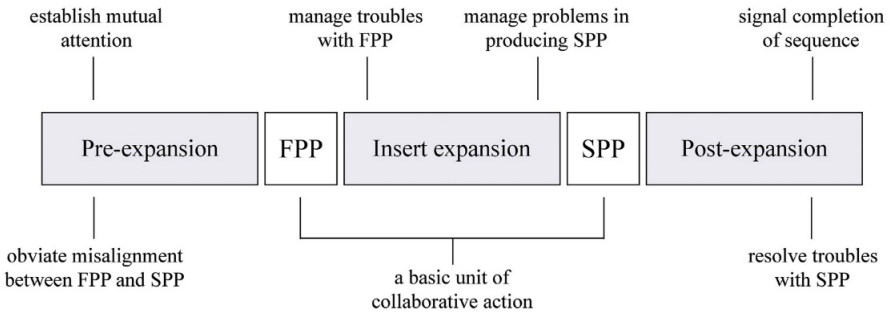


Figure 2.3: The functional organisation of adjacency pair expansion (Kendrick, P. Brown, et al., 2020, p. 133). The first pair part (FPP) and second pair part (SPP) from the basic unit of collaborative action in a conversation. This adjacency pair may preceded by a 'pre-expansion', interrupted by an 'insert expansion' and followed by a 'post-expansion' that serve different conversational functions.

participants mutually recognise. This demonstrates how communication is fundamentally cooperative and orderly (Heritage and Clayman, 2010). Kendrick, P. Brown, et al. (2020, p. 119) argue that adjacency pairs are an example of "the universality of the sequence organisation observable in informal human conversational interaction". CA also highlights that deviations from these expected patterns, such as silences or non-responses, carry social meaning and can indicate dispreference, misunderstanding, or resistance (Schegloff, 2007). By examining these structures, CA sheds light on how individuals collaboratively construct social actions, such as making requests, resolving conflicts, or managing turn-taking in conversation.

Applied Conversation Analysis

A CA researcher "puts institutional activity under the microscope, is revealing how the way the world (and its problems) works" (Antaki, 2011, p. 8). The application of CA in this case is neutral, the researcher has no intention of changing anything. Applied conversation analysis extends CA's principles to examine specific contexts, such as healthcare, education, and institutional settings, where structured interactions play a crucial role in achieving organisational goals. Antaki (2011) identifies six approaches to applied CA, including foundational, social-problem-oriented, communicational, diagnostic, institutional, and interventionist applications. For instance, institutional CA investigates how organisations accomplish routine tasks through structured communication, often revealing subtle mechanisms that make these processes efficient. "Usually the CA analyst goes in curious to see how the institution manages to carry off its work so smoothly and successfully" (Antaki, 2011, p. 7).

In a 1997 article, Peräkylä (1997) shows the added value of conversation analysis when analysing medical consultations. He shows that there are two types of medical diagnoses: those that simply state facts, seemingly pronouncing the doctor's authority, and those that provide an explanation, seemingly leaving more room for an intersubjective understanding of the diagnosis between doctor and patient. However, closely analysing the conversational contexts of these two diagnostic framings show how a diagnosis-as-fact typically involves some form of physical evidence which actually balances the aspects of authority and intersubjectivity. It still makes a difference how a diagnosis is communicated. Diagnoses that contain explanations treat the patient as an "*understanding recipient* of medical reasoning" (Peräkylä, 1997, p. 206) and typically elicit more elaborate patient responses. Peräkylä concludes that conversation analysis shows not just the elements and tasks of a medical consultation but how these come together and what that might mean.

Kiyimba and O'Reilly (2016, p. 535) argue for the value of using conversation analysis to inform therapeutic interactions, listing mindfulness amongst the practices that would benefit. Specifically, they posit that "[t]herapeutic relationships and alignment are central to therapy, and attention to language can help us understand how these are achieved, or problems are over-

come in practice." Also, "[t]hese approaches to analysis have a great deal to offer in the training programmes of practitioners as they help to unveil the specific and actual practices that occur with clients."

2.5 Introducing the Research Question

In the preceding sections, I have outlined the literature that I consider relevant for my study. In our contemporary Western society, there is a surge in mindfulness (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2011). This is due to a large body of mainly quantitative research which provides evidence for its health benefits (Khoury et al., 2013), which is focused mainly in the psy-disciplines (Baminiwatta and Solangaarachchi, 2021, p. 2101). At the same time, there is a dearth of qualitative mindfulness research (Lee et al., 2021). Mindfulness fits into the concept of therapeutic cultures (Nehring, O. J. Madsen, et al., 2020). In a therapeutic cultures, psychological ideas have become more and more influential (De Vos, 2014; J. O. Madsen, 2014a). While prioritising mental health can be considered beneficial, there are also some potential downsides to therapeutic cultures. Critiques point to a risk of promoting self responsibility for issues that could be addressed at a systemic level (Nehring, Alvarado, et al., 2016, p. 163). Moreover, critiques suggest that framing the experience of suffering as inevitable for healing the self could lead to people accepting unfavourable circumstances without attempting to change them (Illouz, 2008). A third critique refers to a trend of viewing normal behaviour such as inattention as 'pathological' as this might lead to a narrow understanding of health and a potential for over-diagnoses (Barker, 2014).

The eight week course Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is a secular adaptation of Buddhist practices for individuals who seek relief from stress (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Reviewing the Buddhist foundation of MBSR reveals some parallels to the critiques of therapeutic culture, especially with regard to regarding suffering as necessary. Deeply engrained in Buddhist philosophy is the First Noble Truth that "that every existence is at its core full of suffering" and the way out of suffering requires acceptance and rightful practice (cp. Bodhi, 2005; Pali Canon:

Samyutta Nikaya LVI, 11). Moreover, MBSR teachers are required to "embody the practice" in order to teach the MBSR curriculum (Santorelli and Kabat-Zinn, 2014).

Qualitative research into MBSR specifically demonstrates the importance of the relationships between teacher and learner (Allen, Evans, and Wyka, 2021), the idea of a shared journey (Cormack, Jones, and Maltby, 2018), and the importance of the group discussion 'inquiry' (Allen, Evans, and Wyka, 2021). MBSR can be considered an 'institutional interaction' because it is a structured, goal-oriented and replicable course (Stanley and Longden, 2016). It can be regarded through the perspective of a 're-inventive institution', in which individuals voluntarily come together and seek self transformation. The concept was put forward by Scott (2011) and emphasises interactions and shared systems of practice. Central to MBSR is a group dialogue called 'inquiry' in which participants are invited to reflect upon their meditation experience (Kenny, Luck, and Koerbel, 2020). The dialogue is not formally structures, yet displayed distinct features and conversational patterns that are unique to MBSR (Crane, Stanley, et al., 2015; Stanley and Longden, 2016). Moreover, 'inquiry' focuses on exploring participants' thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations (Crane, Griffith, and Karunavira, 2021, 54ff), which are the also the foundations of mindfulness that are necessary for enlightenment in Buddhism (Bodhi, 1994).

Looking at 'inquiry' through the lens of conversation analysis offers a method of studying collaborative social interactions (Stanley and Longden, 2016). I am suggesting that CA can be used to reveal the subtle mechanisms within the MBSR classroom. Existing research highlights the efficiency of mindfulness and addresses the broader societal implications of therapeutic culture. However, little attention has been paid to the interactional processes through which mindfulness is accomplished in real life settings. This study seeks to fill that gap by investigating how teachers and learners in MBSR programs accomplish and sustain a therapeutic environment. The MBSR classroom is something that is done: it is not simply a room. It does not exist independently of teachers and learners. Specifically, this research draws on the principles of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis to explore the collaborative practices that constitute a therapeutic setting in the context of MBSR.

Research question

The central research question guiding this investigation is:

How do teachers and learners of MBSR co-accomplish a therapeutic setting?

This question is designed to unpack the nuanced processes that make up the therapeutic context in MBSR. By examining the interactional details of classroom dialogues and 'inquiry' practices, this study aims to reveal how participants collaboratively transform individual experiences into shared opportunities for learning and growth. This co-accomplishment is not simply a matter of content but of method: the ways in which language, embodiment, and interactional patterns combine to produce a setting that is considered therapeutic to its members. In the next chapter, I will describe my methodology and methods.

Chapter 3

Methodology and methods

In this chapter, I will outline the methodology and methods of my study which aims to answer the research question: *How do mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) teachers and learners co-accomplish a therapeutic setting?* In my literature review, I pointed out that mindfulness is studied mainly quantitatively and that there is a dearth of qualitative research (Lee et al., 2021). The subject of meditation remains difficult to study for the social sciences. As Liberman (1999, p. 55) notes in Eisenmann and Mitchell (2024, p. 34) "The very topic of meditation can turn social scientists green in the face, to the point that there is professional pressure to ignore it as a phenomenon." A challenge in the study of mindfulness is that it is a deeply personal and subjective experience that might even lead to a transformation of the self. However, there is not much to observe from the outside when someone sits on a cushion with their eyes closed and meditates. There is no agreement in the literature in terms of how mindfulness is defined which makes it inherently difficult to measure (Chems-Maarif et al., 2025). Measuring mindfulness often relies on self assessment questionnaires. This is problematic because people tend to rate their own mindfulness depending on their experience with regard to mindfulness and meditation. It appears that a long standing practice of mindfulness makes people more aware of states in which they are not mindful, which results in a lower score in self assessment questionnaires (Sauer et al., 2013, p. 5). In the previous chapter, I pointed out that mindfulness is a relational practice that is shaped by interactions between people (e.g. Crane, Stanley, et al., 2015). Research meth-

ods such as questionnaires might miss these social dynamics because they treat mindfulness as a fixed psychological characteristic. This is why authors suggest approaches that can capture the lived experience of practitioners, for example Eisenmann (2022) who explored how yoga practitioners enact spirituality from an ethnomethodological perspective. Eisenmann and Mitchell (2024, p. 35) argue that being a practitioner provides an awareness of the 'real' challenges of self-transformative practices that cannot be be captured through sociological reasoning. In their own words: "when it came to gaining access to the details and "depth" of our practices *from within*, this was an undertaking that often could only be described as feeling that there is "something *more*," out of reach of the sociological reasoning and writing to which we would ultimately have to resort."

In this chapter, I outline my research strategy based on ethnomethodology (EM) (Garfinkel, 1967) and conversation analysis (see 2.4.2) to put the phenomenon of mindfulness first. Instead of asking people to describe their mindfulness experiences after the fact, EM allows me to study how members accomplish mindfulness in the moment through interaction. Moreover, through an ethnomethodological lens it becomes possible to explore how mindfulness becomes meaningful in specific contexts and not just assume a fixed definition of mindfulness. This is tied to the notion of "unmotivated looking" in conversation analysis which means looking at social interactions as they are and without preconceived theories (Psathas, 1995, p. 45).

This chapter consists of two parts, the first part being concerned with my methodology (the why and the how of my research) and the second part with methods (the what and how of data collection and analysis). Firstly, I will discuss the *methodology* of my study which includes an overview of my research strategy and its philosophical underpinnings. In section 3.1, I will discuss the ontological framework of my study in terms of phenomenology and Buddhism. In section 3.2, I will outline ethnomethodology as a research strategy for this study. In the next two sections, I will discuss the *methods* of my study, i.e. the application of my research strategy in the real world. In section 3.3, I will discuss my methods of data collection which includes access, participants, ethical concerns, and how I collected my data. In section 3.4 I will explain the methods I used for data selection and analysis.

3.1 Ontological framework: phenomenological and Buddhist perspectives

This section provides the ontological foundation of my study. My study is an ethnomethodological study of an MBSR teacher training course. This means that I studied the endogenous methods of people in this setting and the way they put together interactions that are orderly. Studying endogenous methods requires a way of looking at the world without preconceived ideas. In ethnomethodology, or more specifically in conversation analysis, this concept is known as "unmotivated looking" (Psathas, 1995, p. 45). In MBSR, there is a similar concept known as "beginner's mind". In fact, ethnomethodology and MBSR share some essential ontological features, that is they share aspects of reality in terms of what is real or true. In this section, I will describe the commonalities of the ontological foundations of both fields. This means, I will describe the phenomenological roots of ethnomethodology (subsection 3.1.1) and the Buddhist roots of MBSR and highlight essential characteristics in which their views of reality are similar (subsection 3.1.2). This provides the ontological framework for my study.

3.1.1 Foundational concepts in phenomenology

Ethnomethodology can be regarded as an applied version of phenomenology. In order to provide an ethnomethodological ontology, I will describe the essential phenomenological ideas that were respecified by ethnomethodology. Phenomenology is a philosophical approach that explores how people make sense of the world around them. The word is derived from the Greek word "phainómenon" (that which appears) and the Greek word "logos" (study). Phenomenology investigates reality as it is subjectively experienced, without assumptions about the external world. It was originally conceived by Edmund Husserl and then further developed by his student Alfred Schütz. Husserl coined the concepts of 'intentional consciousness' and 'essence' (Husserl, 1913/2009). According to Husserl, people perceive the world through their senses. It is our 'natural attitude' to assume that there exists a world out there. 'Intentional consciousness' describes consciousness as always having an object (whether real or imaginary) in this world

around us. People are only conscious of their own individual and subjective experience. They are not conscious of the reality that exists beyond their own experience because it is not possible to perceive anything beyond the five senses. People intuitively organise everything that is going on as 'phenomena' which means that common characteristics are grouped together. These phenomena have distinguishing features, their 'essence'. For example, the essence of a bus may include a large vehicle, a driver, passengers, the exchange of money for tickets etc, which is different from the essence of a car, even though both share some common features. Alfred Schütz further developed Husserl's ideas and made them more applicable to the social sciences. While Husserl focused on how individuals experience the world and relate to each other, Schütz focused on the construction of a social reality and introduced the concepts of 'typification' and 'common sense knowledge' (Schütz, 1932/2013). According to Schütz, everyday life is a space in which meaning is created and our reality is always a social one. As we go about our lives, we label the things we experience ('typification'). These typifications include scripts about how we ought to behave. As humans, we have a large inventory of these typifications shared with others. This collection of typifications are what Schütz calls our 'common sense knowledge' which allows to communicate with each other and understand one another. It also leads us to experience the world as orderly and structured, even though this sense of order is merely an illusion.

I have described the key phenomenological ideas as introduced by Husserl and Schütz. Other thinkers have further contributed to the field of phenomenology, in the context of my thesis most notably Maurice Merleau-Ponty who introduced the concept of 'embodied perception' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). For him, mind and body are inseparable because perception always involves a bodily engagement with the environment. He argued that "[w]e operate not only within but upon the world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 453), meaning that there is a reciprocal relationship between individuals and the world. We act in this world with our bodily presence and in turn our actions affect the world around us. In summary, phenomenology is a philosophical movement that studies the way in which people subjectively experience and construct reality. In the following paragraph I will relate these key phenomenological understandings of reality to Buddhist understandings of reality.

3.1.2 Shared ontological perspectives of phenomenology and buddhism

The relationship between phenomenology and Buddhism was extensively explored in the book *The embodied mind, revised edition: Cognitive science and human experience* by Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, 1992/2017. In this section, I will highlight the main commonalities of both traditions that are relevant for my project and provide its ontological framework.

MBSR is commonly postioned as a secular program with Buddhist roots as I have described in some detail in the literature review in chapter 2. Jon Kabat-Zinn refers to MBSR as "Buddhist meditation without the Buddhism", conceived from the beginning as "a public health intervention and as a "skillful means" for demonstrating the liberative potential of mindfulness practice in regard to conventional views of self and the world and their attendant, often imprisoning narratives, which we all experience to one degree or another. [...] Without that underlying, if mostly implicit element, MBSR would not have been either "mindfulness-based" nor a vehicle for dharma and, therefore, to my mind, of little value from the perspective of healing, transformation, or liberation." (Kabat-Zinn, 2017a, pp. xi–xii). Hence, a Buddhist understanding of meditation in combination with its notion of self transformation and liberation is not only present in MBSR, it is part of its 'essence' (to use phenomenological terminology) according to Jon Kabat-Zinn. With this in mind, it makes sense to turn to Buddhist ideas when discussing the ontological foundation of MBSR.

I will point out three common themes within phenomenology and Buddhism, namely, the emphasis of direct experience, embodied cognition, and the nature of self.

Both traditions, phenomenology and Buddhism highlight the importance of direct experience. This requires the underlying assumption that it is possible to put the conditions of the world "out there" on hold in a sense and focus solely on the lived experience. In Buddhism this idea is called "the beginner's mind" and is one of the foundational "mindful attitudes" that are cultivated through meditation practice. It requires practitioners to focus just on what they experience in the present moment without any assumptions, associations or judgments. For example, in the raisin exercise that introduces mindfulness in an MBSR course, participants are asked to eat a raisin as if they are doing so for the first time in their lives. As they point out what they

perceive through their five senses, they might say something like "it smells like honey", which is an association. What is the actual smell that reminds them of honey? This 'inquiry' might lead to a more direct experience of smelling and possibly to experiential insight. Phenomenology similarly emphasises a direct experience of phenomena. It seeks to describe these phenomena as they are perceived by consciousness. A focus on the essential nature of these phenomena is achieved by what Husserl called "bracketing": the suspension of one's pre-existing biases, judgements and assumptions about the world (Husserl, 1913/2009, 122ff).

Another theme, that is present in both Buddhism and phenomenology is embodied cognition (Shapiro, 2019). In many Buddhist meditative practices the understanding that body and mind are connected is evident, such as vipassana (or insight) meditation, which is also central to MBSR. It involves a non-judgmental awareness of one's thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations as they arise in the present moment. The main focus of the body scan meditation for example is on bodily sensations. In MBSR, there is often an 'inquiry' into the interdependent relationship between these inner phenomena and its influence on our perception of the world. Similarly, phenomenology—especially as suggested by Merleau-Ponty—holds that our experience of the world is shaped by our bodily existence. Our perception is inherently embodied and this influences the way we understand and interact with our our environment (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

Lastly, Buddhism and phenomenology are similar in their respective perspectives in what is the nature of the self. Buddism holds the view of "no-self" (anatta) which basically means that there is no permanent, unchanging self. "There is no static self to be found; it is all process. You find thoughts but no thinker, you find emotions and desires, but nobody doing them. The house itself is empty. There is nobody home." (Gunaratana, 1994, p. 104). From a phenomenological perspective, the nature of the self can similarly be described as something that is continuously shaped through the perception of and the interaction with the world. So whilst not denying the existence of the self, phenomenologists do regard the self as evolving and context-dependent. Husserl calls this dynamic and relational concept of the self the 'transcendental ego' (Husserl, 1913/2009).

In conclusion, the ontological similarities between Buddhism and phenomenology offer a foundation for studying the experiential and embodied aspects of mindfulness training. In the following section I will describe ethnomethodology which allows me to do just that.

3.2 Ethnomethodology as a research strategy

This section explains my research strategy and puts it into context. In subsection 3.2.1, I introduce ethnomethodology, which is the study of how people create and understand social order in everyday interactions through shared methods and practices. I discuss unique adequacy, a key principle within ethnomethodology. It means that researchers must be competent in the social activities they study in order to conduct a relevant and meaningful analysis. In subsection 3.2.2, I explain why unique adequacy is important to conduct an ethnomethodological study of MBSR. In subsection 3.2.3, I outline the iterative process it took for me to arrive at my research focus and research strategy. I describe three key phases of my research journey: the proposal phase, the data collection phase, and the data selection and analysis phase.

3.2.1 Ethnomethodology and the principle of unique adequacy

Ethnomethodology (EM) can be considered an applied version of phenomenology. It shares the ontological properties that I have described in the previous section. Ethnomethodology is a sociological approach that "seeks to describe methods persons use in doing social life" (Sacks, 1984, p. 21). The word is derived from the Greek words 'ethnos' ('people'; in sociological contexts: people who practice a common culture) and 'méthodos' ('a way of doing something' or 'the study of'). Ethnomethodology was developed in the 1960s by Harold Garfinkel and was borne out of his critique of functionalism. Garfinkel did not agree with the assumption of structural approaches such as functionalism that social structures and processes existed over the individual and imposed an order on society (Sharrock, 2014). He believed, just like phenomenologists, that people *create* a sense of order by living their everyday life. While this sense of order is informed by social norms, it is not 'real' but merely an accomplishment. We need this sense of

order to understand, describe and explain things in the world. In EM, 'breaching experiments' deliberately disrupt social norms to reveal underlying rules of everyday life. This can be as simply as "[b]reaching everyday life by standing still in a public place" as the title of Stanley, Smith, et al. (2020) article suggests. When otherwise invisible rules are violated, it can reveal shared expectations, and researchers can observe how individuals restore order and maintain social coherence. EM posits that all social activities are reflexively organised to be both observable and reportable (Garfinkel, 1984). This means that the actions and interactions of individuals within a social setting are structured not only to accomplish a specific task but also to make those tasks accountable to others. This reflexive nature means that the organisation of activities is embedded within the very social settings being studied. The very process of engaging in social activities inherently includes making those activities recognisable, understandable, and analysable by others. EM considers how participants produce and maintain the organisation of their actions in a manner that allows others to make sense of them (Sharrock, 2014). 'Representation' is viewed as a socially organised practice that emphasises that the methods for capturing social phenomena are inherently linked to the social settings being studied. In this way, EM focuses on understanding the endogenous methods that produce social order. One aim of ethnomethodology is to identify what is unique about an action, or rather what practices produce the phenomena/practice as uniquely that and not something else. Garfinkel called this the 'haecceity' of an activity (Garfinkel, 2002). This concept is very similar to what phenomenologists call the 'essence' which I described earlier (see section 3.1.1).

Unique adequacy requirement of methods

In this context, Garfinkel introduced 'the unique adequacy requirement of methods' which means that researchers "must develop a deep competence so as to recognise, identify, and describe the haecceities, the *just thisness* of the local setting he or she is researching" (Morriss, 2019, p. 2). The unique adequacy requirement is a foundational principle in EM studies of work settings. Garfinkel differentiated a weak and a strong version of unique adequacy (UA) (Garfinkel, 2002, 175f.). In its weak version, referred to as "vulgar competency", UA is understood as an immer-

sion into the studied practice, as is common in anthropology for example. The researcher must learn enough about a group's practices and language to interpret their actions without having to rely on the practitioners' explanations. The aim is to understand what it is like to be a part of a group by participating in it, often over a long period of time. UA in its strong application goes a step further and demands of the researcher to become a member. Membership refers to competence–it is not about who someone is but about what they do. It simply means an individual who is competent in the everyday practices and norms of a particular social setting which enables them to understand, produce, and make sense of the social actions within that context. This also means that members are not *people*, despite (Morriss, 2019, p. 2) suggesting that "[m]embers are ordinary persons who are part of any particular local scene" (Morriss, 2019, p. 2). Membership can be context-dependent, for example in an ordinary situation such as queuing. Unique adequacy "invite[s] the ethnographer or investigator to commit the cardinal sin of going native, that is to largely abandon the methodological strictures of sociology or anthropology and favour the conceptions of practice, reasoning, rationality [that are] endogenous to the fields of practice studied." (Sharrock, 2016, 7:01). In mainstream sociology, "going native" is often seen as a methodological error, as it risks losing the objectivity necessary to make sociological generalisations. However, ethnomethodology does not seek to make sociological generalisations but rather to describe the practice from within which is why this form of deep immersion is crucial. Garfinkel critiqued the "missing what" in contemporary sociological studies of work (Garfinkel, 2002, p. 99), meaning that while studies answered sociological questions regarding such as gender, status, race etc. within professions, they ignored the activity of the profession itself. Eisenmann and Mitchell (2024, p. 35) pointed out this issue in their study of embodied self-transformative practices when they said that there is "something *more*" that does not fit into sociological terms. This is also true in mindfulness practices, as a lot of what is happening is on the *inside* and not observable to another person. According to Garfinkel, EM was able to fill this gap if the unique adequacy requirement was met, that is if researchers really do go native and become members in the groups they are studying to a degree that allows them to generate valid results within that field. This is closely linked to Garfinkel's concept of hybrid

studies of work, which seek to contribute not only to sociology but also to the professional discipline under investigation (Garfinkel, 2002, 100ff). Hybrid studies blur the boundaries between sociology and the technical field, allowing ethnomethodology to make meaningful contributions to both. However, Greiffenhagen and Sharrock (2019) raise the question of who the intended audience of such hybrid studies is. They critique an article by Livingston (1983)—often cited by Garfinkel as a prime example of a case of strong unique adequacy—and point out that the professionals, in this case mathematicians, gain nothing from the study. Smith (2024) in a study of mountain rescue work argues that the researcher's competence in the activity being studied should be observable within the worksite itself. Moreover, "the real matter of competency and, indeed, the 'test' of unique adequacy, is not to be able to follow fixed procedures, but to be able to adapt procedures and methods to fluid situations." (Smith, 2024, p. 76). Hofstetter (2024, p. 82) gives an example about unique adequacy in the context of her research, which is rock climbing. "[W]hen rock climbing, moving one's hand towards the safety equipment in a preparatory way to anticipate needing to catch a falling climber is not only a local skill to have, or a requirement for being a good partner, or a performance of safety code – but doing so will be seen as a method for anticipating a fall, and thus judging the climber as insufficiently steady. Or, potentially signalling that one is 'jumpy' and overly anxious about having to catch a potential falling climber." A hand movement to the safety equipment in climbing in the right moment shows competency in the "method for anticipating a fall". Unique adequacy should be demonstrated through 'hybrid findings'—results that can be applied locally by the members in real time, reflecting the lived order of the scene rather than theoretical conclusions drawn after the fact. For example, I highlighted in the beginning how self-assessment questionnaires in which subjects are asked to self-reflect on aspects of their mindfulness do not necessarily reflect the reality of how experienced a practitioner is (Sauer et al., 2013, p. 5). Essentially, meeting this principle requires a "double membership" in the studied practice and in ethnomethodology (ten Have, 2004, p. 130).

Since EM is concerned with common-sense understandings, it naturally extends to the systematic organisation of everyday conversations. In 1964, Harvey Sacks' interest in how "ordinary things get done methodically and reproducibly" led him to engage with the structure

and patterns of talk, which later became known as conversation analysis (CA) (Jefferson, 1995, p. xvii). CA is a method that examines the underlying organisational properties of conversations, such as turn-taking, sequencing, and repair mechanisms. It shows how social order is continuously produced and maintained, even in ordinary everyday interactions.

In this section, I have introduced ethnomethodology which studies how individuals create and maintain social order. I introduced the unique adequacy requirement of methods which emphasises the importance of immersion in a studied practice (weak version) or membership (strong version). In the next section, I will discuss my own unique adequacy in the context of my study.

3.2.2 Meeting the unique adequacy requirement

In this section, highlight two key aspects of my own unique adequacy in the context of MBSR. Firstly, as an MBSR teacher and practitioner, I am deeply familiar with the social world of my study and have practical competency. Secondly, due to the ontological overlap between MBSR and ethnomethodology, I am uniquely positioned to study people's lived experiences as they unfold in real time.

"In ethnomethodology, the unique adequacy requirement outlines what is necessary to create a good ethnomethodological description of local order(s)." (Hofstetter, 2024, p. 82). I am a certified MBSR teacher and have been teaching MBSR courses for the past 7 years. I have practiced meditation in my private life for about 20 years, including 10 years of Buddhist meditation followed by 10 years of more MBSR-inspired practices. I am familiar with the central components of MBSR, such as the body scan, sitting meditation, and mindful yoga from both a practitioner's and an instructor's perspective. How does this background and knowledge enable me to recognise and describe the local methods that enact order in MBSR? In the previous section, I shared Hofstetter (2024)'s example of unique adequacy in the context of rock climbing, in which she showed how reaching for safety equipment at the right moment demonstrates competence in anticipating a fall. Similarly, there are recognisable and describable in situ skills that enact local order in MBSR. For example, the goal of 'inquiry' is to explore participants'

thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations that arise during the practice (see 2.3.3). The teacher guides the process by asking questions without knowing what a participant decides to share. They still need make sure that whatever personal topic the participant introduces, it is relevant for the participant, advance the learning theme of the session, and suit the group dynamic. The nature of the 'inquiry' questions, the way they are phrased and their timing, as well as the timing of silences all reveal nuances of the teachers' competence. The basic conversational structure of 'inquiry' can be described by conversation analysis. However, a skilled teacher not only speaks in a recognisable pattern but has the ability to improvise in the moment and respond adequately to the experience the participant has shared. The term "disciplined improvisation" from a conversation analysis of 'inquiry' captures this two-pronged competency well (Crane, Stanley, et al., 2015, see 2.4.2). This is an example of the ability adapt to fluid situations as I have explained in the previous subsection 3.2.1. This skill to adapt to whatever participants share and make it relevant on various levels is essential when leading 'inquiry' in MBSR. My background uniquely enables me to perceive and analyse these situated methods that MBSR teachers and participants and describe the haecceities, the *just thisness* of 'inquiry' in particular.

Beyond practical competency, my engagement with MBSR offers what could be described as ontological unique adequacy. Ethnomethodology and MBSR share an ontological foundation in terms of lived, embodied experience and the recognition of a non-fixed, context-dependent self (see subsection 3.1.2). Both fields emphasise direct experience and focus on how individuals construct meaning in the present moment. Through my own practice and teaching of MBSR, I have cultivated a deep personal understanding of mindfulness, that is the non-judgmental awareness of my thoughts and emotions. This allows me to empathise with participants' lived experiences *in the moment* and guide them towards exploring these experiences. In combination, my practical experience as an MBSR practitioner and teacher, along with the ontological overlap between MBSR and ethnomethodology, provides me with strong unique adequacy to conduct this study.

3.2.3 Iteratively arriving at a research strategy

> ”The ethnomethods used by the people who staff the culture being studied must be located, identified, and described in that work’s own identifying details, and these ethnomethods cannot be invented in advance, even during one’s composition of applications for research grants, because they are only to be discovered.” (Liberman, 2007, p. 33).

“Walker, there is no road, the road is made by walking.”

(Machado, 2004, p. 281)

When I first decided to pursue a PhD on mindfulness, I did not anticipate that my research focus would change. However, once in the field, I encountered really interesting stories that impacted my thinking. One of these stories intrigued me in particular: During an advanced teacher training course, a student teacher led a guided meditation and then blew a loud whistle in the middle of it (I will explore this incident in detail in chapter 6). Everyone jumped in their seats, myself included. I had certainly never experienced anything like this before. Some participants had really strong adverse reactions to being scared like this and became angry with the person who had blown the whistle. The researcher in me was intrigued by the way the situation unfolded and how it was ultimately resolved. The situation was reframed and ultimately resolved by the group in a way very MBSR-specific way—even though at the time I did not quite understand it in this way. I felt compelled to explore the ‘whistle incident’ further and understand its layers and meanings. The more I engaged with it in the course of my research, the more it changed my personal relationship with MBSR. It ultimately led me to refine both my research question and strategy. I began my study as a more traditional ethnographic study with interviews and focus groups, and eventually shifted to an ethnomethodological ethnography as it would allow me to address the subtleties of the whistle situation. In this context, the whistle could be understood as a breaching experiment that revealed underlying rules of the MBSR classroom (see 3.2.1). I will develop this observation further in subsection 3.4.1. I will explain how my initial objectives

changed over time by describing three key phases of my research: the proposal phase, the data collection phase, and the data selection and analysis phase.

Research proposal: my call to adventure

I first had the idea to pursue this PhD in 2016 while reading the article Disciplined Improvisation by Crane, Stanley, et al. (2015) during a mindfulness project at my previous job. At the time, I had been practicing meditation for over a decade, had recently completed an MBSR course, and was training to become an MBSR teacher. Crane et al's paper intrigued me because I knew of the challenges of MBSR teachers who learn to facilitate inquiry. As a linguistics graduate, the authors' conversation analytic approach was really interesting to me and deepened my own understanding of inquiry. This fascination led me to contact the authors and eventually led Steven Stanley, the second author, to become my PhD supervisor. My initial research goal was to explore what really happens in the MBSR classroom by examining the social and discursive practices that construct mindfulness in this context. I wondered whether mindfulness itself might be socially produced and shaped by the interactions between practitioners. This led me to formulate my original research question: How do discourse and bodily practice construct the experience of mindfulness in MBSR courses?

Data collection phase: Walker, there is no road.

My initial goal was to identify linguistic themes and patterns in MBSR classrooms and to explore the experiences of MBSR teachers. To this end, I collected observational data from an MBSR class that I taught and from an MBSR teacher training course where I was a participant-observer. Additionally, I conducted interviews and focus groups with participants from two teacher training courses. However, the 'whistle incident' had impacted me and made me struggle with my research. In ethnographic research, it is commonly discussed that it is necessary to create sufficient distance when researching familiar settings (e.g. Delamont, P. Atkinson, and Pugsley, 2010). So whilst I researched a setting that was deeply familiar to me, at the time, the fact that I was there as a researcher already provided some distance to what was happening

in the classroom. Gold (1958, p. 223) acknowledges that on the continuum of fieldwork roles (complete participant, participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant, and complete observer) "a field worker selects and plays a role so that he, being who he is, can best study those aspects of society in which he is interested". The way I filled the role as a participant-observer in the classroom setting greatly depended on the context in the moment—at times I would be completely engaged in an exercise, at other times, I would simply observe the group. During my fieldwork, the whistle jolted me from being engaged in meditation as a participant to realising that this unusual situation could potentially be valuable in my analysis. Some type of emotional impact or 'crisis' is not uncommon during fieldwork. Delamont (2009, p. 61) posits that "[a]ll crises in 'access' or in fieldwork generally, provide a new set of research questions." According to Delamont this is the case if the crisis is not an "autoethnographic self-obsession" (Delamont, 2009, p. 58) but aligns with the objectives of the social sciences to explore society and advance their field (Delamont, 2009, p. 60). At the time, I did not have Delamont's foresight, just a feeling of unease and uncertainty. These challenges impacted my ability to teach and practice MBSR, leading me to temporarily step away from both. On top of this, the Covid-19 pandemic forced me to pause my research for a while—fortunately a few months *after* my data collection was complete.

Data selection and analysis: The road is made by walking.

In hindsight, the break from both my thesis and my personal mindfulness practice allowed me the space to reassess my data and see it in a new light. When I was faced with selecting data for analysis, I realised that my original research design, while valuable, was not sufficient to answer my emerging research question. Firstly, I had collected more data than I could possibly transcribe and analyse within the time frame of my thesis. Secondly, I wanted to somehow include the whistle situation and do it justice. That was easier said than done. When I listened to the audio recording of the situation, I realised that how the situation unfolded and was resolved in the classroom was very unique to the world of MBSR and I was in a position to describe and analyse it. At the same time, I felt a tension between my wish to highlight the benefits of MBSR

and the obligation to examine it critically, including potential downsides. Moreover, I felt a sense of loyalty–to the MBSR teachers who had welcomed my research, and to the fellow participants with whom I had shared moments of vulnerability. Morriss (2016) describes how for her, a crisis occurred during the transcription phase of her research. Whilst conducting her interviews, everything appeared "wonderfully familiar" (Morriss, 2016, p. 528). However, by repeatedly listening to the recordings and upon transcription, what was once familiar to Morris, became strange. By using an ethnomethodological approach, she moved away from explaining social facts, as is typical in sociology, and instead examined how they are created through members' everyday practices (Morriss, 2016, p. 529). Similarly to Morris, I adopted an ethnomethodological framework that would allow me to focus on the lived, co-constructed experience of the MBSR setting. The decision to shift to an ethnomethodological approach was a response to the data and also a reflection of my own positionality. I became interested in both the breach, and how that breach was repaired. This required a shift from discourse and into the co-accomplishment of social order, i.e. ethnomethodology. As an MBSR teacher, I meet the unique adequacy requirement which enables me to understand the subtleties of the interactions and the significance of certain practices. This new approach allowed me to integrate both my initial interest in language and my concern with how individuals in MBSR co-accomplish a therapeutic environment through their interactions. Through valuable discussions with my supervisors and numerous iterations, I refined my research question to "How do MBSR teachers and learners co-accomplish a therapeutic setting?" This shift in focus was a methodological choice that reflected my growth as a researcher. The next section outlines the details of my research strategy in full including gaining access, methods of data collection and analysis.

3.3 Research Strategy: access, participants, data collection

In the previous section, I explained how my research strategy was influenced by a particular situation during an MBSR teacher training course, specifically the 'whistle incident'. The whistle incident highlights a deviation from expected norms and practices of MBSR that made partici-

pants upset. Moreover, it highlights how the situation was addressed and resolved in a way that was very specific to MBSR. This specificity is something that I started to unpick in my analysis in chapter 6. The aim of my research strategy is to be able to analyse the interactions of the 'whistle incident'. In order to understand the expected norms and practices that were breached, I had to establish them first. I do this in chapters 4 and 5. In chapter 4, I establish the ordinary and everyday practice of MBSR, and MBSR 'inquiry' in particular. I take the reader along the very first session of an MBSR course that I taught to show how MBSR is framed and how 'inquiry' is conducted. This allows the reader to experience MBSR from a beginning participant's point of view. In chapter 5, my focus is on the embodiment of mindfulness in an MBSR teaching context. I include extracts from a focus group with student teachers that demonstrate what role embodying mindfulness plays in their lives and how members talk to each other. I also discuss a sequence in which members make it known to each other how they embody mindfulness whilst teaching. Together, chapters 4 and 5 allow me to describe the various foundational aspects of teaching MBSR that were breached in the whistle incident. Finally, chapter 6 picks these aspects up in the analysis of the 'whistle incident'.

In this section, I will explain the methods of my research strategy in four subsections. Firstly, in subsection 3.3.1, called 'getting in', I will discuss the rationale for choosing my research sites and my roles in them. I will also explain the details of how I gained access to the research sites and the ethical considerations that were relevant before beginning fieldwork. In subsections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3, I will describe my research sites, participants and recruitment, and my methods of data collection: the focus of subsection 3.3.2 is on my observational data (participant-observer in an MBSR teacher training course, teaching an MBSR course); that of subsection 3.3.3 is on my focus group data. Finally, subsection 3.3.4 is a brief description of my challenges as an insider.

This provides a comprehensive rationale and overview of my research strategy. In the next section 3.4, I will explain why and how I selected specific extracts for analysis and how I analysed them.

3.3.1 Getting in: Access and ethical concerns before data collection

This thesis draws on data collected at three sites. Firstly, I collected data at an MBSR course where I was the teacher, secondly, at an MBSR teacher training course, where I was a participant-observer, and thirdly, I conducted a focus group with MBSR student teachers. The first data set was audio recorded as part of my teacher training. The second and third set were collected specifically for this thesis. In this section, I will discuss all considerations that took place before seeking consent from participants and/or before data collection. I will first discuss the potential impact of a pre-existing membership for fieldwork in general and then discuss the specifics of my MBSR membership on access and ethical concerns regarding the three sites of my data collections.

Access as a member of the MBSR community

I have described in the previous section that the goal of EM research is to capture the production and maintenance of social order in a natural setting. Membership describes the belonging to a social setting and the ability to understand it from the members' point of view (ten Have, 2005). A researcher who possesses unique adequacy is competent in a practice and can understand and describe it, including shared understandings that an outsider might miss. Moreover, when a researcher is familiar with a social practice, they know what to do to blend in with the members, or know how to create a 'breaching situation' which would break with the perceived normalcy. This means their presence is not likely to disturb other members during fieldwork studies the way an outsider might do. This allows a researcher who is also a member to capture authentic social interactions in a natural setting. I have described how I myself meet the unique adequacy requirement in this specific MBSR teacher training context in section 3.2.2. In this section, I will point out how my membership affected my ability to gain access to my research sites and ethical concerns regarding my membership. Negotiating access as an external researcher can be a lengthy process that involves building trust with gatekeepers and familiarising oneself with the setting (Chaudhuri, 2017). I have been a member of the MBSR community before starting my research, both as a practitioner and as a novice teacher. My familiarity with the setting meant

that I did not have to negotiate access but had it already. I could immerse myself within the setting naturally.

Ethical considerations before seeking consent for an existing data set

My first data set were audio recordings from an MBSR course I taught in the spring of 2018. I had recorded the course for the purpose of my own MBSR teacher certification. All participants consented to the audio recordings when they signed up for the course. No access negotiations took place because I was the course organiser. I later asked participants for retroactive consent to analyse the audio for my PhD.

Asking for consent post data collection may raise issues regarding transparency and voluntariness. "In the context of social research ethics, it is this principle that underpins the common requirement that researchers must obtain informed consent from people before research is carried out, and that participants should be able to withdraw from an investigation at any point." (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012, p. 75). Asking for retroactive consent can be problematic for a variety of reasons. By the time I sought their consent, participants had developed a relationship with me. Judging from the feedback sheets they provided after the course, all participants had experienced it as valuable. Their decision to give me consent to use the existing audio recordings for my doctoral thesis might have been due to their personal connection to me rather than an entirely independent and voluntary choice. I addressed this concern during the consent seeking by emphasising the right to withdraw consent at any time and without giving a reason. I explained that I could delete their contributions in my recordings. Another ethical concern regards the fact that MBSR involves to large degree disclosing personal information and exploring vulnerable emotions. Knowing that the recordings would be used for research might have changed what they shared during the course and it is unlikely they remember everything they said after the end of the course. I addressed this issue by not using any of this type of data in my analysis. I also used pseudonyms instead of their real names and censored any information that might reveal their identities, including the location of the course.

Ethical considerations before data collection as participant observer and before conducting a focus group

For the second data set, I was a participant-observer in a teacher training course in 2019. My access to the course was due to the fact that I had completed the same course two years earlier. The teacher and the course organisers knew me as a recent participant. I talked to both on the phone and emailed them details about my research. They allowed me to participate for a second time without having to pay a fee. The organisers emailed the participants before the start of the course to inform them that I would be present. Yielding standard ethical procedures, all participants and teachers provided written consent for me to conduct my research before I began my fieldwork. There are several potential ethical challenges with this setup. Firstly, my established relationship with the organisers and the course leader might create a power imbalance between me and the participants of the course. I was concerned that they might have felt compelled to give consent and participate in the research. At least this was very much on my mind right at the beginning of the course. I addressed this concern by arriving early before the start of the course to be available for questions and to collect the signed consent forms from the group. There were a few participants who had not yet signed the forms and I discussed the information with them individually to make sure they understood what the research was about and their right to deny consent. This would have meant that I would have had to delete their contributions on my recordings.

Delamont and P. Atkinson (2021, p. 40) describe the considerations at the beginning of fieldwork: "In the early stages, the ethnographer needs to focus on how he or she introduces the project and its methods to the actors in the chosen setting, how to dress, where it is sensible and safe to go and on how data are to be collected." For me, I know that MBSR classrooms can be vulnerable environments and I felt a strong need to blend in and not disturb the group. In MBSR, participants often share personal information and sit in silence with their eyes closed. This requires an atmosphere where people feel safe and are not disturbed. This is why I had agreed with the teacher before that I would mostly rely on audio recordings and participate in most exercises with the rest of the group. Also, when introducing myself to the group, I

emphasised my member status and participant role. I would not be a researcher sitting on the side who would sit on the side and observe everyone; I would be a part of the group.

For the third data set, I conducted a focus group with participants from a second cohort of the same course. Access to the second cohort was again mediated by the course organisers and the course leader. Again, following standard ethical procedures, all participants gave me their written consent to be audio recorded during the focus group.

3.3.2 Observational data collection: Participants, recruitment, and methods

I was able to investigate settings in which MBSR occurred naturally. This allowed me to study the members' methods from within. This subsection is a description of my two observational data sets with contextual details for each.

A key principle in ethnomethodology is that members are the experts on how their social practices are organised (Garfinkel, 1967). My goal for data collection was to capture these naturally occurring interactions between MBSR participants and teachers in a course setting. This is why audio recordings of live MBSR sessions and MBSR teacher training sessions are the primary data for my study. Audio recordings allow to capture the interactional methods people use in real time and in an unobtrusive way. This way my data reflects members' unmodified practices and their spontaneous use of language.

Data set 1: Audio recordings from an MBSR course

Context and course description. The first data set are audio recordings from an MBSR course I taught as part of my teacher certification. To obtain certification, I had to teach a full MBSR course under the supervision of a senior teacher, write a subjective report on the experience, and discuss specific sessions using audio recordings and transcripts with the supervisor. The audio recordings that comprise this data set were created during this teaching experience. The course followed the standard MBSR structure, which consisted of eight weekly sessions, each lasting 2.5 hours, as well as a 'day of mindfulness' lasting 7 hours, which took place over the weekend.

My course took place in the spring of 2018, on a weekday evening from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. I held the sessions in a large, fully equipped meditation room located in a central and affluent area of a large German city. The room contained yoga mats, blankets, and cushions, so participants only needed to wear comfortable clothing. The location was private which ensured confidentiality for the audio recordings.

Participants and recruitment. I advertised my MBSR course on social media platforms (Facebook, Xing, Nebenan.de) and sent emails to friends and acquaintances to spread the word. The advertisement included a brief description of MBSR, the course dates, location, a fee of 290 Euros, and an introduction to me as the teacher. The course was open to any adult member of the public who did not currently suffer from mental health issues, spoke fluent German, and agreed to have sessions recorded as part of my MBSR teacher certification process. As required for MBSR, I had a 30-minute conversation with each potential participant before they signed up. The aim of this conversation was to ensure they were emotionally stable or had professional support if needed, and that they had a clear understanding of what the course was about. It was also important to confirm their commitment to regular attendance and the required home practice.

In the end, four participants enrolled in the course, one man and three women, all of them white and middle-class. I did not collect exact data about their income or professional background, but work-related discussions during the course suggested that all four participants were economically stable and had a university education. Their ages ranged from late twenties to mid-forties. Although this a very small sample, these demographics reflect the participants who are typically represented in randomised controlled trials of mindfulness-based interventions, where the majority is white, female, middle-aged, and from a higher educational and socioeconomic background (e.g. Waldron et al., 2018, Eichel et al., 2021). Kucinskas described this trend in the United States in her book "The mindful elite" (Kucinskas, 2019), observing the fact that accessibility to mindfulness is limited to those that already have social advantages. These dynamics are not the focus of my study but they still influence how the participants' experiences and interactions unfolded. Interestingly, all four participants shared the experience of single parenthood: two were currently single parents, one had been a single parent in the past, and the fourth partic-

ipant was pregnant and was about to be a single parent. None of the participants had practiced MBSR before. They all attended the course to help them cope with stressful situations in life. They did not know each other before beginning the course, nor did I know anyone.

Data collection. During the MBSR course, the four participants and I sat in a circle on yoga mats, with cushions and blankets by our sides. My teaching materials–notes, cymbals, and a timer–were within reach, along with my smartphone, which I used to record the sessions. At the time, I did not think much about these recordings because I just did them in the context of my MBSR teacher certification. In their initial purpose, only my MBSR supervisor and I would have listened to very short excerpts. The course included eight weekly sessions à 2.5 hours and a day of mindfulness à 7 hours. I recorded all of the weekly sessions and 4 hours of the day of mindfulness (because I forgot to record at the start of the day). This amounts to approximately 24 hours of audio recordings from the MBSR course.

Data set 2: Audio recordings from an advanced MBSR teacher training course

Context and course description. The second data set consists of audio recordings collected during an advanced MBSR teacher training course in which I was a participant-observer. This advanced training focused on teaching MBSR. It followed a 'foundational' training course, where participants focused on embodying mindfulness. Both the basic and advanced courses were required to complete the full teacher training and qualify for certification. The course was structured as three block seminar modules spread over eight months in 2019. The modules lasted six days, five days, and four days, respectively, and were led by a senior teacher and a newly trained teacher. The training took place in a quiet, centrally located venue in a mid-sized German city, with all necessary materials provided, including mats, cushions, and blankets. The course had elements of a meditation retreat, with long, intensive days (some lasting from 9am to 9pm with a 2-hour lunch break). Many hours were spent in silent meditation. The experience was often mentally and physically demanding for both me and the participants.

Participants and recruitment. This group of participants consisted of eleven women and five men. As a prerequisite, all participants were regular mindfulness practitioners who had

completed the foundational teacher training program. About two thirds of the participants had simply continued to the advanced course, so they were already on a shared learning journey together. The last third were participants from previous years. About half of the group intended to use the skills from the course in their current occupation because they either worked in a health-related field or in a business context. The other half of the group said that they either took the course to deepen their own mindfulness practice or intended to work as an MBSR-teacher. The course was led by two instructors, a female senior teacher and a male newly trained teacher.

Data collection. I placed two audio recorders in the room: one near where I was sitting in the back, and another close to where the teachers were seated. I started recording 10-15 minutes before the first session each morning and paused the recorders during the lunch break. For shorter breaks, I let the recorders continue running. On many occasions, I completely forgot about the recorders, which some participants also mentioned to me. Even the senior teacher later remarked that she had at times forgotten I was not a 'regular' participant. In a way, I felt both 'undercover' yet in plain sight. Whenever possible, I supplemented my recordings with observational notes. If something of interest caught my attention, I quickly jotted down the time and a brief note to locate it in the recordings later. However, I often could not take notes, especially when participating in exercises or during the silent meditation sessions, as it would have disrupted the group. The course consisted of three modules, or fifteen training days, which results in a total of 25 sessions. With varying lengths of the sessions this amounts to about 82 hours of audio recordings of audio material from the advanced MBSR teacher training course.

3.3.3 Focus group data collection: Participants, recruitment, and methods

In addition to the audio recordings of the live sessions, I conducted interviews and focus groups with MBSR teachers and participants to further explore their experiences. My aim was to explore how they understand and articulate their own practices. However, as I changed my research question to explore how teachers and learners co-accomplish a therapeutic setting, this was no longer my primary focus which is why I decided not to use any of my interview data and only use

a few excerpts from one of my focus groups. The aim of my focus group data is to supplement my primary data and show recurring conversational patterns that I found in the live sessions. Below is a description of the context, participants and recruitment, and data collection methods.

Data set 3: Focus group with MBSR student teachers

Context and course description. The third data set consists of a focus group with participants from the 'basic' teacher training course. This foundational course comprised five immersive block seminars (3-5 days each), a week-long silent retreat, and ongoing mindfulness practice assignments between the modules. The training emphasised the embodiment of mindfulness, with the option to continue to the advanced training for MBSR teaching certification. The course took place in 2019 in Germany, and I conducted the focus group at different stages: between the modules and after the course's completion. Focus group sessions were held in person immediately following each immersive weekend.

Participants and recruitment. The course organisers informed participants about my research via email and asked if they were interested in taking part. From a group of about twenty individuals who had just begun their MBSR teacher training, four participants volunteered to take part in the focus group, three women and one man.

Data collection. For the focus group sessions, I followed a semi-structured interview guide. My focus was to explore the participants' experiences during the teacher training, both within the course and in the time between modules. The key themes covered in these semi-structured focus groups included:

- experiences during the teacher training program including gains and challenges,
- effect of the training on their sense of self, embodiment and language,
- incorporation of the training into their daily life and impact on behaviour in other areas of life.

While I used these questions as a framework, I allowed the participants to steer the conversation towards whatever they felt was most relevant. For example, as the interviews progressed,

I noticed that many participants described mindfulness primarily as a bodily experience, rather than the traditional definition of "paying attention in a particular way". Based on this observation, I began asking other participants about their bodily experience of mindfulness. I recorded all conversations using an audio device which I placed in the centre of our seated circle during focus group sessions. I conducted four focus groups (3 hours total) and seven individual interviews (4 hours 20 minutes total) with the four participants of the foundational MBSR teacher training course. [1]

3.3.4 Challenges as an insider

I did not set out my research with an ethnomethodological perspective during data collection and being an insider involved certain challenges for me. While the familiarity aspect ensures easy access, the flip side might be that I could miss subtle dynamics in the field because they are so familiar to me to the extent that they become invisible. I addressed this issue of overfamiliarity in two ways. Firstly, I remained aware of how my insider status and positionality would shape my data collection and analysis. Berger (2015) discusses this type of reflexivity when researching the familiar. The author posits that it requires "a constant deliberate effort to maintain the separation between mine and theirs" (Berger, 2015, p. 224) because otherwise the researcher's own perspective might overshadow that of the participants. As an MBSR teacher and practitioner, I am trained to maintain this boundary between myself and others and also between whatever I perceive in the world 'out there' and my interpretation of it. This uniquely positions me to research a familiar field whilst maintaining an analytical distance. Moreover, I collected data from multiple sources and initially complemented my participant observation with several interviews and two focus groups (and ultimately only used data from one focus group). This type of triangulation reduces the reliance on my own interpretation of the research setting (Patton, 2014, 390ff). Additionally, during the data collection phase I regularly talked to my supervisors,

[1] For the sake of completeness: I conducted additional interviews and focus groups with participants of the *advanced* teacher training course that I decided not to use in this thesis. Following the same interview guideline, I conducted two interviews with the course leader, one focus group with six participants, and seven individual interviews.

my peers, and critical friends to challenge my own assumptions.

Being a participant-observer required me to navigate the role of a participant and the role of an observer within an MBSR teacher training course. The course resembled a meditation retreat. We spend long and intense days together in the group (some days lasted from 9am to 9pm with a 2 hour lunch break). A substantial amount of time was spend in silent meditation during which taking notes would have meant a disruption of the group. Instead, I relied on audio recordings to capture data which allowed me to be fully immersed as a participant. At times, the training was both mentally and physically exhausting for me and the other participants. This is acknowledged by Delamont and P. Atkinson (2021, p. 38) who posits that "[f]ieldwork is mentally and physically exhausting, and emotionally stressful". This was especially true during the whistle incident as I mentioned earlier. However, since "[a]ll the pain can be data" in field work (Delamont and P. Atkinson, 2021, p. 38), I ultimately used this 'data' to try and understand the whistle from an ethnomethodological perspective.

3.4 Methods of data selection

In the previous section, I have explained my research strategy which allowed me to audio record naturally occurring interactions between MBSR teachers and learners and a supplementing focus group. In this section, I outline the iterative process of my data selection and analysis which was guided by a series of analytic decisions. Each decision build upon the previous one which made my analysis more nuanced. Briefly, the *first decision* was to focus my analysis on the 'whistle incident' and adapt my research question, the *second decision* was to explore the dimensions of 'inquiry' that were breached during the 'whistle incident', the *third decision* was to explore the embodiment of mindfulness which was relevant in the 'whistle incident', and the *fourth decision* was return to the 'whistle incident' with a refined understanding of 'inquiry' and the embodiment of mindfulness. These decisions ultimately map on to my findings chapters in which I first establish a foundational analysis of MBSR 'inquiry' (see chapter 4), then analyse the embodiment of mindfulness (see chapter 5), and finally analyse the unfolding and resolve of

the 'whistle incident' (see chapter 6).

In this section, I will elaborate each decision. Subsection 3.4.1 explains why I am focusing on the whistle incident and analysing it as a breaching situation using conversation analysis. The next two subsections provide explanations for my two foundational analyses: subsection 3.4.2 explains why I am including an analysis of 'inquiry' and subsection 3.4.3 explains why I am including an analysis of the embodiment of mindfulness.

3.4.1 Analysing the whistle incident as a breaching incident

Decision 1: focusing on the whistle incident and adapt my research question

I initially chose to analyse the 'whistle incident' that occurred during a meditation session in a teacher training course. In it, participants articulated their shared expectations and rules that had been breached and were otherwise silently agreed upon. When I started transcribing the whistle sequence I was able to recognise the recurring interactional patterns that had been violated and those that were enacted to resolve the situation. This early transcription was the basis of my analysis and drove the reworking of my research question.

Analysing the whistle incident as a breaching incident

The 'whistle incident' stood out to me as something that I had never experienced in the context of MBSR before. I had a strong adverse reaction to it, both in the moment and again when listened to the audio recordings. The participants in the group mirrored my reaction. From an ethnomethodological point of view, the whole incident stands out as breaching situation. As I have described earlier, a breaching experiment in EM purposefully breaches with taken-for-granted social rules or expectations (Garfinkel (1967), see subsection 3.2.1). These experiments reveal shared assumptions, norms, and interactional practices. In this case, the whistle disrupted a meditative atmosphere. This prompted a series of reactions that allowed me to observe how both the MBSR teachers and participants restored the social order. This breaching moment was not an experiment but simply happened, surprising everyone, including myself and the course

leaders. It is ideal for analysis because it highlights how participants and teachers managed the disruption. When participants voiced their upset, they made implicit interactional norms explicit. This offered me the opportunity to understand the underlying expectations of MBSR. I decided to approach the incident from an ethnomethodological perspective and formulated my research question accordingly: *How do teachers and learners of MBSR co-accomplish a therapeutic setting?*

For the analysis, I chose conversation analysis (CA) as my methodological approach. According to Sormani (2019, 9ff), conversation analysis or 'studies of talk-in-interaction' is one of three approaches in ethnomethodological analysis (the other two being conceptual analysis or 'respecification of social theory' and practical analysis or 'studies of work'). I am not an ethnomethodologist by training but as a trained linguist, I have the expertise in analysing the structure and function of language. While my study is by no means an ethnomethodological 'hybrid study' of work (Garfinkel, 1984), it is a study that is very specific to the context of MBSR and requires unique adequacy, that is the competence to understand and report the ethnomethods used by members. With this in mind, I strongly agree with the concept that the results of my study are of interest within the field of my study, that is the MBSR teaching community. Knowing how tricky it can be to learn 'inquiry', breaking it down into its components as is done in CA studies, de-mystifies it and could potentially make it more accessible for novice teachers. This addresses Greiffenhagen and Sharrock (2019)'s concern of who the intended audience of an ethnomethodological study of work is.

Observational data analysis

I followed these five steps for my initial analyses of all observational data: (1) I went through my observational notes to locate specific incidents and interactions. I listened the audio files and reminded myself of the context. (2) I listened to each incident as a whole to consider if it is worth transcribing. (3) I transcribed the whole incident or interaction as briefly as possible, simply transcribing what was said in each turn. (4) I scanned the transcript for conversational patterns and themes that struck me as interesting. (5) I translated the transcript from German

to English. From this point forward, my transcriptions became more nuanced. I used a simplified Jeffersonian transcription (Jefferson et al., 2004) which allowed me to include silences as I realised that they played a large role in the 'inquiry'.

Regarding the software I used, I transcribed the audio recordings using the transcription software F5. All my data is in German and had to be translated to English. I used free software for an automatic translation and then manually corrected translation errors. The software I used were Google Translate and Deepl. Whilst these programs are fairly accurate, they tend to have several issues with transcripts of spoken language: they "smooth" spoken language (i.e. delete repeated words), do not perform well when a sentence is interrupted by another speaker, and they sometimes do not translate meditation terms accurately. I had to correct these errors manually. Generally, I have noticed that the less interaction amongst speakers, the more accurate the translation. In my initial transcripts, I marked the turn of speakers, interruptions, instances of laughter, inner-turn pauses that were exceptional, and any disruptions that were significant in the context.

3.4.2 A member's description of the dimensions of inquiry

Decision 2: exploring the dimensions of 'inquiry'

As I analysed the whistle incident, it became clear that I needed to elaborate on the underlying dimensions of the 'inquiry' process in MBSR. To do so, I transcribed a sequence from my MBSR course in which a participant described a pain in his foot metaphorically as 'an Indian dance in his foot'. This sequence allowed me to explore how a participant's subjective experience was talked about and collaboratively transformed during the inquiry. I recognised this transformational process as a recurring conversational pattern in inquiry.

Selecting data to describe the dimensions of 'inquiry' to the reader

I ultimately decided not to include the 'Indian in the foot' transcript in my thesis because it would have needed foundational and contextual information for readers who are not familiar

with MBSR. Instead, I transcribed an example of 'inquiry' with less complexity—the very first 'inquiry' during my MBSR course when the participants were completely new to MBSR and to 'inquiry' (for a description of the data set see 3.3.2). My choice aligns with the ethnomethodological principle that all materials–whether mundane or extraordinary–are valuable for analysis (Garfinkel, 1967). In EM, every instance of interaction provides insight into how participants create and maintain social order. My choice of transcripts from the beginning of the course allows me to illustrate the 'inquiry' process and at the same time introduce the practices of MBSR to the reader. In EM, this "following along" allows readers to actively engage with the methods and practices that are analysed. For example, Garfinkel, Lynch, and Livingston (1981) ask the reader to use a prism to follow along how scientists' discovery of a pulsar is constructed. Similarly, in my analysis, the reader can follow along and learn about MBSR and the dimensions of 'inquiry' from a novice practitioners' perspective that occurred in a real-life situation (see chapter 4).

3.4.3 Members making their own methods of embodying mindfulness explicit

Decision 3: investigating the embodiment of mindfulness

During the 'whistle incident', some of the participants who were disrupted pointed out that they could no longer practise mindfulness. However, when the situation was resolved, it was ultimately reframed as a learning opportunity for practicing and teaching mindfulness. Thus, in this context the embodiment of mindfulness was relevant to members. In order to fully understand the role of embodying mindfulness during the breach I decided to introduce it through two analyses with less complexity: an excerpt from my focus group with MBSR student teachers and a sequence of a novice teacher who guides a practice and receives feedback (see chapter 5).

Selecting data in which members make the embodiment of mindfulness explicit

I chose the focus group sequence for two specific reasons. Firstly, the novice teachers in the focus group discuss the role of embodying mindfulness. This allows me to introduce its importance in the teachers' lives through their own words. Secondly, in the focus group itself, I found the same conversational patterns that I had identified in my earlier analysis which supports the consistency of these patterns across different MBSR contexts. From an ethnomethodological point of view, the members of the focus group co-accomplish a familiar social order, as the participants must account for themselves as competent members (see Antaki et al., 2003 for an application of ethnomethodological ideas to interview analysis).

I chose the teaching and feedback sequence from the teacher training course to introduce the role of embodying mindfulness in a teaching context. The participants make their own methods explicit by openly discussing how they embody mindfulness whilst teaching. A learning situation is especially useful to make otherwise implicit and therefore invisible methods visible, as Eisenmann and Mitchell (2024, 40f.) point out:

> "The social world, complicated as it may be, appears to be routinely out there, ready to hand, to be identified and/or categorized. But, the concerted embodied work of achieving social facts is not readily available, neither for the participants nor as topics for detailed ethnographic observation and consideration. They are easily missed, and as Garfinkel (1967) argues, ordinarily uninteresting, seen-but-unnoticed, and seemingly unproblematic. It is therefore one approach to search for perspicuous situations in which social processes become visible, that is, in which members are explicating members' methods, for instance, in learning and teaching situations or *faux pas*."

Decision 4: returning to the whistle incident

With my refined understanding of 'inquiry' and embodiment of mindfulness, I revisited the 'whistle incident' and integrated what I had learned into my analysis. This allowed me to show

how the teachers and the participants reframed the disruption as a learning experience (see chapter 6).

This iterative process of selection and analysis allowed me to address my research question of how MBSR teachers and participants co-accomplish a therapeutic setting. In the write-up of my findings, I first present the two foundational chapters and then present the whistle chapter.

3.5 Conclusion to the chapter

In conclusion, this chapter has established the methodological and practical foundations of my study, which seeks to answer the research question: how do MBSR teachers and learners co-accomplish a therapeutic setting? I first discussed my overarching methodology to provide an overview of the ontological underpinnings of my study. By situating my research within the shared ontological frameworks of ethnomethodology and MBSR, I highlighted how both fields view reality through a lens that values lived experience and embodied practice. I then outlined my research strategy and its context. For this, I introduced ethnomethodology which studies on how people create and understand social order in everyday interactions through shared methods and practices. I discussed the principle of unique adequacy and why unique adequacy is important for conducting an ethnomethodological study of MBSR. Finally, I discussed the practical application of my research strategy. This included an overview of my data collection methods, i.e. access, participants, and ethical considerations, as well as a detailed explanation of how I selected and analysed my data.

Chapter 4

Setting the scene

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is structured into two main parts. The first part literally sets the scene for an MBSR course and the second part contains a conversation analysis on 'inquiry'. In section 4.2, I invite the reader to follow along with the first session of an MBSR course that I taught. I provide a detailed description of the physical environment of the course, which includes the layout of the room and its atmosphere. Additionally, I include transcripts of the participants' self-introductions and their motivations for attending. This is essential to understanding the diverse backgrounds and expectations they bring into the session. These motivations range from stress reduction to self-care, which reflects the appeal of MBSR in contemporary 'therapeutic culture' (see chapter 2, subsection 2.2.2). I also include a transcript of how I explain to the participants what they can expect from the course. This gives the reader an insight into how MBSR is framed as cultivating a relationship with *what is*. Section 4.3 introduces the reader to the first mindfulness practice conducted during this session, along with the 'inquiry' that follows it. 'Inquiry' is the central focus of this thesis. It is the dialogue between a participant and the teacher in which they jointly explore the participant's experiences during a guided meditation (see chapter 2, section 2.3.2). With these transcripts of 'inquiry', I show 'inquiry' in action in a real-world context which consistent with the principles of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967, see 3.2.1).

The second part of the chapter is a conversation analysis of the 'inquiry' presented in the first part. In section 4.4, I identify four key dimensions of 'inquiry', each analysed through the lens of conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974). In section 4.5 I draws parallels between 'inquiry' in MBSR and similar practices in psychotherapy. With this, I demonstrate how 'inquiry' in MBSR mirrors therapeutic dialogue structures that are common in psychotherapy. This positions 'inquiry' within a broader framework of therapeutic interaction (Heritage and Clayman, 2010).

4.2 Why are you here?

The meditation room is located on the ground level next to a road that is lined by a pavement and a cycle path. Inside the room, two walls consist entirely of bottom to ceiling window panes that are covered by curtains. In the evening, you can see shadows of flickering lights from the road and silhouettes of people walking by on the pavement. When people walk by in groups, you can hear them talk, sometimes even shout. A football stadium is located just a few hundred meters from the room. On game nights, groups of mostly male voices exude excitement and anticipation. Most nights are fairly calm however and you will hear mumbled voices and traffic noise rather than groups of drunken football fans. What you will most certainly hear and notice right away when you enter the room is the tram that passes by every few minutes. Not only will you hear the tram, when you pay close attention, you will notice a very slight vibration in the wooden floor when it rattles by.

The room itself is quite large, minimally decorated with large plants and Hawaiian items. When you walk in through the door, there is a small changing room to your right. When you walk through the room, you enter a small tea kitchen from where there are doors to two bathrooms and a door to the storage room where the meditation cushions and mats are kept.

The MBSR class that I taught and collected data from took place in this room on weekday evenings in the spring of 2018. When the class began at 19:00, it was still light outside. I had the dimmer lights switched on and a few candles lit, so when the day light faded outside, the

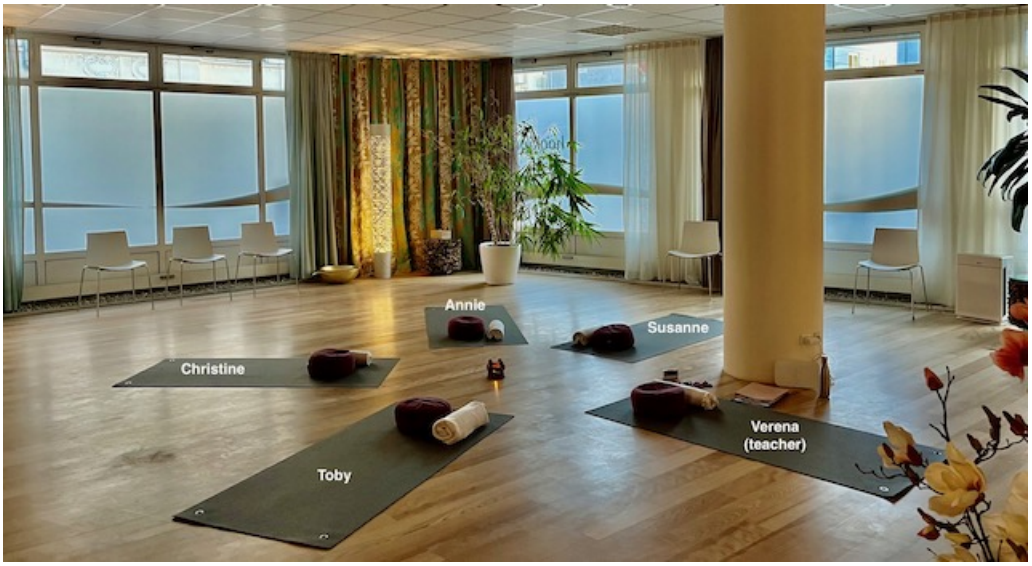


Figure 4.1: The meditation room pictured from the doorway that leads to the tea kitchen. The mats are arranged in a circle with me sitting with my back to the back wall, and the participants sitting clockwise beginning with Toby, and then Christine, Annie and Susanne.

light in the room slowly turned into a warm dim light with the hint of street lights and street life shining through the curtains.

Before the participants arrived, I had arranged five yoga mats in a circle in the middle of the room into the shape of a snow flake. See figures 4.1 and 4.2 for pictures of the room with the curtains open. Each mat had a purple meditation cushion on top with a neatly rolled up white blanket next to it. Next to my mat, I had a small digital clock, a set of cymbals placed on a small piece of felt, my phone for the audio recordings, my notes, and four binders with course materials for the participants. I played soft music from a random playlist that promised "yoga music".

I had talked to each participant on the phone before to discuss their participation in the course. They were aware that I had not taught an MBSR course before and that I would audio record everything for my MBSR certification process. They had also shared with me their motivation to participate in the course and I had explained that MBSR is neither therapy nor religion. None had any mental health issues that would exclude them from attending and they were all aware of the major time commitment the course entailed: attending all nine group sessions and daily 45-60 minutes long home practice for the course of two months.

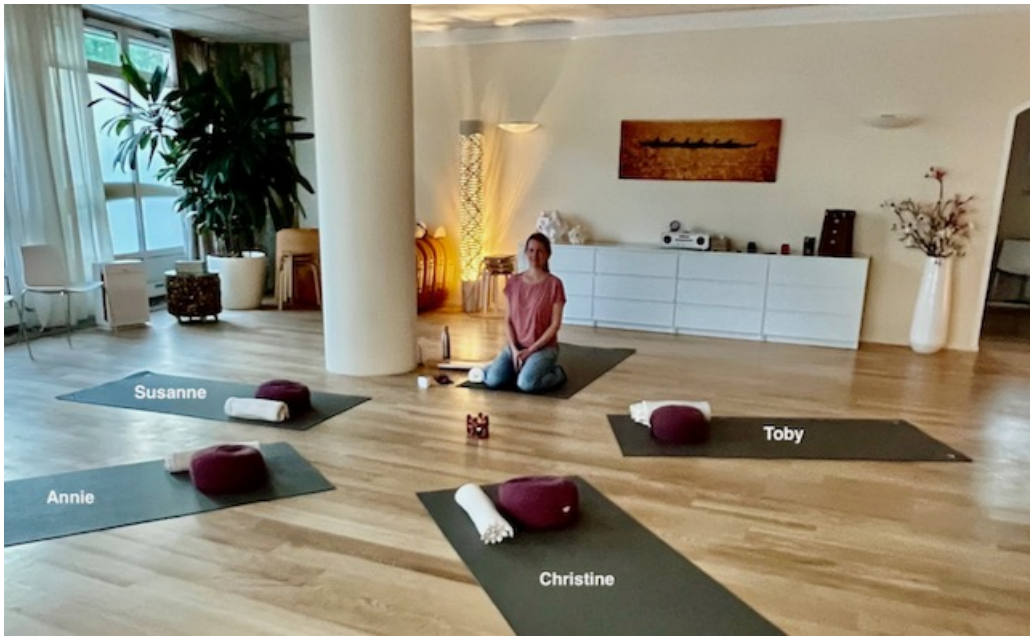


Figure 4.2: The meditation room pictured from the entrance door. The mats are arranged in a circle with me sat with my back to the back wall, and the participants sat clockwise beginning with Toby, and then Christine, Annie and Susanne.

The four participants arrived one after the other on that first evening. As participants arrived, I welcomed them one by one, making sure I had their signed agreement forms, and asked them to choose a seat on a mat. My mat was placed so that my back was against the back wall which allowed me to see the entrance front left. Toby sat on my left, next to him Christine, then there was Annie, and on my right side there was Susanne[1]. When everyone was settled, I briefly welcomed the group and immediately started a short guided "welcome" meditation. It partly helped me to combat my own nervousness because guiding the practice requires me to focus inwards as well. In the guided meditation, I asked participants to check in how they were feeling in the moment, to become aware of sensations in their body such as the weight of their body on the cushion, and to notice the movement of their breath in the body. After a few minutes, I asked them to reflect on the question what brings them to the course. "Why are you here?" When I ended the meditation, I asked participants to discuss this question with their neighbour. When they started chatting with each other, I noticed that I had forgotten to switch on the audio recorder, so I turned it on then. I ended the paired introduction round and asked participants

[1]I changed the names for anonymity

to introduce themselves to the whole group. The following transcripts show what they said. Susanne was delicate woman in her late twenties who seemed almost fragile to me. At the same time she was very animated, spoke loudly and laughed a lot. She was the first to interrupt the silence and speak up. Transcript 4.3 is Susanne introducing herself to the group.

	#00:01:49-3# - #00:02:47-8#
1	**Susanne**: "Um, I had a lot going on, I became a mother at a very young age and am
2	now a single parent and um, I also had intensive drug experience before that. And
3	now I'm actually on the road to recovery and have been in therapy for one and a
4	half years. And yes, in principle everything is going great. I am very happy and my
5	son is doing well. And everything is great most of the time (laughs). But I would
6	also like to be more relaxed and to radiate more calmness, to be able to relax
7	better and to get to know myself better and to be more myself again. And do
8	something for myself again, exactly, that's why I'm here (very quietly)."

Transcript 4.3: Susanne introduces herself to the group. She shares her motivation for attending which is to be able to relax better.

Annie was not much older than Susanne. She seemed very shy, spoke quietly, slowly and in a very monotone voice. In transcript 4.4, Annie introduces herself to the group.

	#00:02:50-9# - #00:03:42-1#
1	**Annie**: "Um, yes, my name is Annie, um, I am um, well, there's more happening in my
2	life right now than I can handle right now, so (laughs) I'm on a trip for three
3	months, I'm pregnant and I'm without a job right now and I've just got a flat, so
4	that's all that's coming together at once. And um yes so I wish that I can somehow
5	process this better and um um yes so that I can then um somehow become more relaxed
6	or somehow relax better."

Transcript 4.4: Annie' self introduction. Her motivation for attending is to handle the difficulties in her life and be able to relax better.

Christine was in her early forties who spoke really quickly, almost swallowing her words and not catching a breath in between. Christine introduces herself in transcript 4.5.

#00:03:45-4# - #00:04:46-2#

Christine: "Um, I am Christine, I am um, I was a single parent for a very long time. I have been separated from my partner for four years, my former partner, the father of my daughter. And then I worked a lot again as a single parent and then I've had a new partner for two years and I actually thought I was doing well and then last year I went into hospital with a suspected heart attack and it turned out that it wasn't anything physical, it was all psychosomatic. And I also had panic attacks and I didn't know myself and I've always been a very hectic, nervous person and it was much worse. And um I have actually always done a lot of sports except for last year and yoga again. I also tried meditation but somehow I couldn't get into it on my own. And when I read about this course I thought, I've never heard anything about it before and I thought that's exactly what I'm looking for. Right, and that's why I'm here now"

Transcript 4.5: Christine introduces herself to the group. She attends the course to deal with psychosomatic stress.

Toby had a smile on his face when he spoke and had a gentle tone of voice. He spoke quietly. He was somewhat chubby and with his friendly demeanour radiated a certain ease that seemed to contradict the stress in his life that he talked about. Transcript 4.6 contains Toby's introduction to the rest of the group.

#00:04:47-9# - #00:06:28-1#

Toby: "I have a daughter and her mother lives in France, so that means I'm really on my own as far as raising her is concerned. The reason why I'm here today is that I got the diagnosis last year that I have shortness of breath at night and also heart problems later on and I've put on a lot of weight because of the stress. And yes, somehow I have to do something about it and um I'm here today actually to do a bit of research into the causes. [...] because my life has always been very hectic, I'm not used to it, I've always had 90-hour weeks in the last few years. that was so normal for me, um it's not quite healthy. [...] I said it's good to learn a few more techniques. What can I do to calm down again"

Transcript 4.6: Toby's self introduction. His reason for attending the course is for physical health, understanding the sources of his stress better, and learn techniques to calm down.

All four of them share some detail about what causes stress in their lives and the hope of learning something that might help them relax. A certain level of suffering and hope for relief is palpable in their descriptions. I thanked them for their openness and did not comment on the details of their accounts. The following transcript 4.7 is me talking about what they might expect from the course:

#00:08:47-6# - #00:09:36-2#

Verena: "so [the meditation] is not about making anything go away um it's about being in a different relationship with what is, so that means even if you meditate regularly and practise mindfulness, all these catastrophes that accompany you in life will continue to accompany you. They don't stop all at once (laughs) um and all these frustrations that you are exposed to, they continue, but what might change is the way I deal with them, the way I relate to myself, namely more gently and kindly"

Transcript 4.7: Verena's introductory words to the participants, saying that meditation is about cultivating a relationship with 'what is'.

So right away, within the first fifteen minutes of the MBSR class, participants shared the difficulties in their lives and their hope for relief. This means they already produced and displayed their expectation of openness by volunteering vulnerable and personal information about themselves. They heard that despite all the investment that was asked of them, those difficulties would likely continue. They learned that the focus of the course would be cultivating a "relationship with what is" which includes a certain degree of suffering. This might sound somewhat abstract at this point for participants who have not practised mindfulness before. At the very least, it requires a certain amount of trust.

4.3 Turning to the inner and talking about it

Right after the introduction round, I said a few things about the course and the location. I did not reveal a lot about the contents of the course. Rather, I gave an outlook of the special structure of an MBSR course which broadly consists of turning to the inner and then talking about it. In the following transcript 4.8, I talked about the structure of MBSR regarding engaging in 'inquiry':

#00:13:49-6# - #00:15:50-0#

Verena: "About this course here, so I won't tell you that much but it is about your experience with yourself, that means it is really a space that is there to feel into yourself and that also means that what is spoken here stays in the room, so to speak. So of course you can talk about what happens to you at home but the things that other participants talk about stay here in the room, so that's important, also that you feel comfortable and can open up and um what is also important is um that we don't give each other advice, that is, if someone tells us something and we think yes, I absolutely know the solution for that, but the basic attitude is that everyone carries wisdom within themselves, so everyone knows for themselves what is best. And the silence also serves to give this wisdom and that which is whole in us the space to do so, which means that the conversations that take place will mainly be in such a way that after meditation you report on your experiences and then do not talk to each other, so this talking to each other only takes place in such two-way conversations. um, but there is always a more in-depth dialogue, and then it is really only ever with one person um, right, but then you also get the hang of that very quickly."

Transcript 4.8: Verena framing course expectations and the flow of 'inquiry'.

After these few introductory words, I guided a standing yoga practice that lasted five minutes. The exercise consisted of standing up and slowly raising the arms above the head while being aware of the sensations in the body. This short practice was followed by the very first 'inquiry'. Broadly speaking, the yoga practice is the 'turning to the inner' and the 'inquiry' is the 'talking about it' part. Transcript 4.9 is the guided yoga practice from the course. My voice is soft and slow, leaving longer and longer pauses between each utterance. Some background noise from the road includes the tram passing by (not included in the transcript).

#00:22:36-0# - #00:28:42-7#

Verena: "ok (1.8) um then (1.2) I would suggest we continue with an (1.5) exercise and that is yoga (0.7) standing up (1.5) um that means just standing up (rustling, 9.1) I don't know if you practise yoga um yoga in MBSR is (0.7) is perhaps a bit different from what you might know from fitness centers or yoga studios (2.3) hhhh right (1.5) just arriving (0.6) now in a standing position. You can also close the eyes for this exercise if it feels comfortable (3.7) and grounding (2.6) in standing (2.6) and feeling the ground (0.8) this posture as we are standing there now (2) is a yoga posture, this is the the mountain pose (3.3) and this image may also help (2) to arrive in this posture (2.1) like a mountain (4.5) and exploring into the body (2.3) as you are standing there (4.1) keep the knees loose (0.6) not pushing them through (9.4) and maybe the image of being pulled up at the crown of the head as if by a thread, also helps (0.9) this upright, dignified standing (11.1) and (0.6) perceiving the weight in the feet (1.4) how it is distributed (10.2) and then (1.4) with the inhalation moving both (0.5) arms (1.2) gently (0.5) upwards, very slowly, palms upwards (1.5) stretched out to the side (1.2) lifting (0.8) both arms (1) and feeling this transition, into this transition (6.5) where do you notice the change in the body? (1.8) What does this perhaps do to your breath when this movement is added? (5.4) And then when the arms are fully extended, pause (8.8) and what do you notice in the hands? (5.5) and in the upper arms? (2.3) is it perhaps pleasant or unpleasant (1.1) to stand there like that? (5.5) maybe a tingling sensation noticeable somewhere (3.4) and then raising the arms even higher (2) above the head (7.1) stretching out completely (4.1) and maybe stretching (0.6) on foot- what is it called, toes- moving on the toes, if possible (0.6) and stretching (2.2) and then standing again (3.5) and then lowering (1.3) the arms again (5.5) and feeling this transition (9.6) at your own pace (10) what does this do to the breath? (8.2) and how does the change feel now, what is it like standing now? (31.3) and then (0.9) opening the eyes again (2.6) ok that was a yoga exercise (1.3) the mountain meditation, now we can sit down again"

Transcript 4.9: Guided yoga meditation. The numbers in brackets represent pauses in seconds.

The guided meditation in transcript 4.9 includes two interwoven sets of instructions, one for movement and one that directs the perception to inner sensations. As the group members find their seats again, I asked a question to initiate the inquiry: "What did you experience in this short exercise of standing, raising the arms?" One by one, all four participants engage in short 'inquiry' sessions with me. Below are excerpts of 'inquiries' with the first two participants, namely Susanne and Annie. At this point in the course, the participants have never before engaged in an 'inquiry' in an MBSR course. They are not only reflecting on their experience, they are also learning how these dialogues work. Transcript 4.10 below is of Susanne engaging in an

inquiry:

#00:29:02-8# - #00:30:39-8#

Verena: What did you experience during this short exercise of standing and raising your arms?
Susanne: Um, yes, then I'll start again, um, yes, so I noticed again how difficult it is for me to get to my feet (laughs) because I always feel my hands vibrating a little bit, so I already felt a good tingling, but my feet, I don't have them (laughs), they are not there (laughs), that's how it feels. um yes
Verena: What did you feel? In the feet?
Susanne: Um, I just felt the few points on which I was standing on the floor minimally, that they, that something is holding me there so that I don't take off completely (laughs) and um, yes, that, I also know that I have no feet (laughs) yes, I also know that I want to learn to ground myself and to be more here on the ground than always lost in thoughts and plans and organisation and daydreams.
Verena: Mmh. But that means you say you noticed it slightly, so the perception was there?
Susanne: Um a little bit (laughs)
Verena: Yes

Transcript 4.10: 'Inquiry' with Susanne directly following the guided yoga meditation

The dialogue with Susanne was followed by Annie, who was the next person to engage in an inquiry:

#00:31:18-5# - #00:32:15-1#

Verena: Did anyone else feel that it was perhaps difficult to get into the feet or also this difference between feet and hands?
Annie: I think at the beginning standing was somehow as if you couldn't stand still, somehow as if you were swaying and I also felt a tingling in my arms or in my hands and at the end somehow I had the feeling that I was standing still. and um at the end somehow I had the feeling that I was then standing more firmly or yes
Verena: mmh. How did you notice that?
Annie: Mm, that you were somehow standing more still or more firmly on the floor

Transcript 4.11: 'Inquiry' with Annie following the inquiry with Susanne

There are certain patterns about these dialogues in terms of their structure and contents that are easily noticeable. I ask questions, the participants answer the questions, and I react to their responses. The dialogues focus on one person at a time who provides an account of their subjective experience during the guided yoga practice. The questions I ask direct the participants to explore their inner experience in a specific way and I do not provide any feedback regarding what might have been a preferred experience. In the next section, I will look at these aspects in more detail.

4.4 Foundational elements of inquiry

In the first half of this chapter—in the two previous sections—I set the scene for an MBSR course by decribing the room and atmosphere, and by introducing the participants and their reasons for attending. I have introduced and contextualised 'inquiry' by sharing how it was framed and practised in the course. I did this by presenting selected transcripts from a course I taught as a novice teacher. In the second half of the chapter, I will reconsider the transcripts and describe the 'inquiry' process in more detail, from a conversation analysis perspective. Firstly, I introduce foundational elements of 'inquiry' in this section. These elements include 'sequence organisation' in which I explain the basic turn taking pattern of 'inquiry' (subsection 4.4.1), 'phenomenological mapping' which is concerned with the subject of 'inquiry' (subsection 4.4.2), 'objectives' which explains how 'inquiry' supports the overarching goal of cultivating mindfulness (subsection 4.4.3), and finally 'preference organisation' which describes how 'inquiry' occurs in a dialogical atmosphere of agreement (subsection 4.4.4).

Building on these elements, in section 4.5, I will describe the transformative and collaborative process that takes place in 'inquiry', and draw parallels to the psychotherapeutic processes described in CA literature.

4.4.1 Sequence organisation

The first dimension of 'inquiry' I will describe is sequence organisation. The term 'sequence organisation' is borrowed from conversation analysis and describes the systematic way in which talk is in organised in conversations (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974). At the most basic level, it refers to the structured way speakers in a conversation take turns, such that for example one speaker asks a question and another speaker provides an answer. This question-answer pair is an example of an 'adjacency pair' (see 2.4.2). Three-turn sequence organisations that are typical in therapeutic and in classroom settings, and Crane, Stanley, et al. (2015) found that 'inquiry' sequences in an MBSR course are organised similarly to classrooms. This same pattern can also be seen in my data. As an example, consider again the first three turns of the 'inquiry'

with Susanne in transcript 4.12 below (or transcript 4.10 for the extended transcript that was introduced in the previous section).

Excerpt of transcript 3.8

Verena: What did you experience during this short exercise of standing and raising your arms? (5)
Susanne: Um, yes, then I'll start again, um, yes, so I noticed again how difficult it is for me to get to my feet (laughs) because I always feel my hands vibrating a little bit, so I already felt a good tingling, but my feet, I don't have them (laughs), they are not there (laughs), that's how it feels. um yes
Verena: What did you feel? In the feet?

Transcript 4.12: Consider the first three turns of the 'inquiry' between Susanne and me. I initiate the process, Susanne self selects and shares her experience, and I ask a clarification question.

Transcript 4.12 shows the first instance in the course that participants engaged in inquiry. This means that they had no previous knowledge of what to expect, yet the sequence organisation is immediately obvious. I could have picked any other excerpt to exemplify this pattern. Those three turns reveal a typical three-turn structure of initiation, response, and third position action (Peräkylä, 1997). I initiate the interaction by asking a question, Susanne answers the question, and then I respond to Susanne's answer by asking another question. More specifically, I ask the whole group a reflection question regarding the yoga practice. This is followed by a five seconds silence. Susanne then speaks up and describes her experience during the meditation. By volunteering her answer, she self selects. I then ask a clarification question regarding her answer. Note that the third-position action can in turn represent another initiation, as is the case in this example. When talking about longer sequences, it makes sense to talk about the sequence organisation in terms of adjacency pairs. An adjacency pair consists of a First Pair Part (FPP), such as a question, and a Second Pair Part (SPP), such as an answer (Kendrick, P. Brown, et al., 2020). This FPP-SPP pairing is considered the foundational unit of cooperation in a conversation. However, for various functions within a conversation, this basic unit is often preceded, interjected, and succeeded by utterances. According to Kendrick, P. Brown, et al. (2020) this is a universal principle of conversations. For now, my main concern is to establish the sequence organisation that is typical of 'inquiry', namely a three-turn structure consisting of initiation, response, and third position action. Table 4.13 is an overview that describes these three turns from transcript 4.12 between Susanne and me and the action that is achieved in each turn. In the first

How are sequences organised in an inquiry?

3-turn structure:
Initiation - response - third position action

Turn	Speaker	Adressee	Action
1 - Initiation	Verena	Group	asks reflection question
2 - Response	Susanne	Verena	self selects for inquiry, describes inner experience
3 - Third position action	Verena	Susanne	asks clarification question

Table 4.13: Sequences are organised in three-turn structures, namely initiation, response, and third position action. A table shows those three turns using the beginning of the 'inquiry' between Susanne and me in transcript 4.12 as an example.

turn or FPP (initiation), I address the whole group with a reflection question, in the second turn or SPP (response), Susanne self selects for 'inquiry' and describes her inner experience, and in the third turn or FPP (third position action), I ask Susanne a clarification question regarding her account. This describes a typical three-turn sequence organisation in inquiry. In the next section, I will consider the focus of this 'inquiry', i.e. the subject of transcript 4.12, and of 'inquiry' in general.

4.4.2 Phenomenological mapping

The second dimension is 'phenomenological mapping' which describes the subject of 'inquiry' as an exploration of the lived inner experience of the participant. I am using the term 'phenomenological mapping' in the following understanding. Phenomenology studies the essence of experiences without imposing preconceived notions of the phenomena in question. 'Inquiry' also 'studies' (or rather jointly explores) the essence of experiences without imposing preconceived notions of the phenomena in question, and also without *interpreting* the phenomena. The main point of 'inquiry' is to explore and gain a deeper understanding of various aspects, meanings, and associations of a particular subjective experience. In a way, the teacher and the participant co-create a map of the participant's lived inner experience. The use of the present participle 'mapping' implies that this is an action that is happening in the present moment. To an extent,

this resembles "phenomenological interviewing", which is a qualitative research method that similarly explores individuals' lived experiences (Seidman, 2006). However, the purpose and context of 'inquiry' in MBSR and phenomenological interviewing are very different. Most notably, 'inquiry' serves primarily as a means to support the participant gaining insights, whereas a phenomenological interview is conducted to help the researcher gain an understanding of the interviewee and collect data. Moreover, the phenomenological map that is created in 'inquiry' bears little relevance beyond the moment in which the dialogue occurs. The scope usually includes an exploration of bodily sensations, thoughts, emotions, reactions to stimuli in the immediate environment, and patterns in meditation or everyday life (for examply a tendency to get bored easily). Consider again the same three-turn sequence between Susanne and me in transcript 4.12. This time, rather than looking at the overall structure, consider the subject of the interaction.

Excerpt of transcript 3.8

Verena: What did you experience during this short exercise of standing and raising your arms? (5)
Susanne: Um, yes, then I'll start again, um, yes, so I noticed again how difficult it is for me to get to my feet (laughs) because I always feel my hands vibrating a little bit, so I already felt a good tingling, but my feet, I don't have them (laughs), they are not there (laughs), that's how it feels. um yes
Verena: What did you feel? In the feet?

Transcript 4.12: Again, consider the 'inquiry' with Susanne. This time with attention to the subject of the dialogue, which is on the inner lived experience of Susanne.

In the first turn, I ask a reflection question that invites a subjective response. The question is directed at the whole group and is followed by a five second pause. Such pauses in a group setting can become uncomfortable easily. For me as the group leader, a temptation can arise to fill the silence with another question or an explanation of the question or to address a participant directly. However, as an MBSR teacher, I have learned to accept this potential discomfort and simply wait for someone to speak up. (In conversation analysis, the study of silences reveals that they may hold significant meaning in conversation. I will discuss the occurrence of silences in 'inquiry' in more detail when I talk about preference organisation in subsection 4.4.4 below.) In this example and in the context of phenomenological mapping, the silence may allow participants some time to reflect upon the question and allow the self selection of a speaker. In the second

turn, Susanne describes several aspects with regard to her hands and feet. She says that she felt her hands vibrating and tingling. With regard to her feet, she says that she noticed "again" (line 3) that it was difficult to "get to" (line 4) her feet, implying that it is a recurring issue. She says that it feels like her feet are "not there" (line 6). Susanne is using language to describe inner phenomena. She speaks about experiences that are not verifiable by another person. A summary of the informational value of her account might include the following: difficulty of feeling her feet (a recurring issue), vibrating sensation in her hands (easily accessible). This offers several themes that could be explored further. My response, or the third position action, is dependent on several contextual considerations. What is the main theme of the session? What is the situation of this particular participant? What preceded the interaction and what is the situation in the group at that moment? Even though these considerations apply equally to the initiation question, it is especially relevant in this third turn. The participant has offered subjective information in a one-on-one dialogue, yet the conversation takes place in a group setting with an educational claim. The dialogue should ideally address Susanne personally and hold value for the group. In this example, I respond to Susanne's account with a clarification question regarding the feeling in her feet (or lack thereof). Susanne says "my feet, I don't have them, they are not there" (lines 5-6) which makes it difficult to understand what type of sensation she is describing. My clarification question invites further subjective exploration that could provide another fragment of the phenomenological map of her experience. This might provide insight for Susanne into her own experience directly and for other participants who might be able to relate to their own version of 'lack of feeling'. Another facet of phenomenological mapping is that I do not simply collect information but subtly transform information by using reformulations (see i.e. Schegloff (1997) for examples of 'third turn repair' regarding misunderstandings or Knol et al. (2020) for reformulations in the context of psychotherapy).

> "A member may treat some part of the conversation as an occasion to describe that conversation, to explain it, or characterize it, or explicate, or translate, or summarize, or furnish the gist of it, or take note of its accordance with rules, or remark on its departure from rules. That is to say, a member may use some part of conversation

as an occasion to formulate the conversation" (Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970, p. 350)

Note in transcript 4.12 that Susanne talks about '*my* feet' (line 4) whereas I do not talk about '*your* feet' but use the impersonal '*the* feet' (line 7). This use of the direct article subtly depersonalises Susanne's sensation in her feet, linguistically speaking. Stanley and Longden (2016) have also described this conversational feature of 'inquiry' in their conversation analysis. I will describe the use of reformulations in more detail in the next section when I explain the transformational process of 'inquiry' (see 4.5). The main point of 'phenomenological mapping' is: The 'inquiry' process can be regarded as a co-exploration of the phenomenological landscape of participants' lived experiences by putting experiences into words. However, the experience that is talked about and the way it is talked about is entirely dependent on the teacher asking questions about specific inner phenomena[2].

4.4.3 Objectives of inquiry

The next element is concerned with the 'objectives of inquiry' or the overarching goal of inquiry. In their guide for mindfulness teachers, Crane, Griffith, and Karunavira (2021, p. 49) subhead the chapter on 'inquiry' as "conveying course themes through interactive dialogue". What does that mean in practice? The overall goal of an MBSR course is to alleviate suffering (or stress) in some form. The understanding is that while life is inevitably painful at times, the way we relate to events sometimes adds to the suffering. In MBSR, participants learn to relate to inner and outer events in a "mindful" way, that is they learn to be present with what is. This is achieved step by step and often very subtly through guided meditations, home practice, 'inquiry', reflections, conversations with classmates, and teachings. There are many aspects as to what 'inquiry' achieves. One prominent one is that it serves to guide participants towards noticing and exploring various facets of inner experiencing with curiosity rather than with judgement. Consider yet again the same three turns between Susanne and me, this time focusing on the underlying

[2]Consider in this context that from a constructionist point of view such as described by Rapley (2001), an interview is regarded as an interaction that is actively produced by *both*, the interviewer and the interviewer. It is considered a co-accomplishment in the moment, just like any other social interaction, not a reality outside of the interview.

purpose of my questions.

Excerpt of transcript 3.8

Verena: What did you experience during this short exercise of standing and raising your arms? (5)
Susanne: Um, yes, then I'll start again, um, yes, so I noticed again how difficult it is for me to get to my feet (laughs) because I always feel my hands vibrating a little bit, so I already felt a good tingling, but my feet, I don't have them (laughs), they are not there (laughs), that's how it feels. um yes
Verena: What did you feel? In the feet?

Transcript 4.12: For a third time, consider the 'inquiry' with Susanne. This time notice how general learning themes are addressed through the dialogue. In this case, 1) noticing and exploring bodily sensations, and 2) turning towards difficulty with curiosity.

My questions in this interaction reveal two important objectives of MBSR: 1) noticing and exploring bodily sensations, and 2) turning towards difficulty with curiosity. I will consider both goals in turn, beginning with the first. The 'inquiry' in transcript 4.12 followed a guided yoga practice in which participants were asked to move their body and notice sensations in their body while moving and while standing (see transcript 4.12 on page 85). The practice served the goal of noticing and exploring bodily sensations. My first question is the invitation to reflect upon this experience of 'noticing and exploring' and put it into words. The question is directed at the whole group and not a specific person, and the silence gives everyone time for reflection. When Susanne answers the question, she provides an example of 'noticing bodily sensations' which other participants may or may not relate to. Susanne says that she noticed tingling sensations in her hands and a lack of sensation in her feet. Both experiential descriptions could be explored further as there might be more to be noticed. As I said in the previous section, my follow-up questions are entirely context-dependent. In this example, I ask Susanne whether she can clarify the lack of sensation in her feet which serves the objective of turning towards difficulty with curiosity. In fact, in MBSR the idea is to turn towards all experience *non-judgementally*, keeping in mind Jon Kabat-Zinn's definition of mindfulness as the awareness that arises through "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). However, in the context of meditation, especially in the beginning as is the case with this group, there is often a tendency to turn away from difficult or uncomfortable situations. Participants might have an expectation that a meditation should go a certain way and

should feel pleasant. In my guided meditation, I made a few suggestions as to what sensations might arise when lifting one's arms and Susanne's description of tingling in her hands mirrors my suggestions. Her description of 'having no feet' is certainly interesting and could be perceived as a difficulty. My clarification question in the sense of 'what do you notice when there is a lack of sensation?' allows for further exploration of a potential difficulty rather than turning away from it. The question makes this option available to Susanne and because of the group setting, it becomes available to the other participants as well, who might have also experienced some version of 'lack of sensation'. This ties into more indirect objectives objectives, such as normalising the difficulty for other participants.

In summary, in 'inquiry' the teacher guides the participants towards noticing and exploring various facets of inner experiencing without judgement. In the example with Susanne two very common objectives were addressed, namely 1) noticing and exploring bodily sensations, and 2) turning towards difficulty with curiosity. The objectives that are addressed specifically in any interaction is often not clear-cut and is context-dependent. 'Inquiry' can be regarded as a reflection of the guided meditation itself in which the teacher demonstrates through their questions how to relate to the inner phenomena that are jointly explored. In this example, Susanne reported how she felt during the meditation with a focus on bodily sensations. 'Inquiry' commonly addresses experiences in the present moment, i.e. I could have asked 'What are you feeling *now*? In the feet?' which could have led to an in-the-moment exploration rather than a retrospective one.

4.4.4 Preference organisation

The fourth foundational dimension of 'inquiry' is 'preference organisation'. It describes how the teacher supports a dialogical atmosphere of agreement and allowing. In the context of MBSR, preference organisation can be understood in terms of (1) the teacher's consistent agreement with the participant's statements, and (2) the use of silences to allow a deeper exploration of the participant's experience.

Agreeing with participants' statements

To frame preference organisation, consider again the concept of adjacency pairs that I introduced earlier. Schegloff (2007) defines adjacency pairs as fundamental building blocks of social interaction, consisting of two adjacent turns by different speakers: the first pair part (FPP) and the second pair part (SPP). Typically, preference organisation influences how FPPs are followed by certain responses (SPPs). Preferred responses tend to occur promptly and dispreferred responses tend to be delivered with delays and more elaborate explanations (Pomerantz and Heritage, 2012). For example, accepting an invitation tends to be quick (preferred), while rejecting one may involve hesitation and justifications (dispreferred) (Sacks, 2020). Consider the following 'inquiry' sequence between Christine and me in transcript 4.16 which illustrates how I either agree with what Christine says or ask clarification questions. In the MBSR course, this sequence followed the inquiries with Susanne and Annie and again refers to the guided yoga practice (transcript 4.9).

```
    #00:32:24-1# - #00:33:26-8#
 1  Christine: I- I do yoga and I know [that ]
 2  Verena:                           [hm=hm]
 3  Christine: but uh:m I found it a nice feeling, like when you consciously uhm stand
 4  with both feet on- on the ground
 5  Verena: hm=hm
 6  Christine: how strong that feels some- that feels somehow good
 7  Verena: hm=hm what exactly did you notice? (1.2)
 8  Christine: uhm (1.2) I can't describe it that well, but really standing so firmly
 9  like that li::ke
10  Verena: hm=hm (0.5)
11  Christine: yes
12  Verena: so was it [especially          ]
13  Christine:        [I'm really standing ]
14  Verena: in the feet [then?]
15  Christine:          [yes  ] exactly, not so much in the arms
16  Verena: hm=hm (0.8)
17  Christine: thinking about it consciously (0.9)
18  Verena: yes
19  Christine: yes (0.7)
20  Verena: W- what exactly do you mean when you say thinking about it consciously?
21  Christine: With two- so something very simple, to stand with two feet on the ground
22            [just really ]
23  Verena:   [hm=hm       ]
24  Christine: what: yes what it means and uhm
25  Verena: yes
26  Christine: because I'm someone who- who distracts herself well and always is in
27  thousands of thoughts and just really thinking about something simple like that
28  Verena: hm=hm (0.9) do you really mean thinking or do you mean feeling into or
29               [towards-]
30  Christine:  [yes     ] maybe it is a feeling into it yes [yes  ]
31  Verena:                                                 [hm=hm] so percei[ving]
32  Christine:                                                              [yes ]
33  Verena: that you are standing?
34  Christine: exactly "yes" (1) which I hardly ever do otherwise yes
35  Verena: yes
```

Transcript 4.16: The 'inquiry' illustrates (1) my consistent agreement with Christine's statements, and (2) the use of silences which allows a deeper exploration of Christine's experience

Christine was a rapid speaker who almost swallowed her words whereas I spoke a lot slower. In this transcript 4.16, I have included overlapping speech (square brackets) and silences (numbers in round brackets are seconds). Consider just my turns in the dialogue which consist of affirmative responses ("hm=hm" and "yes") and clarification questions. In lines 1-7, Christine says that she practises yoga and positively assesses her experience during the guided meditation by saying that it was a "nice feeling" (line 3) and that it "feels somehow good" (line 6). My turns all consist of an affirmative "hm-hm". This is neutral and can be interpreted as an encouragement for Christine to continue speaking. I do not react to her positive assessment but rather ask a clarification question "what exactly did you notice?" (line 7). This open question can be linked to the MBSR subgoal of "noticing and exploring bodily sensations". When Christine struggles to answer the question, I carry on in the same manner of affirming whatever she says and ask another clarification question "So was it especially in the feet then?" (lines 12-14). Again I do not react to her assessment that she "can't describe it well" but pick up on her statement of "standing so firmly" (line 8). Her account that follows is again simply acknowledged with affirmative responses, followed by another clarification question "What exactly do you mean when you say thinking about it consciously?" (line 20). This question uses the exact same words Christine has used in her turn prior. She elaborates, with my turns again affirming what she says. Up until this point in the dialogue, Christine has been able to speak freely and my questions provided a clear direction to 'noticing and exploring'. Moreover, as Christine said that she struggled to describe what she noticed (line 8), the fact that we simply keep on exploring together can also be regarded an example of 'turning towards difficulty with curiosity'. My next clarification question "Do you really mean thinking or do you mean feeling into or towards?" (lines 28-29) picks up on her vocabulary again ("thinking") and suggests a new phrase to describe her experience ("feeling into"). This can be considered an example of an "other-initiated repair" (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks, 1977, p. 377). Christine immediately agrees to which I again summarise her experience in my words "So perceiving that you are standing?" (lines 31-33) to which she rapidly agrees again. Sikveland and Stokoe (2020, p. 339) provide "evidence that some actions, when composed of particular word selections, are easier to reject than others, specifically in circum-

stances where (strong) resistance is to be expected". In a way, I accept and agree with anything Christine says, I direct the focus of her account through the use of clarification questions, and eventually offer new vocabulary. I do not interrupt nor do I provide feedback to the contents of her account. Throughout our interaction, I used affirmative responses ("hm-hm", "yes") and clarification questions through which I was able to maintain a non-evaluative stance. This practice of responding neutrally aligns with research by Stivers (2008), who found that non-verbal cues like nodding serve as signals of affiliation in conversation, which promotes alignment between speakers. Similarly, in this case, my minimal verbal responses encouraged Christine to continue exploring her experience.

Silence as a Productive Tool

The second aspect regarding preference organisation is the use of silences. Turn design refers to how speakers structure their utterances when taking turns in conversation (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974). Typically in conversations, silences (or inter-turn gaps) precede a dispreferred second part pair as was discussed above (see also Kendrick and Torreira (2015)). This is not always the case however. Stokoe et al. (2020) show that a delay may also precede a productive response in situations where interlocutors start out with different goals. A silence breaks the contiguity of turn-taking "giving an independent quality to the response" (Stokoe et al., 2020, p. 80). Consider Christine's long silence after my first question "what exactly did you notice?" (line 7) after which she produced a response that might be regarded as dispreferred: rather than describe her bodily sensations she says that she finds it difficult to do just that. However, in MBSR, this answer is just as good as any other answer and simply provides a foundation for inquiry. In fact, 'inquiry' in which participants describe difficulties often allow for deeper exploration and they typically involve significant silences. These silences may be uncomfortable, especially in the beginning. A reason for this may be that, in different contexts, these silences are considered a dispreferred turn design (Kendrick and Torreira, 2015). In this case, Christine's acceptance of silence might have increased as her pace of speaking slowed significantly down towards the end. In her last utterance she even leaves a one second long pause while speaking.

In summary, preference organisation in MBSR 'inquiry' demonstrates how agreement and allowing are fostered through turn design. Unlike typical conversational contexts, where delays and difficulties might signal dispreference, in MBSR, they serve as foundations for exploration. Silences do not interrupt the flow of the interaction but provide space for participants to reflect. Moreover, all contributions are met with acceptance, and even "negative" experiences become opportunities for 'inquiry'. In this way, preference organisation in MBSR facilitates an atmosphere of 'allowing'.

4.4.5 Four foundational elements of inquiry

In the previous sections, I introduced four foundational elements of 'inquiry' through a conversation analysis perspective, namely sequence organisation (subsection 4.4.1), phenomenological mapping (subsection 4.4.2), objectives (subsection 4.4.3), and preference organisation (subsection 4.4.4). Figure 4.17 shows the essential information for each of these four dimensions in one framework.

Elements of inquiry

I. Sequence organisation

Sequences are organised in a 3-turn structure:
Initiation - response - third position action

Example (see 4.4.1)

Turn	Speaker	Adressee	Action
1 - Initiation	Verena	Group	asks reflection question
2 - Response	Susanne	Verena	self selects for inquiry, describes inner experience
3 - Third position action	Verena	Susanne	asks clarification question

II: Phenomenological mapping

The subject of inquiry is:
a joint exploration of the phenomenological landscape of the participants' lived experiences

Example (see 4.4.2)

Verena and Susanne jointly explore Susanne's inner experience during the meditation, specifically regarding "not feeling the feet".

III. Objectives

The general objective of inquiry is:
conveying course themes through noticing and exploring facets of inner experiencing

Example (see 4.4.3)

Objective	Action
Noticing and exploring bodily sensations	Letting Susanne share her inner experience regarding bodily sensations
Turning towards difficulty with curiosity	Asking a clarification question regarding the lack of feeling in Susanne's feet

IV. Preference organisation

An atmosphere of agreement is achieved by:
agreement with participants' statements
and a turn-design that allows silences

Example (see 4.4.4)

(1) Anything that participants share is met with acceptance and may serve as a basis for inquiry, even so-called 'negative' utterances such as difficulties with the exercise.

(2) Silences in turn design appears to break the contiguity of turn-taking on a surface level; however it allows time for reflection and an independently produced response.

Figure 4.17: Summary of the four elements of 'inquiry' described in this section: sequence organisation, phenomenological mapping, objectives, preference organisation.

The first element 'sequence organisation' reveals a three-turn structure. In the example of transcript 4.12 these three turns consist of initiation (in which I ask the group a reflection question), response (in which Susanne self selects for 'inquiry' and begins describing her inner experience during the yoga practice), and third position (in which I ask Susanne a clarification question regarding her account). The second element 'phenomenological mapping' refers to the subject of 'inquiry' which typically is a joint exploration of the participant's inner experience, during a meditation or in the present moment. Thirdly, 'objectives' describes the general aims of 'inquiry' that support the learning themes of the MBSR course. In the example of transcript 4.12 two very common objectives are addressed: (1) noticing and exploring bodily sensations, and (2) turning towards difficulty with curiosity. The last element of 'inquiry' is 'preference organisation' which shows that the turn design in 'inquiry' supports an atmosphere of allowing. (1) Anything a participant is accepted and the dialogue is directed by asking clarification question regarding specific subjective experiences. (2) Silences are not dispreferred but are used productively to allow the participant time for reflection.

4.5 Transformative sequences of an 'inquiry project'

4.5.1 Sequence organisation in different settings

Building on the four patterns or dimensions of 'inquiry' that I described in the previous section, I will now discuss conversational features within longer 'inquiry' sequences. Crane, Stanley, et al. (2015) describe sequence organisation in 'inquiry' in terms of the 3-turn structure that has been discussed in the context of education. In both, their work on sequence organisation in 'inquiry', and in classroom learning settings, the structure that is described consists of three turns, namely Initiation - Response - Evaluation/Feedback (IRE/IRF). Those three 'turns' might not map entirely on three turns in conversation as Koole (2013, p. 3), a conversation analyst of classroom interactions, notes: "[t]he IRF sequence consists of three related sequential "positions" (I, R, F), but not necessarily of three turns. A sequence can be expanded to include more turns […]." However, whilst MBSR is certainly linguistically placed in the realm of education by

calling the programme a 'course' and the providers 'teachers', the skills that are conveyed such as self awareness are highly personal. MBSR is not (and does not claim to be) a pure training programme where the aim is to impart verifiable knowledge. Rather, MBSR is a psycho-educational programme, where learning is not measurable and verifiable, but individual, subjective and inherent[3]. This form of learning is more comparable to the processes that take place in the context of psychotherapy. The most basic conversational interaction in psychotherapy is described in terms of 'Initiation - Response - Third-position action' (Peräkylä, 2019, p. 258). What is more is that in psychotherapeutic interactions a transformation of experience is achieved through a series of action sequences. This is similar to what happens in MBSR as I will show below. For these reasons, I would like to build on the works of both Crane, Stanley, et al. (2015) and Peräkylä (2019), and add my own findings. I am adopting the terms 'Initiation - Response - Third-position action' for my analysis and use the abbreviation I-R-3P:

- I → Initiation, e.g. question
- R → Response, e.g. answer
- 3P → Third-position action, e.g. feedback

As an example for the I-R-3P structure, consider again the MBSR session that I recounted in this chapter. After the short yoga practice and 'inquiry' that I discussed previously, the session continued with the 'raisin exercise' (a mindfulness exercise to introduce present moment awareness of the five senses) and the body scan meditation (a lying down meditation to promote present moment awareness of sensations of the physical body). The body scan was followed by an 'inquiry', first with Susanne and then with Annie. Annie shared that her mind wandered during the meditation. Transcript 4.18 begins just after Annie has finished talking. In it, referring to Annie's account, I ask the group who else experienced wandering thoughts during the guided body scan meditation. Christine self-selects and responds.

[3]Brandsma (2017, 160ff) suggests that 'inquiry' enables experiential learning which starts with an experience as described by the educational theorist Kolb (2013) in the context of adult education.

1	I→	V:	who has also experienced that, that the thoughts galloped(h) away
2			with(h) you in between?
3	R→	C:	all the time.
4	3P→	V:	yes (h)

Transcript 4.18: Example of the sequence structure: I → Initiation, R → Response, 3P → Third-position action. V=Verena (teacher), C=Christine (participant).

In CA terms, my question contains a 'formulation'. "In a formulation, as it usually emerges in psychotherapy, a speaker suggests the meaning–a candidate understanding–of the other speaker's prior talk. In doing that, formulations are selective (focusing on something, and focusing away from something else, that the interlocutor just said). They make relevant confirmation or disconfirmation, often also elaboration, by the next speaker." (Peräkylä, 2019, p. 262). In this case, my question selects the subject of mind wandering and makes it relevant to the rest of the group by re-directing it to them. My question can be considered a 'reflection question' to which the answers are only found in someone's own subjective experience. My reflection question represents the initiation of a new sequence because it opens the floor to the whole group once again. The question acknowledges Annie's account, focuses specifically on the subject of mind wandering, and asks who can relate to it. Christine self-selects and immediately replies "all the time" (line 3). Her quick and affirmative response expresses agreement which indicates that the question was phrased in a way that aligns with her experience of the meditation. In my response to Christine, the third-position action, I simply say "yes (h)" (line 4) which expresses agreement with her response.

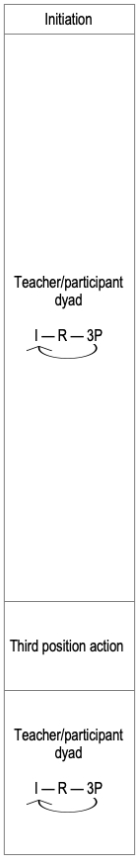
4.5.2 How 'inquiry' relates to the psychotherapeutic process

CA research seeks to understand how these types of I-R-3P sequences enable a psychotherapeutic process, which is about the *transformation of experience*. "Here, the concerns of CA and the concerns of clinical practice meet, as we try to understand how the sequential structures (concern of CA) facilitate the sociopsychological "substance" (concern of clinical practice)" (Peräkylä, 2019, p. 265). In CA, this transformation of experience through sequences is called a 'psychotherapeutic project'. This project involves a transformation of referents, emotions and relations. Similarly, in MBSR a transformation of experience takes place and is achieved through

sequential actions as I will show. However, in psychotherapy the referents typically lie outside the therapist's office as clients might talk about issues with their partner or issues that happened in their childhood[4]. In MBSR on the other hand, the shared referential world that is discussed lies almost exclusively in the inner experience of the course participants and in the present moment (or very recent moment). A 'psychotherapeutic project' in which referents, emotions and relations are transformed is described in terms of four action sequences, namely 'prior action', 'target action', 'response', and 'third position' (Peräkylä, 2019, p. 267). I will show how the sequential transformation in MBSR 'inquiry' can similarly be described in terms of action sequences. In order to show the basic mechanism of an 'inquiry project', I will describe three action sequences using the following terminology: *initiation* (combining 'prior action' and 'target action'), *teacher/participant dyad* ('response'), and *third position action* ('third position'). Consider the 'inquiry' between Christine and me in extract 4.19. In the transcript, I have marked the component parts of the IR3P sequence on the right hand side: I. Initiation (lines 1-2), II. Teacher/participant dyad (lines 3-31), III. Third-position action (lines 32-35). IV a second teacher/participant dyad (lines 36-44).

[4]Of course referentiality depends on the form of therapy. See for example Kondratyuk and Peräkylä (2011) for a conversation analysis of psychotherapy that focuses on the present moment.

1	I→	V:	who has also experienced that, that the thoughts galloped(h) away	Initiation
2			with(h) you in between?	
3	R→	C:	all the time.	
4	3P→	V:	yes (h)	
5		C:	I found it really difficult.	
6		V:	yes.	
7		C:	and I had then whenever you said something again uh I came back when you	
8			were again with another body part	
9		V:	mm=hm	
10		C:	and then I decided ok now until the end it can't be that hard to	
11			concentrate on it now and then I was gone again	
12	I→	V:	mm=hm when you say you were gone, where were you then?	
13		C:	Oh, at all sorts of things. What I experienced today, then I briefly	
14			thought about this Lomi Lomi massage, so really everything yes? [so]	
15		V:	[mm=hm]	
16		C:	it wasn't anything specific, really thousands of thoughts yes	
17	I→	V:	mm=hm (1.1) and (0.7) how- (1) that means you noticed that you had	
18			thoughts? (1.7)	
19		C:	and how you then named another body part and then I went back again and	
20			then I was immediately- (1.7) so I also know that this is difficult for	
21			me	
22		V:	yes (1.1)	
23		C:	but I have now consciously- normally I am that [someone]	
24		Someone:	[((cough))]	
25		C:	who then says, no, it doesn't work anyway, but I'm now- well, when I	
26			really try to get involved now and but, that's incredibly difficult for	
27			me	
28	I→	V:	so that means you know this also from [other]	
29		C:	[mm=hm]	
30	I→	V:	areas of your life?	
31		C:	mm	
32	I→	V:	mm=hm (1.9) yes (0.6) well you just saw, everyone raised their hand, I	Third position action
33			can raise my hand too, it doesn't stop (soft laughter) so that is- the	
34			um (0.6) meditation is not, ah I sit there and have no thoughts (0.6)	
35			but meditation is, ah again a thought, ah another one, ah another(h)	
36		C:	but then I don't want to let it happen, because I think, that can't be	
37			so difficult now, that you just stay with it, yes?	
38	I→	V:	mm=hm that means, there is immediately also (1.5) a judgement?	
39		C:	mm=hm (0.9)	
40	I→	V:	mm=hm (1.3) and (0.5) that is (2) [(2.7) so how do you notice that	
41			you are in thought?]	
42		Outside:	[((Traffic noise))	
43			]	
44		C:	because I'm thinking about something else	



Transcript 4.19: Inquiry between Christine (C) and Verena (V). I. Initiation (lines 1-2), II. Teacher/participant dyad (lines 3-31), III. Third-position action (lines 32-35). Followed by another teacher/participant dyad (lines 36-44). Initiation questions are marked with 'I →' in the left column.

Lines 1-35 of the 'inquiry' can be divided into three phases, which I begin with an initiation question (lines 1-2). I ask the group to reflect who has experienced mind wandering during the guided body scan meditation. The initiation question is followed by a teacher/participant dyad between Christine and me (lines 3-31) in which we jointly explore Christine's subjective experience of mind wandering. Within this dyad there are several turns that follow the I-R-3P structure. In the third phase, the third-position action, I deliver a mindfulness 'lesson' based on Christine's account, that is I talk about mind wandering in meditation and relate it to what she has shared (lines 32-35). In the transcript, this is again followed by a teacher/participant dyad with further exploration and transformation of Christine's experience (lines 36-44).

The following diagram illustrates the overall structure:

I. Initiation: Teacher

II. Teacher/participant dyad (Initiation → Response → third-position)

III. Third-position action: Teacher

In the remainder of this section, I will analyse transcript 4.19 in detail in terms of the three phases (I) Initiation (lines 1-2, see subsection 4.5.3), (II) Teacher/participant dyad (lines 3-31, see subsection 4.5.4), and (III) Third position action (lines 32-35, see subsection 4.5.5), and the teacher/participant dyad that immediately follows (lines 36-44, see subsection 4.5.6). I will present the relevant part of the transcript again as I talk about it. Finally, I will summarise the whole 'inquiry' project in subsection 4.5.7.

4.5.3 (I) Initiation

The interaction in extract 4.19 is initiated by my question regarding who in the group has experienced mind wandering similar to what Annie has shared in a previous 'inquiry' (lines 1-2). It would hence be possible to talk about the initiation question in terms of 'prior action' and 'target action' as is done in CA work regarding psychotherapeutic projects. However, my main concern is to describe the overall structure of the 'inquiry project' which is why I call this action sequence simply *initiation* even though it could be analysed by considering the conversational context more fully. Initiation best describes the function of this utterance. In this case, the question initiates both the 'inquiry' project (full transcript) and a basic I-R-3P structure (lines 1-4). It achieves several conversational aims. Firstly, it is focused on 'noticing and exploring thinking', that is the act of thinking, not the content of thoughts. The process of noticing thoughts as mental events without engaging with their contents is known as cognitive defusion (Assaz et al., 2018). Secondly, the question directly follows the 'inquiry' with Annie in which she shared that her mind wandered and I simply affirmed her account. Mind wandering could be perceived as a potential difficulty. By asking to explore it rather than frame it as a difficulty, this promotes the MBSR objective of 'turning towards difficulty with curiosity'. Thirdly, I am not the one introducing the subject of mind wandering but rather it was Annie, a participant. By asking who

in the group might relate to her experience I allude to the MBSR objective of 'normalising and accepting difficulty'. The realisation that all humans go through difficulties is a component of self compassion called *common humanity* (Neff, 2003). Fourthly, the question serves as a bridge between two inquiries. After focusing solely on Annie, it opens the floor to the rest of the group and invites another participant to engage in inquiry. By not addressing anyone in particular, participants are given the opportunity to self select.

4.5.4 (II) Teacher/participant dyad

After the initiation, the teacher/participant dyad represents the second phase of the 'inquiry' project (lines 3-31 in transcript 4.19). It is made up of various turns that follow the basic 3-turn structure of initiation, response, and third-position. I will go through the transcript line by line, zooming in on four actions that illustrate how the teacher/participant dyad serves to transform Christine's account in a specific way. For each, I will focus on the teacher's actions.

First action: teacher's third actions of simply affirming

1	I→	V:	who has also experienced that, that the thoughts galloped(h) away
2			with(h) you in between?
3	R→	C:	all the time.
4	3P→	V:	yes (h)
5	R→	C:	I found it really difficult.
6	3P→	V:	yes.
7	R→	C:	and I had then whenever you said something again uh I came back when you
8			were again with another body part
9	3P→	V:	mm=hm

Transcript 4.20: V=Verena, C=Christine. The first turn (I, lines 1-2) represents the V's reflective initiation question. V's following third positions (3P, lines 4, 6, 9) are all affirmative feedback to C's responses (R, lines 3, 5, 7).

Transcript 4.20 shows my initiation question again (lines 1-2) and the first part of the teacher/participant dyad (lines 3-9). Christine reflects on her meditation by evaluating it as difficult and detailing her difficulty with it (lines 3, 5, 7). My answers consist of affirming her account (lines 4, 6, 9). In the second turn, Christine answers the reflection question of whether her mind wandered during the meditation by saying "all the time" (line 3). I affirm her response in the third turn by saying "yes" (line 4). These first three turns illustrate the familiar 3-turn structure: initiation,

response, and third-position action. A clear distinction between initiation and third-position action is difficult since a third-position action such as 'simply affirming' can also be understood as a request to continue talking.

Second action: teacher's clarification question using a formulation

10	R→	C:	and then I decided ok now until the end it can't be that hard to	Mentions the focus of her attention
11			concentrate on it now and then I was gone again	
12	3P/I→	V:	mm=hm **when you say you were gone, where were you then?**	Clarification question about focus of attention

Transcript 4.21: V=Verena, C=Christine. C elaborates on her difficulty with concentration and mentions that she "was gone" (line 11). V's clarification question focuses on just this aspect of C's utterance and ignores the difficulty.

The next part of the teacher/participant continues in transcript 4.21 (lines 10-12). In it, Christine details her difficulty with concentration and says she was "gone again" (line 11). This indicates that she *noticed* that her mind was in thoughts, so I ask a clarification question to invite a further exploration of what exactly she noticed about the focus of her attention. My question does not address the difficulty she described but makes relevant the focus of Christine's perception. By echoing what Christine has said, I am using a 'formulation' in the sense that "[m]embers may, on occasion, formulate the sense or gist achieved thus far either in a conversation in toto or in some foregoing section of the conversation" (Heritage and Watson, 1980, p. 130).

Third action: Teacher's reflection question using a repositioned account

13	R→	C:	Oh, at all sorts of things. What I experienced today, then I briefly	
14			thought about this Lomi Lomi massage, so really everything yes? [so]	
15	3P→	V:	[mm=hm]	
16	R→	C:	it wasn't anything specific, really thousands of thoughts yes	Mentions experiential category „thoughts"
17	3P/I→	V:	mm=hm (1.1) **and (0.7) how- (1) that means you noticed that you had**	
18			**thoughts? (1.7)**	Clarification question about *noticing* thoughts
19	R→	C:	and how you then named another body part and then I went back again and	
20			then I was immediately- (1.7) so I also know that this is difficult for	
21			me	
22	3P→	V:	yes (1.1)	

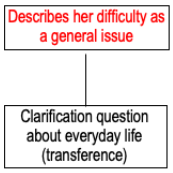
Transcript 4.22: V=Verena, C=Christine. C describes the contents of her thoughts which mentions the experiential category 'thoughts' (lines 13-16). V asks a clarification regarding *noticing* thoughts (lines 17-18). C again elaborates on her difficulty with the exercise (lines 19-21) which is again simply affirmed (line 22).

The third part of the teacher/participant continues in transcript 4.22 (lines 13-22). Christine

answers my question by describing the contents of her thoughts (lines 13-16). She also mentions that she had "thousands of thoughts" (line 16), using a wording that is not concerned with the topic of her thoughts but rather with thinking as an action, and perhaps an unwanted one, in this context. I ask a reflection question regarding the *noticing* of thoughts, something Christine had not mentioned directly. This is a repositioning of her account because Christine just talked about thoughts, but not about perceiving them *as* thoughts. Christine does not answer the question, but after a 1.7 second silence continues to elaborate on her difficulties with meditation and in specific relation to the instructions and their progressivity (lines 19-21). This time she mentions that this type of difficulty is familiar to her. I simply affirm her utterance and say nothing for 1.1 seconds (line 22).

Fourth action: Teacher proposing a candidate understanding

23	R→	C:	but I have now consciously- normally I am that [someone]	
24		Someone:	[((cough))]	
25		C:	who then says, no, it doesn't work anyway, but I'm now- well, when I	
26			really try to get involved now and but, that's incredibly difficult for	
27			me	
28	I→	V:	**so that means you know this also from [other]**	
29		C:	[mm=hm]	
30		V:	**areas of your life?**	
31		C:	mm	



Transcript 4.23: V=Verena, C=Christine. C describes her difficulty as familiar (lines 23-27). V asks a rhetorical clarification question about the familiarity of her difficulty, proposing a candidate understanding.

Transcript 4.23 shows the last part of the teacher/participant dyad (lines 23-31). Christine reinforces the description of her difficulty, again mentioning that it is a familiar issue (lines 23-27). For the first time, I now indirectly address her difficulties by asking about the familiarity of the issue "so that means you know this also from other areas of your life?" (lines 28-30). This question contains a formulation offering a possible interpretation of what Christine said, inviting agreement or correction. In CA terms, this question can be considered a 'candidate understanding' (see J. M. Atkinson and Heritage (1984, 320ff) for displays of understanding surrounding the particle 'oh'[5]). My question invites reflection and directs the attention away from the *description* of the difficulty towards the *recognition* of the difficulty. 'Generalising to

[5]There is currently a debate surrounding epistemics in CA; for a more recent view around epistemics and *oh* consider e.g. Drew (2018).

everyday life' is another common objective in MBSR. It can be understood as transferring the insights from meditation to other areas of life.

Teacher/participant summary

In summary, the teacher/participant dyad consisted of Christine repeatedly mentioning the difficulty of having thoughts, whereas my turns consisted of affirmations, and questions that contained formulations which influenced the direction of the conversation toward the MBSR objective of 'noticing thoughts'. In the first part of the dyad, I encouraged Christine to keep talking by responding neutrally and affirmatively (cp. Stivers (2008)). Then, as soon as Christine mentions that her attention was "gone" (line 11), I ask her to clarify where it was. When she mentions that she had "thousands of thoughts" (line 16), I ask her whether she noticed that she had thoughts. When she does not answer the question but instead mentions that this difficulty is familiar (lines 23-25), I ask her to confirm or correct the gist of my understanding. My questions were grounded in what Christine said, however, they did not pick up Christine's pressing issue that 'having thoughts is difficult' but gradually tried steering the dialogue towards '*noticing* thoughts'. The subject (or phenomenological map) of the 'inquiry' at this point is 'thoughts'. However, there is a negotiation between Christine and me about what is most relevant regarding 'thoughts' as the *object of study*. Whilst Christine's subjective experience during meditation contained the experience of difficulty, the joint exploration, through subtle repositioning of her account, shifts the focus towards other nuances of her experience. This turns Christine's subjective experience into an intersubjective object of study. In the next subsection, I describe how I address the whole group with a third-position action regarding this object of study.

4.5.5 (III) Third position action: mindfulness lesson

Third-position action describes the third phase of the 'inquiry' project, after the initiation by the teacher and the teacher/participant dyad. In the dyad that was discussed in the previous subsection, the intersubjective object of study has emerged as 'thoughts' and Christine has repeatedly described her subjective difficulties with having thoughts. I now address the whole group with

a third position action. Transcript 4.24 shows the third position action of the 'inquiry' (lines 32-35).

32	3P→	V:	mm=hm (1.9) yes (0.6) well you just saw, everyone raised their hand, I	Teaching: *noticing thoughts* = goal of exercise, normalises difficulty, includes group
33			can raise my hand too, it doesn't stop (soft laughter) so that is- the	
34			um (0.6) meditation is not, ah I sit there and have no thoughts (0.6)	
35			but meditation is, ah again a thought, ah another one, ah another(h)	

Transcript 4.24: Lines 32-35 show my third position action response to Christine that address the whole group. I normalise Christine's difficulty of having thoughts by showing that everyone has thoughts, and that the goal of the exercise is simply *noticing* thoughts.

Firstly, I again affirm Christine's utterance (line 32). After a silence of 1.9 seconds, I draw attention to the fact that apparently everyone–including myself–had experienced mind wandering during the body scan (lines 32-33). It is a way of addressing Christine's difficulty through a kind of normalisation, as the whole group and I as teacher are all experiencing the same difficulty of wandering thoughts. It produces mind wandering as a normal and expectable trouble. Similarly to the initiation question, this alludes to the self compassion component of common humanity, that all humans share similar difficulties. In the next sentence I explain that meditation is not about not having thoughts, but on the contrary, it is about *noticing* thoughts (lines 34-35). With this I base my mindfulness teaching on the intersubjective object of study that has emerged in the dialogue in which Christine shared her subjective experience. The concludes the three phases of the 'inquiry' project of initiation, teacher/participant dyad, and third position action.

4.5.6 (Subsequent) teacher/participant dyad

36	R→	C:	but then I don't want to let it happen, because I think, that can't be	Describes resistance to difficulty
37			so difficult now, that you just stay with it, yes?	
38	3P/I→	V:	mm=hm **that means, there is immediately also (1.5) a judgement?**	Clarification question uses a formulation to describe resistance
39		C:	mm=hm (0.9)	
40	3P/I→	V:	mm=hm (1.3) and (0.5) that is (2) [(2.7) **so how do you notice that you**	Clarification question
41			**are in thought?**]	
42		Outside:	[((Traffic noise))	
43			]	
44	R→	C:	because I'm thinking about something else	

Transcript 4.25: Another teacher/participant dyad that illustrates how C's resistance to difficulty is repositioned in terms of her *relationship to* said difficulty, rather than addressing the difficulty itself

Transcript 4.25 shows another teacher/participant dyad that occurs after the mindfulness lesson (lines 36-44). This is another example of the use of a formulation. Christine describes

her resistance towards her difficulty with staying focused during the meditation (lines 36-37). I reply with a reflection question "that means there is immediately also (1.5) a judgement" (line 38). "Judgement" is a formulation that focuses Christine's description away from engaging with the specifics of her difficulty. It is an invitation to reflect upon and notice the relationship with her experience, rather than engage with the experience itself. Overcoming 'resistance to difficulty' is a central theme in MBSR. In ethnomethodological terms resistance can be considered an interactional accomplishment (Humă, Joyce, and Raymond, 2023) as we shall see. I will revisit the topic of resistance more fully in chapter 6.

The 'inquiry' that I just discussed as an example is from a course I taught as a novice teacher. I am aware that this is not the gold standard of MBSR inquiry. For example, I could have empathised with Christine's difficulty a lot earlier in the conversation, or used silences more instead of clarification questions. This might have given Christine more autonomy in coming to her own conclusions. However, the linguistic mechanism I described of jointly transforming a subjective account into an intersubjective object of study that is then used to teach mindfulness, is universal across MBSR 'inquiry' (see e.g. Stanley and Longden (2016)). So in line with ethnomethodology, I could have used any 'inquiry' sequence to illustrate what is unique about MBSR inquiry. I chose this particular sequence because it occurred very early in the course, with the simple learning theme of 'noticing thoughts', and where the participant did not immediately align with the shift of focus from discussing the difficulty itself to discussing the relationship with her difficulty. In the next subsection, I will summarise the entire 'inquiry project'.

4.5.7 Transformation of experience in inquiry

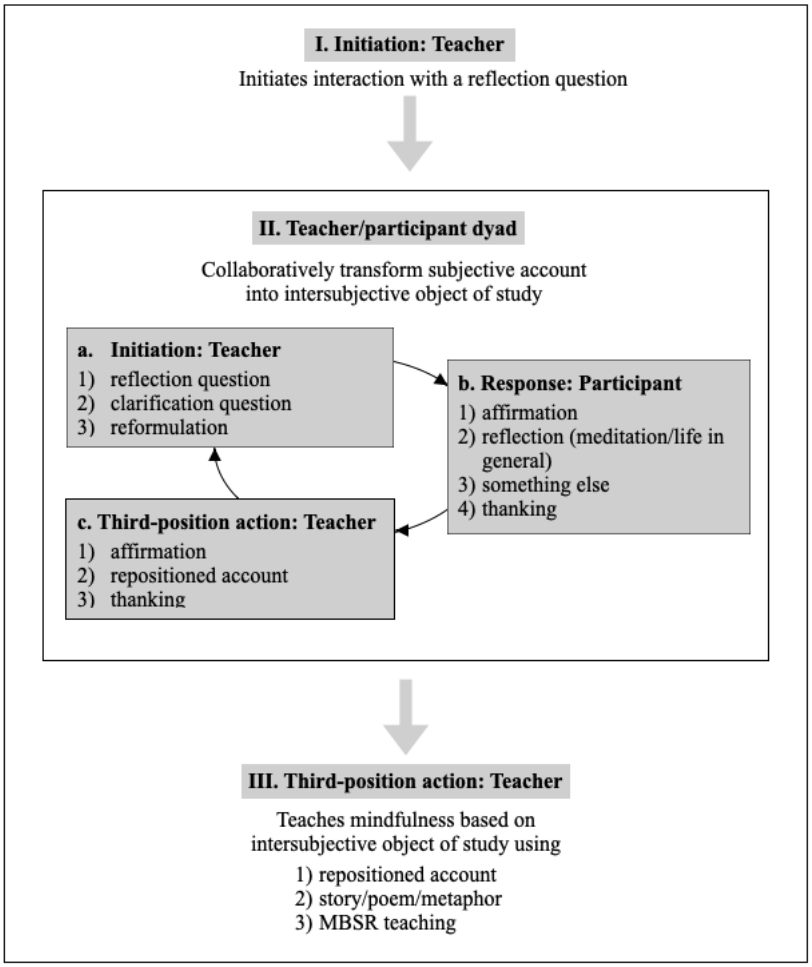


Figure 4.26: Transformation of experience in inquiry. I. Initiation: The teacher initiates the interaction. II. Teacher/participant dyad: Within the dyad, the interlocutors follow the same structure (I-R-3P). III. Third position action: The teacher then ends the interaction by teaching mindfulness based on the participant's account.

Figure 4.26 illustrates the three phases of the 'inquiry' project in MBSR: (1) the teacher initiates the interaction by inviting the group to share their experiences of the meditation or home practice, (2) the teacher and a participant engage in a dialogue where they collaboratively transform the participant's subjective account into an intersubjective object of study, and (3) the teacher subtly adapts what was said and integrates it into their teaching of mindfulness. This sequence of interactions reflects a process of transforming personal experience into a shared learning opportunity.

To elaborate, the teacher begins the interaction by posing a reflective question (phase I: ini-

tiation). This question prompts the participant to reflect on their personal experience from the meditation or home practice. In phase II, a teacher/participant dyad, teacher and participant engage in a conversation structured by an initiation-response-third position sequence (I-R-3P). In this structure, the teacher initiates with a question, the participant responds by sharing their subjective experience, and the teacher follows with a third-position action. During this dyadic exchange, the teacher's initiation (I) and their third-position action (3P) often overlap. As the participant shares their experience, the teacher guides the conversation with reflection and clarification questions. These tend to focus away from the content of a experiential category towards the relationship with said category[6]. For example the conversation might move away from engaging with specific thoughts to perceiving thoughts as such. Through this process, the initially personal and subjective account is collaboratively transformed into an intersubjective object of study. This transformation occurs as the teacher reframes or reformulates the participant's account and subtly steers the conversation towards mindfulness themes. Finally, in phase III (third position action) the teacher integrates the participant's transformed experience into a broader mindfulness teaching.

This three-turn sequence resembles interactions found in educational settings, where a teacher asks a question, the student answers, and the teacher provides feedback or correction (Koole, 2013). However, in the MBSR context, the participant's response is subjective rather than objective, and there is no 'correct' answer. The goal is not to correct the participant but to allow new perspectives on their subjective experiences. This collaborative transformation of experience in MBSR 'inquiry' is similar to the transformation of experience that occurs in psychotherapy (e.g. Peräkylä (2019)).

4.6 Conclusion to the chapter

At the beginning of this chapter, I introduced MBSR and 'inquiry' in a way that allowed the reader to 'follow along' with first time participants who were new to the practice, similar to how

[6] 'Bound' actions (such as asking a question/doing an initiation for example) can also be done by the 'wrong' category (Jimenez and Smith, 2021)

Garfinkel, Lynch, and Livingston (1981) introduced the construction of a pulsar discovery to readers. In section 4.2, I provided a detailed account of an MBSR course that I facilitated, describing the physical setup of the room and its atmosphere. I included transcripts of participants' introductions in which they shared that they attended the course for stress relief and self-care. They volunteered personal and vulnerable information, displaying and producing openness and trust. As the course leader, I framed the expectations for the course, which would be to cultivate a relationship with 'what is' and emphasised that this would include an acceptance of difficulties. I said that "all these catastrophes that accompany you in life will continue to accompany you" (transcript 4.7), using the same choice of words as Jon Kabat-Zinn in his book on MBSR "Full catastrophe living" (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). This framing of the course aligns both with the Buddhist understanding that 'all life is suffering' and the critique of therapeutic cultures that normalises suffering as inevitable. Moreover, my framing of the course (and MBSR) suggests that the solution is not to get rid of suffering but to transform one's relationship to difficulties: "all these frustrations that you are exposed to, they continue, but what might change is the way I deal with them, the way I relate to myself, namely more gently and kindly" (transcript 4.7). In section 4.3, I shared a transcript of how I framed 'inquiry' for participants. I emphasised that 'inquiry' is a place for self discovery rather than for advice: "the basic attitude is what everyone carries wisdom within themselves, so everyone knows for themselves what is best" (transcript 4.8). I also explained that 'inquiry' is a one-on-one dialogue rather than a group discussion which includes silences to allow time for reflection. The participants picked this format up easily in the first 'inquiry' of the course that followed a guided yoga practice.

In the second part of the chapter (in subsection 4.4), I conducted a conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974) of these initial 'inquiry' sequences, identifying four foundational elements, namely sequence organisation, phenomenological mapping, objectives and preference organisation. With regard to *sequence organisation*, I identified a three turn structure of 'inquiry' of initiation-response-third position (Peräkylä, 1997), see also Crane, Stanley, et al. (2015). The teacher typically initiates 'inquiry' with a reflection question (e.g. "What did you experience during this short exercise of standing and raising your arms?"), a partic-

ipant self selects and describes her experience (e.g. a difficulty of feeling her feet), and then the teacher replies with a third position, e.g. with a clarification question (e.g. "What did you feel? In the feet?"), (see transcript 4.12). *Phenomenological mapping* refers how the teacher and the participant collaboratively create an map of the inner lived experiences of the participant. 'Phenomenological' alludes to the fact that it focuses on the *direct experience* and precludes preconceived notions. The present participle 'mapping' refers to how this activity is happening in the present moment and includes current experiences. The map that is co-accomplished in 'inquiry' is guided by questions of the teacher and often contains reformulations. A common reformulation is the depersonalisation of possessive determiners. So when the participant talks about "*my* feet", I as the course leader talk about "*the* feet" in my next turn. Stanley and Longden (2016) also describe this linguistic phenomenon in MBSR 'inquiry'. Next, I focused on *objectives of 'inquiry'*. Briefly these are to teach the course themes through dialogue. Specifically, in the short three-turn 'inquiry' sequence of my analysis, I showed how they addressed two common MBSR objectives, namely (1) noticing and exploring bodily sensations (closely related to 'phenomenological mapping'), and (2) turning towards difficulty with curiosity. The emphasis here is on the attitudes with which these objectives are achieved, such as without judgment and with curiosity. Lastly, *preference organisation* refers to how 'inquiry' achieves a dialogical atmosphere of agreement and allowing. Firstly, the teacher mainly agrees with the participant's answers, even when they describe difficulties with the exercise itself. Everything is welcome and can become a foundation for exploration. So rather than turning away from a difficulty, the teacher invites the participant to turn towards it and explore its various facets. For example, the participant expressed a difficulty in feeling sensations in her feet, and I—in the role of the course leader—invited her to explore this 'lack of sensation'. Linguistically this was achieved by agreeing with her descriptive statements, asking clarification questions and using formulations. Secondly, silences in 'inquiry' are often used as productive tool in the sense that they offer time for the participant to reflect upon their experience. In other conversations and contexts, silences tend to be dispreferred (Kendrick and Torreira, 2015). Even in MBSR, they can be uncomfortable, both for the teacher and for participants. However, in the context of 'inquiry'

silences provide opportunities for deeper reflections.

Lastly in section 4.5, I drew comparisons between the transformation of experience that occurs in MBSR 'inquiry' and in psychotherapy (Peräkylä, 2019), see subsection 4.5.7 for a short summary. This illustrated how MBSR 'inquiry' mirrors certain therapeutic conversation patterns, thus situating it within the larger context of therapeutic interaction. For a practical example of this transformative process, see the next chapter, subsection 5.4.2.

In the next chapter, I will focus on another key component of 'inquiry': the embodiment of mindfulness by the MBSR teacher. In order to gain insight into this inner dimension, I will present transcripts of an MBSR teacher training course in which participants discuss their embodiment of mindfulness whilst learning to teach MBSR.

Chapter 5

Embodying mindfulness and teaching

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to establish this foundational role of embodying mindfulness in teaching MBSR, particularly with regard to 'inquiry'. This chapter is divided into two parts: the first part explores the role of embodying mindfulness through focus group data and the second part introduces 'embodied teaching' in the context of an MBSR teacher training course. In the context of MBSR, embodiment refers to the teacher's ability to embody mindfulness through their presence, actions, and language. This "is communicated in the class through the teacher demonstrating it in action within the process of the teaching: the teachers themselves are in the mode that participants are being invited to experiment with. This process of 'embodiment' is a key feature of the teaching in a mindfulness-based class; it influences every aspect of the delivery of MBSR/MBCT and, thus, consequently, the training of the teachers who will be delivering it." (Crane, Kuyken, et al., 2010, p. 78). Teaching MBSR is not simply a matter of instructing participants but of embodying the principles of mindfulness whilst teaching.

In the first part of the chapter, I introduce the role of this type of embodiment from a teacher's perspective by drawing on focus group data from novice teachers (section 5.2) and citing MBSR teacher manuals (section 5.2.2).

The second part of this chapter focuses on 'embodied teaching' and draws on data I collected

as participant observer in a teacher training course. In section 5.3, I provide the context for the teacher training course from which I collected my data, focusing particularly on the 'day of practice' when novice teachers practised guiding meditations and leading 'inquiry' for the first time. In section 5.4, I discuss the expectations for the group on the day of practice and introduce the theme of 'embodied participation'. This highlights how mindfulness, in the context of teaching, is both a personal experience and an interactive process. Furthermore, I describe how the embodiment of mindfulness is collaboratively achieved when a student-teacher conducts an 'inquiry' with the group. In section 5.5 I focus on the feedback the student-teacher provides and receives for their guided meditation and 'inquiry'. Due to the learning situation, the embodiment of mindfulness is made explicit by the student-teacher and the individuals providing feedback. This allows for a closer analysis of how mindfulness is embodied in teaching moments, particularly during 'inquiry' when the teacher's role shifts from guiding a meditation to listening and reflecting the group's experiences. In section 5.6 I discuss further feedback for the student-teacher's performance. Here the course leader's third-position action not only serves as feedback for the student-teacher, it is also a mindfulness lesson for the group. This shows that the same process applies during MBSR and during MBSR teacher training–the course leader uses the learning situation to model 'inquiry'. Finally, in section 5.7, I summarise the main findings of this chapter. I extend the framework–previously focused on sequence organisation, phenomenological mapping, objectives, and preference organisation–by adding 'embodying mindfulness' as another critical dimension of inquiry.

5.2 The role of embodying mindfulness: perspectives from novice teachers and training manuals

This section introduces the role of embodying mindfulness for MBSR teachers in their own words and through the words of teacher manuals. Firstly, in subsection 5.2.1 I will provide the perspectives of student teachers by presenting data from my focus group. Specifically, I will discuss the student teachers' motivations for attending the teacher training course and their take-

aways from the course after completing it. Additionally, I will briefly share their impressions of a first time teaching experience. Secondly, in subsection 5.2.2, I briefly discuss the 'embodiment of mindfulness' as it is commonly presented in manuals for MBSR teachers.

5.2.1 Embodying mindfulness as a teacher

In this subsection, I share some data from my focus group to introduce the subject of embodying mindfulness as a teacher and whilst teaching. Specifically, I present what participants from the foundational teacher training course shared as their motivation to participate in the training and what they ultimately took away from the course. I am only looking at the first question of our first meeting (why are you here?) and the first question of our last meeting (what are you taking away from the course?). See appendix C for full transcripts of both questions with everyone's complete answers. The answers cited in the text below are highlighted in the appendix.

Motivations for attending the teacher training course: why are you here?

33 year old Daniel shared his reasons of why he had embarked on a journey to become an MBSR teacher: "I got deeper and deeper into [mindfulness], so to speak, and simply realised that for me um it's like- like a kind of healing and that I also want to combine it with my professional context" (lines 97-101, appendix C.1). His argumentation that he personally benefitted from mindfulness practice in a deep way and because of this wanted to use it professionally was shared by the other three members of the focus group, Ava, Bea, and Carina (all four names changed for anonymity). All five of us were close in age. I had recruited these four participants from a group of around twenty who had just started their MBSR teacher training. The training consisted of two courses that could be booked separately: first a "foundational teacher training" with a focus on embodying mindfulness, and then an "advanced teacher training" with a focus on teaching MBSR. The first focus group meeting took place after they had a first short introductory session to their teacher training. We were allowed to stay in the room after the others had left. We were sat in a circle on the wooden floor on meditation cushions, under the watchful eyes of a child-sized Buddha stature that stood tall against a bright orange wall in an otherwise empty

and unadorned room (see figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Location of the foundational teacher training course, where I was allowed to meet with my focus group. The four participants and I sat in a circle on the floor on meditation cushions.

After they had signed their consent forms, I asked about their motivation to participate in the teacher training course. All four of them openly shared how mindfulness had helped them in difficult circumstances and how this teacher training course was an opportunity to deepen their own practice. The wish to possibly teach was not borne foremost from an expansion of career options but from being able to offer something to others that they had experienced as valuable in their own lives. Bea said ”on the one hand I would like to deepen what is valuable for me even more and because I can possibly imagine that it will be a way to pass it on” (lines 43-45, appendix C.1). Carina said ”I thought, hey this basic training is a way to deepen this for myself for now. But I can definitely imagine passing it on later. So somehow since then it’s kind of also a heartfelt wish to pass it on, because it did me so much good” (lines 68-73, appendix C.1). What is interesting about their accounts is that teaching appeared to be almost an afterthought to deepening their own practice.

Learnings from the teacher training course: what are you taking away from the course?

In our final focus group meeting the participants discussed the impact the foundational teacher training had on their lives and whether or not they considered signing up for the advanced teacher

training. The last meeting took place in a restaurant. We were sat outside with traffic noise of cars and trams in the background. The four participants had just completed the last module of their foundational training and said goodbye to the other participants from the course. This meant that it would also be the last time the five of us would come together as a group. I asked the question: "What did you take away from the whole training programme?" Below are some statements that capture the essence of their answers. They were given in the context of a longer conversation, see appendix C, transcript C.2.

DANIEL: "I have the feeling that I have embarked and am still embarking on a journey where I am, let's just say, packing in more and more that has to do with mindfulness. So it's becoming more and more a part of me, of my identity, which on the one hand fulfils me and on the other hand I'm just looking, okay, there are still areas - when it comes to work, I've already changed, that was also a reason. So, because I did this training here, I've already changed my job, where I have less responsibility, where I have less stress." (lines 111-117, appendix C.2)

AVA: "Also this bond with the group and somehow, as I said, it doesn't feel like a separation or an end, but simply a path that we are walking together. Even if I might not see some of them as often, it's still a bond. [...] For me, it's always an expansion with every area, what you discover about yourself in terms of mindfulness and what you discover together with other people. It's just something much, much more amazing, where you say "Wow, there's always more". (lines 25-28, 39-41, appendix C.2)

BEA: "Well, I can see the heaviness that I have in my life or the baggage and yet I've been able to find something inside for myself, like I've found more of my strength. So, I don't know, I feel like I've suddenly realised my strength. And I'm so radiant, I don't know. [...] And the whole training programme has enriched me a lot overall. I would say that I've been very enriched and grateful." (lines 54-57, 69-70, appendix C.2)

CARINA: "When I look back at all the modules, yes, it was like an accompaniment to, yes, my life. [...] So, I was very emotional today because I'm thinking about resigning. I've been carrying that around with me for a long time (18 sec) yes, and

somehow through mindfulness or the modules, I got closer and closer to myself and realised more and more, okay, what you're doing doesn't feel good." (lines 95-97, appendix C.2)

Daniel and Carina both had changed or were in the process of changing their jobs and directly attributed this to the teacher training course. Daniel said "[mindfulness] is becoming more and more a part of me, of my identity" and Carina said "through mindfulness or the modules, I got closer and closer to myself". These descriptions in which mindfulness has touched the very core of their identity could be interpreted as 'embodying mindfulness'. Ava and Bea both described the significant personal growth they experienced, which for Ava has a lot to do with feeling connected to the people who share her path. In their accounts mindfulness seems to be less about something you *do* but more something you *are*. Bea appears to summarise the gist of these responses when she discusses the meaning of mindfulness later in the interview:

BEA: "So, mindfulness is not somehow 3 to 4 pm, it's your whole life. It permeates all areas of life and, of course, you practise it in a certain area and then you take it with you into other areas. And this also helps you to shape your own life with this principle, I would say."

All four participants said that they considered signing up for the advanced training.

Experiencing the embodiment of mindfulness whilst teaching for the first time

In the last module of the foundational teacher training course, the participants were given the opportunity to guide a meditation for the group. In our last focus group meeting, Carina and Daniel shared their insights about their experience.

CARINA: "I found it the most exciting module for me because it was about guiding others, in small groups. And I perceived myself in a completely different way during those minutes we had there and found it really exciting. [...] So, the first steps. And it's quite different when you have to speak yourself than when you hear it. And I found it

very exciting to observe how much comes from the head and how much comes from the gut, in other words, how much really comes from within. And how much comes across to others, even if you are unsure. That this is also present. And, yes, I think that was the most valuable realisation of the module." (lines 74-89, appendix C.2)

DANIEL: "I also found this perspective of actually teaching very exciting. So, also this-. So, this physical experience. So, guiding that. Well, I found it very, very strange for me at the beginning. Well, I somehow felt a very strong connection. Even stronger than when I usually just listen and then join in. More so because I was really the creator. So, I found that a very impressive experience." (lines 129-134, appendix C.2)

Daniel and Carina described their experience of guiding a meditation for the group. They specifically referred to the embodiment of mindfulness while guiding others. Carina "found it very exciting to observe how much comes from the head and how much comes from the gut" which alludes to an internal awareness in the process of teaching. Similarly, Daniel noted how guiding the meditation created a stronger sense of connection than when simply participating. Both Carina and Daniel's accounts highlight that teaching mindfulness involves a connection with one's inner experience, where the teacher becomes both the facilitator and participant in the practice.

Co-accomplishing 'embodying mindfulness' during the interview

The focus group interviews have an inquiry-like quality to them in the sense that the participants spoke to a large extent about their inner experience when I asked questions about the course. The way I asked questions also resembles MBSR 'inquiry' even if I did not specifically ask about their inner experience, my questions were often interpreted as such. I often did not know what exercise they were talking about but learned a lot about how they felt about it. As an example, consider the first short dialogue from the second focus group interview in transcript 5.2 below. The second meeting with my focus group took place at an outside restaurant on the side of a noisy road with the tram passing every couple of minutes. We were sat around a table ready to

order food and eat lunch together.

	Second meeting with the focus group, first question
1	**Verena:** so what is perhaps present for you right now after the- um after the three
2	days? (9)
3	**Carina:** so for me it's basically first of all that it's incredibly good to um focus
4	on the body
5	**Verena:** So it was mainly body-based now?
6	**Carina:** exactly, so it was yoga and um body awareness as a topic and because my
7	everyday life is so overly intellectual and I have to think so much ((laughing)) um
8	I find it totally relaxing
9	**Verena:** hm=hm
10	**Carina:** getting more into feeling, being more in the body (2.5) and I also notice
11	how the thoughts become calmer

Transcript 5.2: Excerpt from the beginning of the second focus group meeting. The dialogue has inquiry-style features.

My clarification question ”it was mainly body-focused now?” refers to the overall theme of the weekend as I was not aware of the contents of the module beforehand—it does not refer to Carina’s inner experience. It is still easy to map the four dimensions of ‘inquiry’ onto this dialogue (see section 4.4.5 in the previous chapter). The sequence organisation in transcript 5.2 is a three turn structure of initiation - response - third-position action, my question is geared towards noticing and exploring a present moment awareness, and Carina shares her phenomenological landscape. In terms of preference organisation there are two long pauses in the dialogue, one after my initial question (line 2) and one while Carina is speaking (line 10). Rather than being perceived as dispreferred, these silences appear to allow time for inner reflection. Notice how Carina as an experienced meditator does not use personal pronouns when describing her experience and instead talks about *the* body and *the* thoughts. The similarity to ‘inquiry’ in the style of speaking is a fascinating observation and indicates how members in the MBSR teacher community talk to each other. I have decided to explore this manner of speaking further because it allows a potential insight into a quality that might be related to this way of speaking: the embodiment of mindfulness. Whilst it might certainly be enlightening to analyse my interview data for this purpose, I have decided to use data from the advanced teacher training course instead. Firstly, it is naturally occurring language data in a setting in which all participants have completed the basic training that focused on embodying mindfulness. Secondly, I was a participant observer and can analyse interactions which I was not part in. For similar reasons, I decided not to use the seven individual interviews from this cohort for further analysis either. These interviews

were more reflective and allow to learn about their individual journeys on the path of becoming MBSR teachers. However, I realised that an analysis of this interview data was out of scope for this thesis.

5.2.2 Mindfulness is caught rather than taught

> ”The phrase ‘Mindfulness is caught rather than taught’ captures the sense that it is both through *what* we are taught, and through *how* we are taught that learning happens. […] We recognise the truth of Maya Angelou’s words: ”I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel”. We recognise that people who have completed a Mindfulness-Based Programme (MBP) course leave with a toolbox of practices (the explicit elements), *and* they will take away memories of mindful connection, of living in alignment with values, and of caring about themselves, others, and the wider world (the implicit elements).” (Crane, Griffith, and Karunavira, 2021, p. 1).

In the previous section, I presented the focus group responses of four participants in a basic MBSR teacher training course, that highlighted how mindfulness began to touch deeper aspects of their identities. Their reflections illustrate a shift from simply *doing* mindfulness to *being* mindful. This aligns with Crane, Griffith, and Karunavira (2021)’s description of the implicit elements of MBSR teaching, which facilitate integrating mindfulness into daily life. Teaching mindfulness involves more than just instructing–it requires a way of *being* in the world. Teaching manuals such as *The mindfulness teaching guide: Essential skills and competencies for teaching mindfulness-based interventions* suggest that ”[b]eing a good teacher is therefore about adequately managing your own inner territory, meaning all of the elements of your inner life: your perceptions, ideas, thoughts, and pragmatic consciousness, and even your tendencies in reacting and responding.” (Brandsma, 2017, p. 323). Moreover, the MBI:TAC (The Bangor, Exeter & Oxford Mindfulness-Based Interventions Teaching Assessment Criteria) assesses teacher competence in five domains, one of which is the ‘embodiment of mindfulness’:

> ”Five key features need to be considered in assessing this domain: (i) Present moment focus - expressed through behaviour and verbal and non verbal communication, (ii) Present moment responsiveness - to internal and external experience, (iii) Calm & vitality - simultaneously conveying steadiness, ease, non-reactivity, and alertness, (iv) Attitudinal foundations: - conveying mindfulness practice through the teacher's way of being, (v) Person of the teacher - the learning is conveyed through the teacher's way of being” (Crane, Soulsby, et al., 2021, 17f.).

This is why teacher training places place such high value on developing these inner qualities. The ability to embody mindfulness in the process of teaching it is considered essential.

> ”The depth of experience that teachers have in exploring their own personal process through their mindfulness practice and through other personal development processes is thus held to be directly related to their ability to 'meet' the participants in a mindfulness-based class in this radically new way, thus creating a space in which participants can inquire into the actuality of their experience with compassion and free from the constraints of the inevitable ideas that arise about what could or should be happening.” (Crane, Kuyken, et al., 2010, p. 78)

In the next section, I will introduce the context of an advanced teacher training course where the focus is more on teaching the *explicit* MBSR practices, such as guiding meditations and leading the 'inquiry'. In part II of this chapter (subsections 5.4 and 5.6), I will then analyse a learning situation from the advanced teacher training course to explore how teachers themselves understand the embodiment of mindfulness in the context of teaching.

5.3 Context: teacher training course and a day of practice

5.3.1 Teacher training course location

The training facility was located within walking distance from the main train station. The road had a calm sense of liveliness about it. Traffic consisted of mainly bikes and occasional cars.

There was a steady but never crowded flow of people on the pavement. The road was lined with trees and town houses that had their sometimes beautifully adorned entrance doors right on the pavement. In between the residential buildings was a random mix of corner shops, cafes, bakeries, fruit and vegetable shops, and appliance stores. The entrance door to the training facility was painted in a weary blue with the top half consisting of flowery metal ornaments. In the same style as the surrounding residential buildings, the entrance looked completely inconspicuous. It was easy to walk past it to look for something with a more official character. Even the door bell—which you had to ring to get in—did not have the name of the training facility on it. It was definitely necessary to read the information email carefully before arriving. The entrance door led through a short hallway into a small backyard that was wonderfully overgrown with all sorts of green plants and colourful flowers. In this backyard there was a separate entrance to the training facility that led into an entry area with coat racks. From there, a narrow spiral staircase led to a downstairs area with two toilets, a storage room, and a treatment room with a massage couch. To left of the entry area was the meditation room, protected by a stubborn wooden door that was hard to close and would spring open forcefully if the handle was pushed down without holding the door back. The other end of the meditation room opened to yet another small and equally overgrown and enchanted backyard. Both, the room and the backyard, contained some Buddhist artefacts as decorative elements. The room was completely silent apart from birds chirping away passionately (the volume effected by whether the windows were open or closed), the occasional door bell of late comers or misguided mail carriers, and bathroom goers who underestimated the obstinacy of the door with the stubborn handle.

I had two audio recorders that I placed in the room. I was sitting in the back, so I placed one near where I was sitting. I placed another recorder near where the trainer was sitting. I hit record 10-15 minutes before each session in the morning and switched it off for the lunch break. I let the recorders just continue through the short morning and afternoon breaks. This allowed me to be fully present with the course and I oftentimes completely forgot about the recorders. That is also something that some of the participants reported back to me. Even the course leader said that she forgot about me not being a 'regular' participant. See figures 5.3 and 5.4 for pictures of

Figure 5.3: Picture of the meditation room during a break, taken from the back left corner of the room where I was sitting.

Figure 5.4: Meditation room, again pictured from my seat during a break. The group leaders were sitting at in the middle of the wall with the windows, everyone else was in a U shape. To their left there was a small kitchen counter with a sink and a kettle to make tea (not pictured).

the meditation room, both taken from my seat during a break.

5.3.2 Teacher training course: context and module two

Context of the teacher training course

The advanced teacher training course consisted of three modules that were six days, five days and four days long, respectively. During the first module, the entire MBSR curriculum was recapitulated, with a thorough discussion of background information, the various meditation practices, and the 'inquiry' phase. Participants practised leading guided meditations and 'inquiry' in small groups. In the second module, each one of the nine MBSR sessions was again discussed by considering group processes in general, details regarding 'inquiry', and current research literature. Participants practised leading guided meditations and 'inquiry' with the whole group. In the third module, the contents of the MBSR workbook were discussed as well as contra-indications to meditation, and ethical and Buddhist foundations of MBSR. Days were typically long, beginning at 9 in the morning and finishing at 8 or 9 in the evening. With a schedule resembling a non-residential meditation retreat, there was little time to do anything else during the teacher training. The group exuded a friendly atmosphere that was characterised by laughter, personal conversations during the short coffee breaks or two-hour lunch breaks, and the level of trust and openness that arises in spaces where people are vulnerable with each other. As time went on, I felt personally connected with the participants of the group. I sometimes participated in group exercises to even out the numbers and at other times sat with the course leaders Marlene and Thomas to chat with them or to take notes.

Module two and the 'day of practice'

The interactions I will describe in this chapter and the next took place in the middle of the second module. By this time the participants had spend almost an entire week together in the first module and were on their third day together in this module. See figure 5.5 for an overview of the three modules and the temporal location of my transcripts within the second module. On

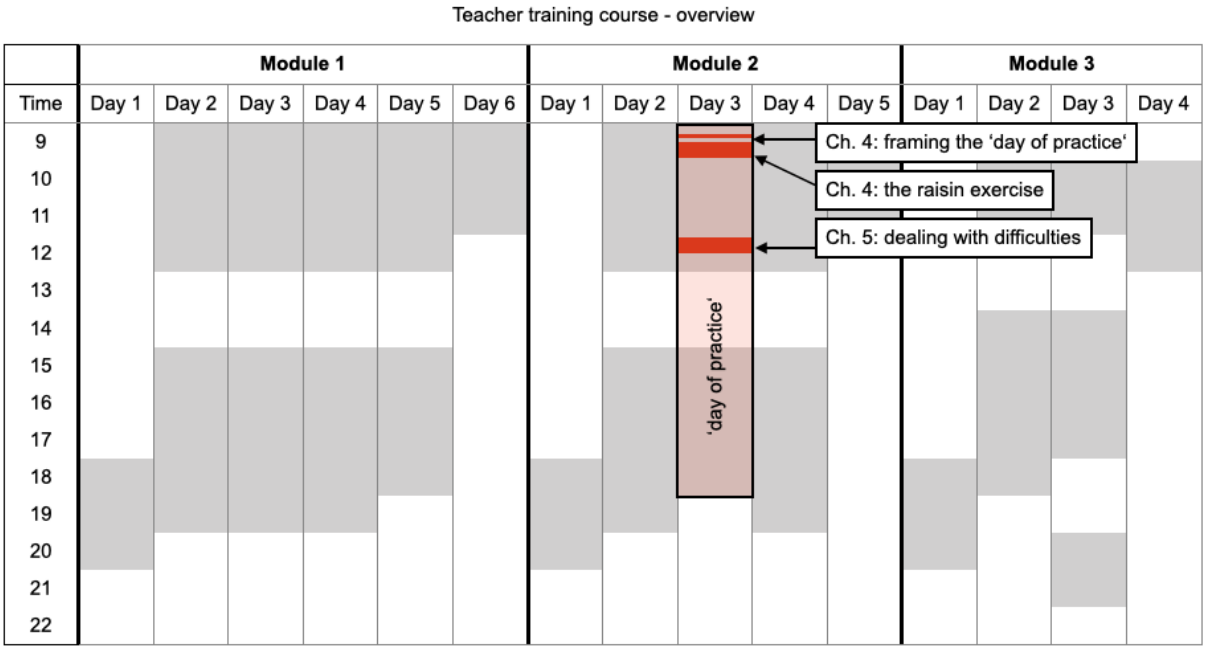


Figure 5.5: Overview of the three modules of the teacher training course. The 'day of practice' took place on the third day of the second module (highlighted in red). This chapter will discuss how the day was framed by the course leader and how a student teacher guided the group through the raisin exercise. The next chapter 6 will discuss how a student teacher guided the group through the course theme 'dealing with difficulties'.

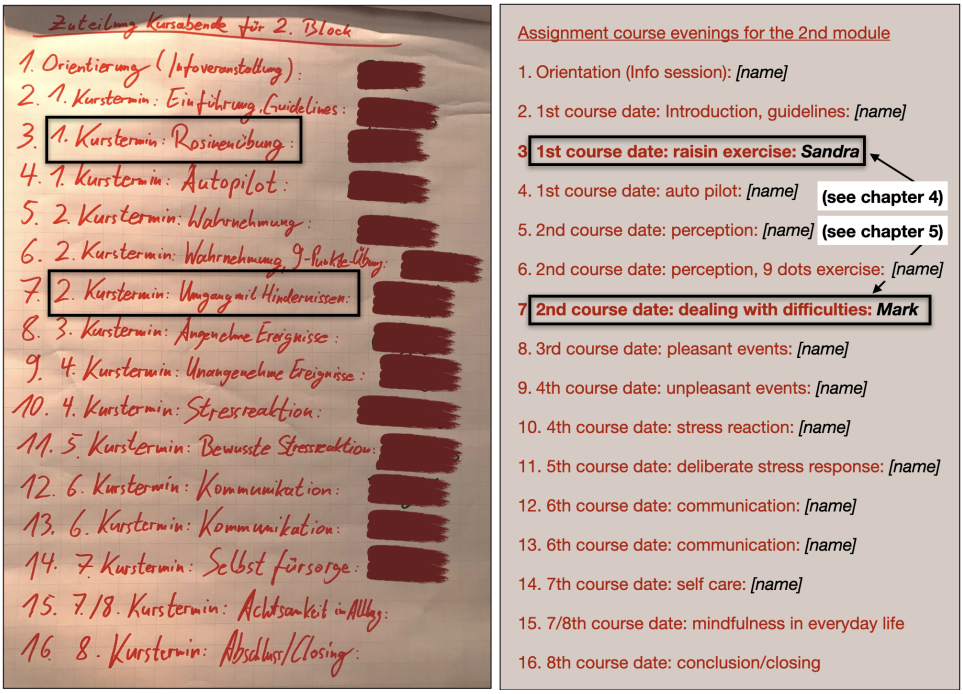


Figure 5.6: Timetable for the 'day of practice' with course themes and the names of the assigned participants. Left: photograph of the flip chart in German (names are crossed out). Right: English translation (with pseudonyms). Sandra's guidance of the raisin exercise is discussed in this chapter and Marks guidance of 'dealing with difficulties' is discussed in the next chapter 6.

the second day of module two, participants practised the 'inquiry' phase in several small group exercises. The group learned that the Four Noble Truths in Buddhism may serve as a scaffolding during 'inquiry' for the teacher. This refers to the insights MBSR course participants may gain during the 'inquiry'. The Four Noble Truths are explained in chapter 2 (see section 2.3, page 21). In this context, they may roughly be summarised as (1) there is suffering (and we might as well accept it), (2) we suffer because we desire a certain outcome, (3) the way to overcome this type of suffering is to no longer desire a certain outcome, (4) insight meditation is a way out of suffering because instead of wanting something to be a specific way, we simply explore the details of the experience. With this context in mind, the next day, the participants guided a meditation and 'inquiry' for the entire group. Said next day—the third day of the module—was dedicated to a full day of practice and feedback that was prepared in advance. On the day itself, each participant had 20 minutes to guide a meditation and 'inquiry'. This was followed by 15 minutes of feedback that included a self reflection and feedback by the participants and the course leader. Each participant had been assigned one of the core themes of MBSR in the previous module and had two and half months to prepare their short 20-minutes session. Figure 5.6 is a picture of the flip chart with all of the themes and the assigned names. The second day ended with the first two participants guiding two introductory MBSR sessions and receiving feedback for it. The other participants all guided their practice on the next day. I did not participate in this exercise and did not guide a meditation practice.

5.4 A day of practice: co-accomplishing the embodiment of mindfulness

The focus of this section is to show how the embodiment of mindfulness is collaboratively achieved on the day of practice. In subsection 5.4.1, I will discuss the course leader's roles and expectations for the group and introduce the idea of 'embodied participation'. This makes explicit how the embodiment of mindfulness is understood from the participants' perspective and how expectations are framed in terms of mindfulness principles. I will then discuss two

excerpts from an ‘inquiry’ between a student-teacher and the group, first an ‘inquiry’ with the whole group (subsection 5.4.2), then an ‘inquiry’ with just one individual (subsection 5.4.3). The first ‘inquiry’ describes the conversational patterns in terms of the four foundational elements of inquiry–sequence organisation, phenomenological mapping, objectives, and preference organisation–and how ‘inquiry’ is used to transform experience[1]. The second ‘inquiry’ shows the role dynamics in the teacher training course.

On the morning of the ‘day of practice’, the course leader framed the day and laid out the roles and expectations for the group. This was followed by the ‘raisin exercise’ which is typically done in the first session of an MBSR course to introduce mindfulness to participants for the first time. The exercise includes eating a raisin ”mindfully” and then contrasting it with eating a raisin ”in default mode”. Exploring the difference between the two modi allows to establish a felt definition of what ‘mindfulness’ is in the context of the MBSR course.

5.4.1 Framing embodied participation on the day of practice

As did most days, the day started with a 15-minute silent sitting meditation led by the course leader Marlene. After the morning meditation, the ‘day of practice’ followed with each of the remaining fourteen participants guiding a meditation for the group. Before beginning, Marlene addressed the group with some housekeeping information. Amongst other things, Marlene asked for a time keeper to oversee that participants would adhere to their 20-minute time slot for practice. Marion volunteered. Transcript 5.7 is the conversation that followed immediately after (when Marion says ”hit it” (line 1) she is referring to cymbals).

[1] I have described these conversational patterns in the previous chapter 4, see ‘Four foundational elements of inquiry’ (subsection 4.4.5) and ‘Transformation of experience’ (subsection 4.5.7).

#00:21:44-4# - #00:23:38-3#

Marion: um is it ok with you if I hit it once after 18 minutes and twice after twenty minutes (0.8) yes?
Marlene: fine, that's fine. thank you very much °Marion°.
Marion: hm=hm(1.5)
Marlene: yes, and then Thomas and I will always join in if possible, so uh (0.4) maybe me a bit less when I write, but we actually try to join in too, so if you would like to include you- us, we would love to (1) otherwise if there are pairs- it actually also works out if- because Verena also joins in (1.1) uh a:nd yes (1.6) a::nd u::m (1.6) yes and we try to be really authentic. we are the group, we are your participants, so we don't try to pretend, °he? that it is really real, yes° (2.6)
Jasmina: um (0.6) you said yesterday that you shouldn't take notes during the [20 minutes]
Marlene: [no]
Jasmina: or?=
Marlene: =yes=
Jasmina: =but afterwards you can, when you then comment-
Marlene: =definitely, definitely. so that we really give ourselves this attention, this presence, that's a great gift and there- otherwise we have this divided attention, eh? aren't quite with it:, um ex- also don't quite experience our experience and um also don't °really listen. as truly.°
Jasmina: hm (affirmative)(0.7)
Marlene: we also see it in the conversations how it affects when we are really in touch (4.3) yes questions? (2) are there still concerns, questions? (6.1) all right

Transcript 5.7: Framing the 'day of practice'. Marlene addresses the group right before the first student-teacher will guide a meditation for the rest of the group. She explains that it is important to participate in a state of authentic presence (when Marion says "hit it" (line 1) she is referring to cymbals).

Transcript 5.7 provides insight into how Marlene frames the 'day of practice,' by outlining roles and expectations for the group. She emphasises that Thomas, me and herself are part of the group, stating, "we are the group, we are your participants" (lines 9-10), stresses the importance of authenticity "try to be really authentic" (line 9), "don't try to pretend" (line 10), and reminds participants that "it is really real" (line 11). Although she does not explicitly define what "really real" means, her explanation for avoiding note-taking reveals that it relates to attention. Marlene encourages participants to refrain from note-taking in order to "really give ourselves this attention, this presence" (lines 18-19), which she describes as "a great gift" (line 19). She contrasts this with note-taking, which she associates with "divided attention" (line 20), being "not quite with it" (line 20), and failing to "quite experience our experience" (lines 20-21) or "really listen as truly" (line 21). This is a reflection of how 'doing MBSR' requires the need to 'embody the present moment' both as a teacher and as a participant. While embodying the present moment could theoretically occur while taking notes, Marlene's discouragement of note-taking in this context suggests that she discourages from it as a more other-centered action, i.e. a risk of being

more focused on assessing the teacher and not fully engaging in the practice itself. Interestingly, Marlene exempts herself from her own suggestion, which may indicate her leadership role. In addition to her verbal framing, Marlene also retains a leadership position physically in the room. The participants, including myself, are seated on cushions in a U-shaped circle, where everyone is equidistant from one another. However, Marlene and Thomas are positioned at the top of the 'U,' slightly distanced from the rest of the group. Throughout the session, participants (apart from myself) take turns to take the role of the teacher but everyone remains in their usual seats. The 'physical position of the teacher' in the room remains occupied by Marlene and Thomas. One aspect where Marlene seemingly surrenders authority is with time keeping. Throughout the teacher training, Marlene is the time keeper, frequently marking the beginnings and endings of sessions by ringing cymbals or a gong. During the 'day of practice' she passes these tools to the participants. In fact, two participants are responsible for time-keeping, the one leading the meditation, and an assigned time-keeper, Marion. Marion agreed to ring the cymbals two minutes before the session ends and right at the end of the session.

In summary, Marlene frames the 'day of practice', where participants take turns guiding meditation. This subsection explained 'embodied participation' by showing how Marlene encouraged participants to engage authentically in the present moment, emphasising the importance of full attention and presence during the 'day of practice.' This means that she suggests to participate in meditation, and to focus on one's inner experience more than be concerned with possibly assessing the student-teacher who guides the meditation. This short framing offers a glimpse into the dynamics of leadership within the teacher training course. While Marlene nominally includes herself and Thomas as 'participants' along with the group, she remains in a leadership role through her physical position in the room and her permission to take notes. Similarly, the act of passing some responsibilities, like timekeeping, to participants while maintaining central control over the framing of activities indicates her authority.

5.4.2 Co-accomplishing mindfulness through inquiry

In this subsection, I will describe the process of transforming experience through 'inquiry' and the repositioning of subjective accounts in terms of MBSR course themes. I will build on the elements of 'inquiry' and the transformation of experience I established in the previous chapter. Furthermore, I will discuss how mindfulness is co-accomplished in this setting.

The raisin exercise on the day of practice

On the day of practice, each student-teacher led a 15 minutes meditation practice and a 5 minute 'inquiry' with the group. Sandra finished guiding a meditation practice in which she led the group through the 'raisin exercise'. This exercise is done on the first evening of an MBSR course to acquaint students with mindfulness. Sandra guided the participants of the teacher training course to eat a first raisin "mindfully" and a second raisin in "default mode". That is, the first raisin was explored with the five senses and the second raisin was eaten quickly. When everyone had finished eating the second raisin, Sandra was about 17 minutes into her allocated 20-minute slot. In the remaining three minutes she conducted an 'inquiry' with the group. The focus of this subsection is the first half of the 'inquiry' (see transcript 5.8). Note that the 'inquiry' was done in a *popcorn style*. This group-based 'inquiry' is known as 'horizontal inquiry' (as opposed to 'vertical inquiry' that is focused on one person (Crane, Griffith, and Karunavira, 2021, p. 53)). *Popcorn style* refers to a way of group sharing where people talk when they feel ready, just like popcorn kernels randomly pop at different times. There is no set order (such as going around in a circle) and not everyone has to contribute.

Establishing an object of study

Consider the three phases of the 'inquiry' project that I introduced in subsection 4.5.7: (1) Initiation: the teacher initiates the interaction by inviting the group to share their experiences of the meditation, (2) Teacher/participant dyad: the teacher and a participant engage in a dialogue where they collaboratively transform the participant's subjective account into an intersubjective object of study, and (3) Third-position action: the teacher subtly adapts what was said and inte-

Transcript 5.8: Establishing an object of study. In the 'inquiry', the participants bring forward several 'objects of study' (highlighted red). Finally, the teacher picks up 'relationship with the raisin' (lines 51ff) and repositions it to teach mindfulness (lines 59ff). The subject of the mindfulness teaching is on the Buddhist notion of 'dependent arising' and the mindful attitude of gratitude.

grates it into their teaching of mindfulness. In the process, a participant's personal experience is used as the basis for teaching mindfulness to the participant and to the group. In Sandra's 'inquiry' in transcript 5.8 these three phases are clearly distinguishable. *(1) Initiation.* Sandra begins the 'inquiry' by asking about the difference between eating the raisin in these two distinct ways (lines 1-2). *(2) Teacher/participant dyads.* The dyadic part of the 'inquiry' consists of several sequences in which participants share their personal experience to which Sandra responds and asks questions (lines 3-59). In the process, the participants offer different objects of study, namely 'difference of taste' (lines 3-15), 'difference in the way of eating' (lines 16-29), 'eating with the senses' (line 30-45), 'eating with guidance' (lines 46-50), 'relationship with the raisin' (lines 51-58). Sandra's third position actions are all affirmative, include pauses to allow time for reflection, and include the following: repeating the answer verbatim with a raised intonation to signal a question (line 6), repeating the answer verbatim (line 8), addressing the whole group to ask if they share a particular experience (lines 25-26), repeating the initiation question (lines 30-31, 35), summarising the key points of the exercise based on a participant's account (lines 44-45), simply answering 'yes' to a participant's account (lines 48-50), repeating certain keywords from a participant's account (lines 55-57). *(3) Third position action.* Out of the object of study candidates, Sandra chooses the last one 'relationship with the raisin', and builds her mindfulness lesson on it (lines 59-67). Firstly, Sandra alludes to an awareness of interdependence, or the Buddhist notion of 'dependent arising' (lines 59-62) (Anālayo, 2021). She gives examples of the conditions and causalities necessary for the raisin for us to be able to eat it. Secondly, Sandra suggests to consider how eating something as simple as a raisin mindfully can inspire gratitude (lines 63-64). Gratitude is another attitudinal quality that "contribute[s] to broadening as well as deepening the embodiment of mindfulness in our lives" (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 31)[2].

[2]In addition to the seven foundational attitudes of mindfulness, practitioners are encouraged to cultivate other attitudinal qualities, namely non-harming, generosity, gratitude, forbearance, forgiveness, kindness, compassion, empathic joy, and equanimity. (see Kabat-Zinn (2013, p. 31))

Meeting the objectives of inquiry

Next, consider the foundational elements of 'inquiry' that I introduced previously. Here I will focus on the *objectives* of inquiry–conveying course themes–and detail which course themes were transported through the Sandra's 'inquiry'. Firstly, note that the other three elements are also met. In terms of *sequence organisation*, the conversation has a 3-turn structure where Sandra asks a question, participants answer, and Sandra offers a third-position action. Regarding *phenomenological mapping*, the focus throughout the 'inquiry' is entirely on the subjective experiences of the participants even though no particular experience is explored in depth. In terms of *preference organisation*, Sandra meets anything participants share with acceptance and uses silences to allow time for reflection.

Turning to the *objectives* of 'inquiry'. I mentioned that in her teaching (lines 59-67), Sandra talks about the interdependence necessary for the raisin to exist which touches on the Buddhist notion of 'dependent arising' (Anālayo, 2021). Moreover, Sandra alludes to the attitudinal quality of gratitude in relation to the eating a raisin. She makes both of these mindsets explicit and they have to do with a type of inner awareness and attitude, with *how* to eat the raisin. Apart from these explicit teachings, the 'inquiry' reveals other mindfulness attitudes that are conveyed implicitly, both through the way Sandra structures the 'inquiry' and through the way participants share their subjective perspectives. A foundational attitude of mindfulness is a *beginner's mind*—"a mind that is willing to see everything as if for the first time." (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 24), one of the seven mindful attitudes[3]. Even though there was no explicit mention of the beginner's mind in this excerpt, the participants–all experienced MBSR-teachers-in-training who have done the raisin exercise before–stayed with the current raisin and did not allude to a previous experience. This aligns with a present moment focus and the notion of a *beginner's mind*. Both the teacher and the participants eating the raisin with the willingness as if for the first time, is an example for the *co-accomplishment* of a beginner's mind.

[3]There are seven foundational 'attitudes of mindfulness' cultivated through mindfulness practice and to be embodied by MBSR teachers, namely non-judging, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go (see Kabat-Zinn (2013, p. 21))

Co-accomplishing mindfulness through inquiry

Mindfulness is co-accomplished through 'inquiry' as both teachers and participants collaboratively bring awareness to present-moment experiences. Ethnomethodologically, this process involves the practical work of participants and teachers aligning their actions and language to create a shared sense of mindfulness. For example, one participant noted a distinct difference between eating a raisin meditatively with Sandra's guidance versus eating it on her own. She said "the instructions do something to me in that moment" (line 49). This reflects how the instructional language transformed a simple act of eating a raisin into a mindful experience. Another participant highlighted, "we share our experiences the whole time" to which Sandra responded, "we put our experiences into words" (lines 68-69). Here, they both make explicit how shared language becomes a tool to frame, reflect (and refine) experiences in a mindfulness context. From an ethnomethodological perspective, these exchanges are co-accomplished moments in which mindfulness is both practised and validated. The 'inquiry' setting enables participants to articulate inner experiences. This process relies on the teacher's affirmative responses to each participant's contributions. This models an attitude of openness which is another foundational element to mindfulness. It invites participants to express and explore their understanding of mindfulness together with the teacher and the rest of the group.

5.4.3 Vertical 'inquiry' and role assertion

This subsection discusses a vertical 'inquiry' which due to its interruptions brings to light the hierarchical dynamics of the individuals in the course. Transcript 5.9 is a direct continuation of transcript 5.8. The 'inquiry' here is solely between Sandra and Thomas which is why I refer to it as 'vertical inquiry'. In it, Thomas shares his experience which has to do with being surprised that the raisin looked somewhat different from what he expected.

```
     #00:44:02-5# - #00:44:47-7#
 1   Thomas: I got to know my expectations uh [know        ]
 2                                            [((doorbell))]
 3   Sandra: you got to know your experien-[ces?        ]
 4   Marion:                               [((cymbals)) ]
 5   Thomas: expectations
 6   Sandra: [got to know expectations ]
 7   Marion: [((cymbals))              ]
 8   Thomas: which were then partly fulfilled, for the most part, but sometimes not
 9   Sandra: not (0.7)
10   Thomas: so it was the same for me, that I uh expected it to be more uh
11   consistent
12   Sandra: yes
13   Thomas: because of the appearance and that was not the case (0.7)
14   Sandra: also interesting, and how did that come about or did that- yes. (0.8)
15   Marlene: sorry
16   Group: ((chuckling))
17   Marlene: but that we really  [stick to the]
18   Sandra:                      [yes         ]
19   Marlene: time
20   Sandra: yes: thank you very much
21   Group: ((chuckling)) thank you (?) ((mumbled, several voices))
22   Marlene: [thank you Sandra]
23   Sandra:  [((gong))        ] (3.2)
```

Transcript 5.9: Vertical inquiry between Sandra and second course leader Thomas. They are interrupted four times: by the doorbell (line 2), by the timekeeper ringing the cymbals twice (line 4, line 7), and finally by first course leader Marlene (line 15, lines 17-19). Marlene maintains her position of authority by interrupting and ending the inquiry.

The dialogue lasts only 45 seconds during which Sandra and Thomas are interrupted four times: first by the doorbell (line 2), then by the timekeeper ringing the cymbals twice (line 4, line 7), and finally by Marlene (line 15, lines 17-19). The last interruption ends the ‘inquiry’ and transitions the exercise to the next phase. Thomas is the second course leader and he shares his experience during the meditation like everyone else. He confirms to the role Marlene laid out at the beginning of the session, that both she and Thomas would participate and ”try to be really authentic” and ”[not] try to pretend” (transcript 5.7, lines 9-10). Yet, he is still the co-trainer who sits in the teacher’s position next to Marlene, so there is a hierarchal gap between him and Sandra. He ignores the signals that the session is over and keeps talking. Sandra has to decide whether to yield to the time or cut his account short. When she keeps responding to Thomas’ account, Marlene interrupts them both by apologising and calling attention to the time (line 15, lines 17-19). After this Sandra and Marlene exchange ‘thank yous’ (lines 20-22) which can be seen as an end to Sandra’s session. Still, Sandra sounds the gong as if to end the session herself (line 23). Marlene is clearly the one who holds most authority in this interaction as she moves both Thomas and Sandra to end their dialogue with a gentle reminder of the time.

This also confirms Thomas' role as a participant in this exercise. Marlene did not share her own experience at any point during the 'inquiry'. Whilst this is not uncommon for participants, in combination with her framing the exercise to begin with, being seated at a distance to the rest of the group, taking notes, and ending the exercise, there is at this point no observable indication that she took the position of a participant apart from that she said so in the beginning.

5.5 Embodying mindfulness whilst teaching

In this section, I examine how members themselves understand the embodiment of mindfulness during teaching. The focus is on the exchange of feedback between a student-teacher and the course leader and another participant. It shows how embodying mindfulness is made explicit as a part of the teacher training. The student-teacher's embodiment of mindfulness becomes visible through her own reflections and through the observations and comments of others. In the upcoming subsections, I will present three perspectives on 'embodied teaching' from different members. Firstly, in subsection 5.5.1, Sandra reflects on her experience of embodying mindfulness while teaching. Secondly, also in subsection 5.5.1, another participant comments on Sandra's performance which provides an external view on Sandra's ability to embody mindfulness. Moreover, the feedback itself is an expression of 'embodied participation'. Thirdly, in subsection 5.5.2, the course leader Marlene provides feedback on Sandra's embodiment of mindfulness and on more technical aspects of 'inquiry'.

5.5.1 Reflecting embodied teaching

The focus of this subsection is how the embodiment of mindfulness during teaching is made explicit by two members. Firstly, Sandra—who guided the raisin exercise and 'inquiry'—offers a first person perspective of her teaching experience. Secondly, a participant from the group gives feedback on Sandra's performance. I will also discuss a shift in the hierarchal dynamics of the course.

Teacher reflecting their teaching experience through inquiry

```
     #00:44:47-7# - #00:45:50-7#
 1   Marlene: yes, would you like to tell us first how you have been?
 2   Sandra: um yes ((chuckling)) (0.7) uh I was nervous, but not terribly nervous,
 3   so it always went back and forth, so the waiting before was a bit
 4   diffi(h)cult, so(h) that's how I felt, but it made me physically- so the body
 5   was always there (0.6) with me, that was very nice
 6   Marlene: hm=hm
 7   Sandra: so it didn't sweep me away or anything, I know that from stage fright,
 8   that it then makes me so hhh so that I then don't have myself at all (1.2) °I
 9   have the feeling I'm just the(h)re° so I'm not just there with my head
10   Marlene: [hm=hm]
11   Sandra:  [I'm  ] physically there, so I also paid attention to it .h so you
12   can pay a lot of attention to it and it can still be different, but that-
13   that- that I felt so- I still felt myself. that- that did me good
14   Marlene: yes. yes (0.8)
15   Sandra: °that helped me° (1.8)
16   Marlene: helped with what?
17   Sandra: With the nervousness
18   Marlene: °okay° (2.1)
19   Sandra: °yes°
```

Transcript 5.10: Self-reflection of embodied teaching. Sandra offers a first person account of her subjective experience during teaching. The dialogue itself displays the four elements of 'inquiry' in terms of sequence organisation, phenomenological mapping, MBSR objective, and preference organisation.

Consider transcript 5.10, which is a direct continuation of transcript 5.9. It is a dialogue between the course leader Marlene and Sandra who just finished leading the raisin exercise and the 'inquiry'. The dialogue itself displays the four elements of 'inquiry' in terms of sequence organisation, phenomenological mapping, MBSR objective, and preference organisation. Marlene initiates the 'inquiry' by asking Sandra about how she felt (line 1). Sandra answers by sharing her inner experience whilst teaching. Sandra frames her response in terms of the typical subjects of 'inquiry', that is bodily sensations, feelings, the awareness of her attention. She talks about feeling "nervous" (line 2) and that feeling "physically there" (line 11) helped her with the nervousness. She says "*the* body was always there with me" (lines 4-5, emphasis added) using the definite article 'the body' rather than the personal possessive determiner 'my body'. As this formulation comes up continually, I will return to this in more detail in the discussion (chapter 7). She volunteers these personal details and focuses solely on her inner experience. She does not reflect on the specifics of her guided meditation, the interactions with the group, or the contents of what was discussed. Marlene takes the role of an MBSR teacher who conducts an 'inquiry'. She affirms Sandra's answers and asks a clarifying question regarding what exactly

paying attention to her bodily sensations helped her with (line 16). Marlene does not inquire into any surface level or observable details about Sandra's teaching experience. She also does not provide feedback yet. This short interaction and first person account of an MBSR teacher during teaching offers a member's perspective of what it might mean to 'embody mindfulness during teaching'.

Feedback on a teacher's embodiment of mindfulness

Sandra's first person account of how she experienced teaching is reinforced by a participant's perspective in transcript 5.11. In it, Flora provides feedback of how she perceived Sandra as a teacher (lines 7-24).

```
    #00:45:50-7# - #00:47:32-5#
 1  Marlene: You ask for feedback and it would be nice, if uh not always the same
 2  give feedback, so that also uh here habits can be broken up, that uh uh
 3  participants who don't say so much also dare to say something as feedback, he?
 4  (0.9) and vice versa (1.6)
 5  Sandra: yes, I would like to, °I would be happy ab(h)out it°.
 6  Marlene: a feedback hm?
 7  Flora: so I felt very welcomed and very brought into the experience already as
 8  you started, 'I invite you on a voyage of discovery' so I already- so a bit
 9  like at story time, but [very, so also here and now ]
10  Marlene:                [((chuckling))             ]
11  Flora: so with your warm voice and experience, that you really made it
12  possible to experience, I found that very nice (0.7). and I also found it very
13  permissive, so just 'try it out', you accepted all the feedback (0.6) and you
14  could say what you noticed. I found you also brought in a lot of input, so
15  many terms like beginner's spirit, discovering and so on, so (0.6) um very
16  related to the content. I also experienced you as very present, so with the
17  way you spoke so freely and with the parts, so with us it was somehow
18  Sandra: right yes the dates
19  Flora: °yes. hm(h)=hm (0.9) right° maybe one more- so sometimes I wondered,
20  should I eat it already or not, so somehow still a- so the transitions maybe
21  from one to the other could have been marked more maybe, but through that the
22  allowing was simply more there and how everyone deals with it, so
23  Sandra: hm=hm right. thank you
24  Flora: yes (2.1)
```

Transcript 5.11: Feedback on embodied teaching. In the transcript, Flora highlights the key aspects about Sandra's teaching from her own subjective perspective (lines 7-24).

Flora shares mostly her own experience in relation to Sandra's teaching, as well as objective/observable facts about it. She begins by saying that she felt "very welcomed" (line 7), expressing a feeling of comfort which she supports by mentioning that she felt like during "story time" (line 9, "Märchenstunde" in German) and calling Sandra's voice "warm" (line 11). She says that she felt "very brought into the experience" (line 7), most likely referring to the experience brought about by following Sandra's meditation instruction. She even addresses Sandra

directly when she says ”you really made it possible to experience”, again not specifying the experience she had but expressing a pleasant feeling tone ”I found that very nice” (line 12). Identifying feeling tones can also be considered a mindfulness skill as it is regularly referenced guided meditations[4]. Feeling tones are also a common subject of ‘inquiry’, although not usually at the beginning of an MBSR course. Flora then makes a few more objective comments regarding Sandra’s teaching, that Sandra ”accepted all the feedback and you could say what you noticed” (lines 13-14), that her input was relevant (lines 14-16), and that she could have made her instructions clearer (lines 16-21). She softens this last somewhat critical comment by suggesting that in the absence of clear instructions ”the allowing was simply there more” (lines 21-22). By this she implies that it was not an issue and alludes to the mindful attitude of acceptance.

> ”Acceptance means seeing things as they actually are in the present moment. If you have a headache, accept that you have a headache. [...] In the meditation practice, we cultivate acceptance by taking each moment as it comes and being with it fully, as it is. We try not to impose our ideas about what we ”should” be feeling or thinking or seeing in our experience. Instead, we just remind ourselves to be receptive and open to whatever we are feeling, thinking, or seeing, and to accept it because it is here right now.” (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, pp. 27, 29).

This quality of allowing can be linked to preference organisation in which discomfort is not only not dispreferred but used as the foundation for inner exploration (see section 4.4.4). Interestingly, Flora comments that ”I also experienced you as very present” because of the way Sandra spoke ”freely” (lines 16-17). Speaking about presence might refer to an observable quality about Sandra such as the way she carried herself. However, in the context of MBSR, ‘presence’ is often used to mean ‘present moment awareness’ and can be used as a synonym for mindfulness. With this meaning, Flora would be commenting on how she perceived an inner state of Sandra. Since Sandra has given an insight into how she was aware of her bodily sensations and feelings whilst teaching, in this understanding of ‘presence’ Flora affirms and

[4]Feeling tones—”vedana” in Buddhist texts—are pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, see Peacock and Batchelor (2018).

validates Sandra's account.

Re-establishing allocated roles in the teacher training course

The two transcripts in this subsection, transcript 5.10 and 5.11 also show something regarding the role allocation of the teacher training course. The course leader Marlene had seemingly taken the role of a participant during the raisin exercise and the 'inquiry'. When Sandra reflects on her teaching experience in the first transcript 5.10 of this subsection, she does so by answering Marlene's inquiry-style questions, so Marlene takes back her role as the course leader. Similarly, regarding the second transcript 5.11 where Sandra receives feedback on her teaching, Marlene acts as the course leader. Marlene initiates the feedback round. She says to Sandra "you ask for feedback" (line 1) and then addresses the group by indicating her preference on who should provide feedback. She frames her preference by asking participants who don't normally speak up to step forward "habits can be broken up" (line 2). In MBSR, participants are continuously engaged in exercises in which they confront feelings of discomfort and Marlene's invitation appears to be in line with this MBSR learning theme. Sandra replies that she "would be happy about it" (line 5) which affirms what Marlene has said. She has thus not asked the group for feedback directly. Even her response to Marlene is redundant in the sense that Marlene has already asked the group for feedback on Sandra's behalf. This is another example that shows how Marlene takes responsibility for structuring the session and holds a position of authority. Flora, the woman who volunteers to provide feedback, is somewhat shy and not normally someone who speaks first.

5.5.2 Feedback on embodied teaching

This subsection describes Marlene's feedback on Sandra's teaching in transcript 5.12. This highlights some of the key features that are important when teaching MBSR. I have grouped Marlene's comments into three groups. The first paragraph is concerned with Sandra's embodiment of mindfulness whilst teaching, the second one provides feedback on Sandra's ability to reposition the participants' accounts to build her mindfulness lesson on them, and the last paragraph

summarises more feedback on teaching feeling tones, asking participants for consent and using reformulations within the repositioned accounts.

Sandra taking her seat: embodying mindfulness

#00:47:32-5# - #00:50:33-0#

Marlene: yes, so um I also found that you had said before that you were well anchored in the body and I have the feeling .h uh I felt that, too, you were really there and not in a hurry, you took your seat, you- you uh seemed to be present (0.5) very present. for me, the instructions were clear, except for uh (0.5) going to the raisin with the tongue, I wondered, should I put the raisin in my mouth now, but otherwise I found uh (0.5) them very clear u:m you also repeated nicely, he, what we had reported and brought very very important (0.8) qualities uh: into the exercise, so you already invited us in the- at the beginning to explore the waiting .h uh then you also um asked us, 'do we want to touch it' you also asked us about wanting and not wanting, i.e. pleasant, unpleasant .h, I found that very very (0.7) well uh doable for us, I don't know now how it is for beginners on the first evening of the course, whether that is perhaps already a bit (0.9) too- do you understand? uh=
Sandra: too much freedom? [(?)]
Marlene: [YES::] who have never been confronted with may I, may I not [you know]
Sandra: [I see]
Marlene: you have to try out=
Sandra: =yes=
Marlene: =hm, I would just make it really simple on the first course evening, for us I found it very helpful he?
Sandra: hm=hm
Marlene: uh u:m (2.5) yes you also (0.5) said when something was said to you, that it had an influence, when Robert said uh somehow 'it glitters in the light' the con- the um the connectedness with the environment for example was emphasised, so I really found that also quite uh uh quite beautiful how you brought in quite important things so unnoticed he? you also asked about the topic of expectations, asked permission to ask about it, and for me you brought a lot of things into it, and it came so naturally (0.5) I, uh, yes, I thought you- that it just had a great naturalness (0.7) uh:m (0.8) uh Flora once said, when one: (0.6) together- now I don't even remember what she said, and you said back with the word 'one'
Sandra: ah, I didn't notice.
Marlene: yes. then I would now say, 'ah so if you bite into it, then' o- [do you understand]
Sandra: [yes]
Marlene: that you then bring it in as referring to her
Sandra: yes
Marlene: hm?
Sandra: hm=hm (1.3)
Marlene: the um (0.8) is actually the only thing that struck me (0.4) uh:m also the questions at the end so that- the short summary of what was different now was actually also (0.5) very helpful

Transcript 5.12: Feedback on embodied teaching. Marlene's feedback for Sandra featured the following elements: Sandra was anchored in the body (lines 1-4), clear instructions (lines 4-6), feeling tones too advanced for beginners (10-21), teachings based on accounts (lines 6-7, 23-27), sought consent (line 28), great naturalness (line 30), missed a reformulation (lines 30-37).

Marlene begins her feedback in transcript 5.12 by saying that "I also found that you had said before that you were well anchored in the body and I have the feeling .h uh I felt that, too" (lines 1-2) linking what she says to Sandra's own reflection and affirming it. Leading with this comment indicates the priority and importance of being anchored in the body. Marlene also seems to suggests that this inner state can be perceived by others. Marlene goes on to comment on

Sandra's presence using a variety of expressions: "really there", "not in a hurry", "you took your seat", "present, very present" (lines 3-4). Again, the repetition and positioning of her comment at the beginning of her feedback hint at a certain degree of importance. "Taking your seat" is a metaphor that is commonly used by Jon Kabat-Zinn in his guided meditations (and MBSR teachers in general) to signify meditation. "While meditation is not all about sitting still on the floor or in a chair, taking your seat both literally and metaphorically is an important element of mindfulness." (Kabat-Zinn, 2018, p. 9). "It is a very brave gesture: to take one's seat for a time and drop in on the present moment without adornment." (Kabat-Zinn, 2018, p. 76). Sandra was already sitting on her cushion when her session began and Marlene's comment seems to point to the fact that she perceived Sandra as meditating whilst guiding the meditation.

Technical feedback on repositioned accounts

The next part of Marlene's feedback is more technical in nature. She notes that the instructions were mostly clear to her and praises how Sandra engaged in dialogues with the group, highlighting that Sandra repeated back what people said and brought in "very very important (0.8) qualities uh: into the exercise" (lines 7-8). This alludes to mindfulness lessons being repositioned versions of peoples' accounts. Marlene makes this point even clearer when she references a specific example from Sandra's session in which a participant shared how the raisin twinkled in the light and Sandra made a connection to the environment (lines 23-26). To Marlene this exemplifies how Sandra "brought in quite important things so unnoticed" (line 27) and "so naturally" (line 29).

Technical feedback on feeling tones, consent, and reformulations

There are three more elements of technical feedback provided by Marlene, namely feeling tones, consent, and reformulations. Firstly, she comments on how the 'inquiry' into feeling tones before eating the raisin might be advanced for beginners but is exactly right for the teacher training course (lines 10-21). 'inquiry' into feeling tones means an 'inquiry' into whether participants feel pleasant, unpleasant or neutral when they are about to place the raisin in their mouth. Sec-

ondly, Marlene notes that Sandra "asked permission to ask about it" (line 28), referring to asking for consent before probing deeper into a personal issue with a participant. Thirdly, Marlene points out a reformulation that Sandra could have used but missed (lines 30-37). Marlene references a situation during the guided meditation where participant Flora uses the impersonal German pronoun 'man' instead of the personal pronoun 'I' when she speaks of her experience. The best English translation of the pronoun 'man' is the generic personal pronoun 'one'. According to the Cambridge Dictionary 'one' can be used to refer to 'people in general': "We can use *one*, *you* or *we* when we are making generalisations and not referring to any one person in particular."[5]. Marlene points this out by saying to Sandra: "Flora once said, when one: (0.6) together- now I don't even remember what she said, and you said back with the word 'one' (lines 30-32). Apparently, in the actual 'inquiry', Sandra had repeated Flora's utterance verbatim. Marlene suggests to use a reformulation instead and replace the generic personal pronoun 'one' with the personal pronoun 'you'. She rationalises this change of words "that you then bring it in as referring to *her*" (line 37, emphasis added).

In summary, Marlene's feedback for Sandra featured the following elements: Sandra was anchored in the body (lines 1-4), clear instructions (lines 4-6), feeling tones too advanced for beginners (10-21), teachings based on accounts (lines 6-7, 23-27), sought consent (line 28), great naturalness (line 30), missed a reformulation (lines 30-37).

5.6 Third position action in MBSR teacher training

In this section, I explore the course leader's use of third-position actions as both feedback for the student-teacher and as an instructional tool for the group. In this context, this third-position feedback not only assesses the student-teacher's performance but also functions as a mindfulness lesson for everyone present. It effectively models the 'inquiry' process that occurs within MBSR. This shows that the pedagogical framework of MBSR remains consistent whether the context is direct MBSR practice or teacher training. Here, the course leader utilises the learning situation

[5]https://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/pronouns-one-you-we-they

to guide the group in understanding how to conduct inquiry.

Subsections 5.6.1 and 5.6.2 both highlight how Marlene models a third-position response for Sandra and the group. In doing so, she demonstrates the technique of repositioning a participant's account as part of 'inquiry' practice.

5.6.1 Modelling third position action: conditional emerging

In this subsection, Marlene models a third position action for Sandra and by extension for the rest of the group, see transcript 5.13. She first summarises and comments on Sandra's third position teaching during the 'inquiry' (lines 1-16). She then transitions her comments into a teaching for the teacher training course (lines 16-42), teaching both mindfulness and how to reposition a participant's account during the 'inquiry'.

Recap of Sandra's inquiry

In the first half of transcript 5.13, Marlene refers to Sandra's delivery of her mindfulness lesson during the 'inquiry' (see transcript 5.8, lines 59-67, page 136). To recap, during the 'inquiry', the object of study that formed the basis of Sandra's teaching was "relationship with the raisin" (transcript 5.8, line 51). Sandra picked up the key word 'relationship' and based her mindfulness lesson on it (transcript 5.8, lines 59-67). In her mindfulness lesson she talks about the circumstances that led to the raisin arriving in the room and links it with the mindful attitude of gratitude.

Going back to the feedback on her 'inquiry' in transcript 5.13, Marlene makes several suggestions to inquire into the subject of relationship "what does this changed relationship do you you?" (lines 2-3), "what influence does this uh experience of the different senses have on eating?" (lines 5-6), "what does the mindful attitude (0.4) actually do with the experience of life?" (lines 7-8), "what is it like to have a relationship with this raisin?" (lines 10-11). Answers to any of these questions are likely to move the dialogue into deeper life issues where the experience with the raisin merely serves as a starting point.

#00:50:33-0# - #00:54:02-0#

Marlene: [...] it came up, I think Verena uh talked about the relationship (0.5) uh 'built up a relationship' you could maybe have asked and what does this changed relationship do to you (0.5) [hm?] (0.6)
Sandra: [hm=hm]
Marlene: or- or what influence does this uh experience of the different senses have on eating? or so we are at the quality of what mindfulness actually brings (0.7) what- what does the mindful attitude (0.4) actually do with the experience of life? (0.5)
Sandra: hm=hm
Marlene: do you understand? you could go one step further and what is it like to have a relationship with this raisin? (1.2)
Sandra: hm=hm (2.8)
Marlene: and also uh for all of us so if we tell this uh story about the raisin, the path it has perhaps travelled uh (0.7) which you have also brought in quite cleverly, even if only briefly (0.6), then this (0.5) on the one hand can really trigger a uh gratitude (0.5) but uh which in any case also does uh shows, that it requires various different conditions and conditions (0. 5) uh for the raisin to be here (0.7) and that speaks to this aspect that I mentioned yesterday, the conditional arising, the dependent arising (0.4) or in connection with the impersonal, which I mentioned yesterday. that everything arises in dependence on so many of things, that is actually also emphasised with this. ah it needs so much, so much is involved (0.7) do you understand? what I mean?
Group: hm=hm
Marlene: that is actually also addressed, as you uh said in the feedback from Robert and someone else, ah if it leaves traces, I think Marion said that, it leaves traces, he? everything has an influence on (1.1) the surrounding
Sandra: hm=hm (1.9)
Marlene: if you- the more often we see that in our lives, the um (0.6) easier it is for us not to take things so personally (1.8) that is very- a very important aspect (7.7) and especially then, so I'll make a little example, if somehow
Someone: ((sneezing))
Marlene: someone affronts me, Gesundheit, with pointed words (0.9) yes, we don't know where this person is coming from and has just had trouble at home, maybe there was a fight at home, or children who didn't want to put on their shoes, impatie(h)nce and you come and ask the question, yes, and what does this look like now this raisin? and by now it explodes
Group: ((Laughing))
Marlene: he? uh and and uh that's exactly the same, he? there's quite a lo:t that preceded, when we know that it really doesn't only have to do with us, then- then uh is a great help (4.4) yes, thank you very much (1.1)
Sandra: thank you too
Marlene: thank you (2.5)

Transcript 5.13: Third position teaching: conditional emerging. Marlene first summarises and comments on Sandra's third position teaching during the 'inquiry' (lines 1-16). She then transitions her comments into a teaching for the teacher training course (lines 16-42), teaching both mindfulness and how to reposition a participant's account during the inquiry.

Third position action: conditional emerging

Marlene uses this opportunity to deliver a mindfulness lesson on conditional emerging to the group. Affirming Sandra's lesson that being aware of the journey of the raisin can "trigger gratitude" (line 16), she adds a lesson about how the journey of the raisin can highlight conditional emerging and gives an example of how that insight might translate into everyday life (lines 16-42). She weaves two participants' accounts into her lesson by noting that Robert and Marion mentioned that the raisin left "traces" (line 27), inferring from this that "everything has an influence (1.1) on the surrounding" (line 27). She gives an example of how someone might be influenced by a stressful day at home and then react angrily when being asked about a raisin ("it

explodes", line 38). She concludes her lesson by linking her example back to the raisin "that's exactly the same, he? there's a lo:t that preceded, when we know that it rally doesn't only have to do with us, then- then uh is a great help (lines 40-42).

5.6.2 Third position action: Perception is not the image in the mind

Similar to the previous subsection, in this subsection, Marlene models a third position teaching for the group (see transcript 5.15). Here, her teaching is preceded by a first person account of the beginner's mind by the other course leader (see transcript 5.14).

Beginner's mind as a course leader

	#00:54:02-0# - #00:55:30-6#
1	**Thomas:** I would also like to [say something]
2	**Marlene:** [right, yes]
3	**Thomas:** um, what I found really helpful was your um- that you always brought
4	in the expectation, that showed me the exercise in a new light and I found
5	that absolutely exciting for me now (0.6) to see (0. 5) um when I look at it,
6	then I already have expectations of how it feels (0.9) and um I first noticed,
7	and um at first I noticed that I felt like you said, I saw the expectation, it
8	is solid (1.0) and the expectation is with- although I know that, but it is
9	there no? and after I noticed that (0. 6) um I checked again more closely with
10	the other senses, which expectation do I actually have now? and these were
11	then fulfilled, then it was in fact- (0. 4) then I saw the softness and the-
12	and the- the- the raspiness that I also felt on the fingers, and on the lips
13	and on the tongue, so it was so um I have with myself and I think that is also
14	a piece of the- of what we are supposed to convey with the exercise, that you
15	also have to work with your (0. 5) uh (0.5) expectations that you have, when
16	you uh: in a way uh (1.3) pass over (0.7) the raisin (0.6) [((chuckling))]
17	**Group:** [((chuckling))]
18	**Marlene:** yes=
19	**Thomas:** =yes, yes thank you

Transcript 5.14: Beginner's mind as a course leader. Thomas shares his experience during the raisin exercise and reveals that it helped him see the exercise "in a new light" (line 4).

In transcript 5.14, Thomas provides a detailed account of how he was confronted with his expectations about eating a raisin. He builds on his earlier exchange with Sandra (see transcript 5.9 on page 140). He praises Sandra for including expectations in her instructions and notes that it "showed me the exercise in a new light" (line 4) which he found "absolutely exciting" (line 5). He shares how he was aware of his expectations regarding the texture of the raisin and when he then touched it with his fingers, his lips and his tongue, these expectations came true (lines 5-13). So when he expected the raisin to feel solid, it felt solid. When he expected the raisin to feel

soft, it felt soft. He ends by saying that this is something ”we are supposed to convey with the exercise” (line 14). With this utterance, he appears to fulfil the role of the course leader, however, by qualifying his statement with ”I think” (line 13) he simultaneously expresses uncertainty. His account alludes to the mindful attitude of a beginner's mind in that he admits that eating a raisin mindfully can offer new insights, even to someone who will have plenty of experience with this exercise as you would expect of someone in his position. By making clear that he was aware of the focus of his attention, his bodily sensations, his feelings and his thoughts, he covers the experiential categories of ‘inquiry’.

With his account he has now also displayed that he was true to the role of a participant during the exercise, which Marlene has laid out at the very beginning of the session. Note that Marlene on the other hand has not shared any personal experiences she might have had during Sandra's guided meditation. Her comments were more technical in nature and her personal feelings regarded Sandra's ‘presence’ (see transcript 5.12).

Third position: perception is not the image in the mind

#00:55:30-6# - #00:57:14-3#

Marlene: Yes, but now something else occurs to me, I think that is also a wonderfully important point with the expectations, uh, what you could done- could have done is when someone brings associations, hm? (0.7)
Sandra: [hm=hm]
Marlene: [Amber]
Sandra: hm=hm
Marlene: um (0.6) then it is important uh or helpful to say, ah: what reminds you of amber? or because that is an association, that is not what she sees, the person, but what do you see that reminds you of amber? then you are at the perception itself, hm? (0.3) and in a way not correcting, but simply that you are in dialogue with the group
Sandra: hm=hm
Marlene: also making that experiential, ah there's a- a uh sensory experience and there's an image that comes up in the mind and that's not the same (0.6) that's a con- in another- a concept
Sandra: there was also a quality, no? I think somehow like [(?)]
Marlene: [right]
Sandra: I also found that very exciting, that it was-
Marlene: right, also there, ah: what triggers this feeling, what do you see, or what [do you hear?]
Sandra: [hm=hm]
Marlene: or=
Sandra: =there=
Marlene: =what-
Sandra: you can later ask more [questions?]
Marlene: [right]
Sandra: hm=hm
Marlene: simply that they begin to see the difference between direct perception
Sandra: hm=hm
Marlene: and what I make of it
Sandra: hm=hm
Marlene: it is followed by a feeling, a sensation, an image, memories, hm? (1.5) right
Sandra: yes. thank you (2.2)
Marlene: good. then uh: (0.6) ah now I have to check a bit. Susanne
Susanne: yes (1.3)
Marlene: Susanne autopilot

Transcript 5.15: Third position action: Perception is not the image in the mind. Marlene emphasises that it is important to differentiate between ”perception itself” (line 10) and ”an image that comes up in the mind” (line 14) when conducting the ‘inquiry’. She uses the learning situation to model the ‘inquiry’ process.

Transcript 5.15 marks a transition to another mindfulness and teacher training lesson Marlene delivers, prompted by but not based on Thomas’ account. She affirms that the topic of expectations are ”a wonderfully important point” (line 2) and then goes on to explain how to engage in ‘inquiry’ when someone brings up ”associations” (line 3). For this she again engages in a dialogue with Sandra. Marlene gives the example of someone bringing up amber in the raisin exercise. She lists a series of questions that Sandra could ask in this situation to differentiate between ”perception itself” (line 10) and ”an image that comes up in the mind” (line 14). The ability to make this distinction is important for the mindful attitude of non-judging. ”When prac-

ticing mindfulness, it is important to recognize this judging quality of mind when it appears and assume a broader perspective by intentionally suspending judgement and assuming a stance of impartiality, reminding yourself to, as best you can, simply observe what is unfolding, including your reactions to it. When you find the mind judging, you don't have to stop it from doing that, and it would be unwise to try. All that is required is to be aware of it happening." (Kabat-Zinn, 2018, p. 22).

From a more psychological stance, it is an important aspect of 'cognitive defusion', that is to notice thoughts as mental event but not engage with their content. Marlene goes on to explain that seeing "the difference between direct perception" (lines 28-29) "and what I make of it" (line 31) gives rise to notice what might follow, i.e. "a feeling, a sensation, an image, memories" (line 33). With this last point, Marlene again alludes to the Buddhist idea of conditional emerging and links her teaching to the one she delivered earlier.

After ending the conversation with Sandra, Marlene moves on to the next student-teacher who will deliver a guided meditation regarding the 'auto-pilot' (line 38).

5.7 Conclusion: Co-accomplishing mindfulness

In conclusion, I showed how 'embodying mindfulness' is at the core of 'inquiry' and teaching MBSR. I shared how novice teachers understand mindfulness as a way of being in the world, how the embodiment of mindfulness involves an understanding of Buddhist ideas, how mindfulness is co-accomplished in the teacher training context by means of the four elements of 'inquiry' and its transformative process described in the previous chapter, and I showed how teaching *mindfulness* and teaching *how to teach mindfulness* uses the same mechanism of utilising and transforming participants' contribution. I will elaborate these points below.

Being mindful as a teacher

In the beginning of this chapter, I provided a perspective on embodying mindfulness by sharing the words of student teachers from a focus group. Before their teacher training started the partic-

ipants all shared that one of their principle motivations was to deepen their own practice and then possibly pass it on. The focus was not on expanding career options but on sharing something with others that had helped them in their own life. This sentiment was still shared after completing the course. The participants attributed major life changes such as leaving their stressful jobs to the positive impact of the teacher training course. They talked about how the course had effected them deeply at the core of their being, that mindfulness had become more and more a part of their identity, allowed them to get closer to themselves, and permeated all areas of life (see subsection 5.2.1, appendix C.1). This echoes what is said in teacher training manuals that mindfulness is not something you *do* but something you *are* ("the learning is conveyed through the teacher's way of being", Crane, Soulsby, et al., 2021, p. 17). The focus group also discussed their first time teaching mindfulness themselves in terms of how it felt as if though the teaching came from *within*, from the gut, and that it was a physical experience that allowed them to feel connected to themselves (see subsection 5.2.1, appendix C.2). Moreover, the focus group itself was a context where we all produced and displayed the four elements of 'inquiry', that is we all talked and interacted in a way that is specific to MBSR 'inquiry'.

In the second part of the chapter, I presented data from 'day of practice' of an MBSR teacher training course. I arranged this part of the chapter in a way that simply followed the unfolding of events in the teacher training course chronologically. This means I first shared a transcript in which the course leader framed the 'day of practice' to lay out the expectations of the day. In the rest of the chapter I shared a long transcript that I broke into several components in order to analyse and describe what was happening. In the transcript, a student teacher guides an 'inquiry' with the participants of the course, reflects on her teaching experience, and receives feedback for her performance. These interactions yielded three interesting insights with regard to the embodiment of mindfulness in the context of teaching MBSR, which I will summarise here. Briefly, the insights are that: (1) There is a Buddha in this 'secular' space, both physically and metaphorically, and embodying mindfulness involves a grasp of Buddhist philosophy. (2) Co-accomplishing mindfulness involves that participants and teachers align their actions and language to create a shared sense of mindfulness. These actions include the four elements of

'inquiry' which are reproduced in every 'inquiry' sequence and a repositioning of participants' accounts into mindfulness lessons. (3) The utilisation of participants' contributions is not only the foundation for teaching *mindfulness* in MBSR 'inquiry', it is also the foundation for teaching *how to teach mindfulness* in MBSR teacher training.

A buddha in the room

MBSR is advertised and researched as a secular programme. Still, there was a small buddha statue in the room where teacher training course took place and a second one in the small garden outside. The room was rented and does not belong to the institute that offered the teacher training course, yet it does not seem out of place. This is because Buddhist philosophy was also part of the curriculum in this teacher training course. The sequence of 'inquiry' and feedback for the teacher I presented in this chapter contained several references to Buddhism. Most notably is that in the transcripts of this chapter, the *objectives of inquiry*—the overall goal of 'inquiry'—are attitudinal and involve insights that are linked to Buddhism. The seven 'attitudes of mindfulness' are non-judging, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 21). In a teaching of how to guide an 'inquiry' (see subsection 5.6.1), the teacher training course leader suggests how participants' accounts can be repositioned to lead to an insight that is essentially Buddhist, even though she does not explicitly say 'Buddhist'. Specifically, in the exercise, a participant shared that a raisin that was eaten in the course "left traces" in her mouth. The course leader linked this participant's contribution and the production cycle of the raisin to Buddhist concept of 'conditional emerging' or 'dependent origination'. It says that everything is interconnected and subject to a web of causes and effects.

Co-accomplishing mindfulness

This chapter has shown how co-accomplishing mindfulness involves that participants and teachers align their actions and language. This includes the four elements of 'inquiry' which are applied to transform a participant's contribution into a mindfulness teaching. What is new in this chapter is the perspective of embodying mindfulness, both when participating in guided

mindfulness practices and in the process of teaching it. I showed this firstly by focusing on how the 'day of practice' was framed at the beginning of the day (see subsection 5.4.1). The course leader emphasised that participation required authenticity and full presence on one's own inner experience. She encouraged participants to engage fully in the practice and abstain from taking notes. Secondly, the chapter provided a member's perspective of what embodying mindfulness entails in the moment of teaching. A student teacher reflected on her teaching experience by focusing on her inner experience whilst teaching (see subsection 5.5.1). Through this she communicated how she was aware of her bodily sensations, thoughts and feelings whilst teaching—she was present within herself. Moreover, when the student teacher received feedback from other participants for her teaching, others commented on her authenticity and presence as well (see subsection 5.5.2). This makes it appear as though these are observable qualities.

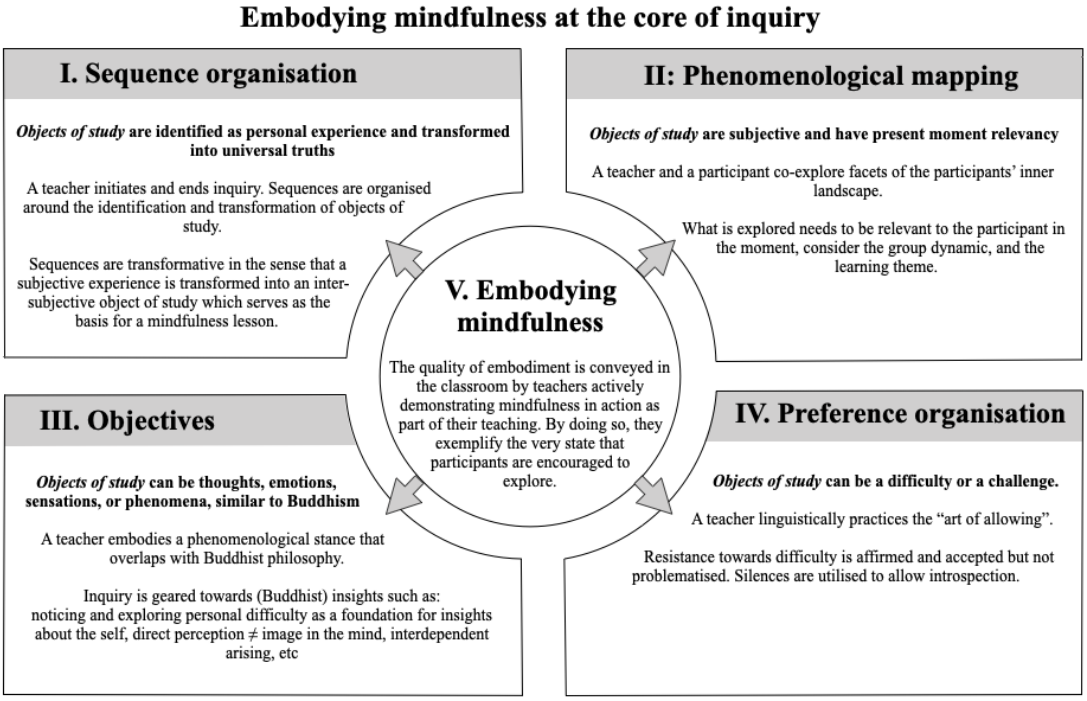


Figure 5.16: Embodying mindfulness is at the core of 'inquiry'. It effects the other elements of inquiry–sequence organisation, phenomenological mapping, objectives, and preference organisation–in terms of how 'objects of study' are selected, discussed, and transformed into shared understanding.

The embodiment of mindfulness of both the teacher and the participants influenced the elements of 'inquiry'–sequence organisation, phenomenological mapping, objectives, and prefer-

ence organisation. It effected how 'objects of study' were selected, discussed, and transformed into shared understanding. See figure 5.16 for an overview of these four elements and placing 'embodying mindfulness' at its core.

Modelling *how to teach mindfulness*

The transformation of experience that takes place within MBSR 'inquiry' (see subsection 4.5) involves a repositioning of participants' accounts and collaboratively transforming them into mindfulness teachings, as I have said above. This was present in the transcripts of this chapter, and even made explicit (e.g. see subsection 5.5.2). A new insight in this chapter is that the very same mechanism is used in this MBSR teacher training, that is participants' contribution serve as a basis to teach *how to teach mindfulness* (see subsection 5.6).

Chapter 6

Disruption and repair: understanding the co-accomplishment of a safe space

6.1 Introduction

Overview

In this chapter I analyse the 'whistle incident', a breaching event within the MBSR teacher training course. I use ethnomethodology to explore how foundational expectations and norms that are not normally noticed are seen and made explicit by members in this moment of disruption. The 'whistle incident' happened when a student teacher blew a loud whistle in the middle of guiding a sitting meditation. This startled the participants and temporarily destabilised the shared understanding of the session's purpose and safety.

Section 6.2 outlines the 'whistle incident'. I first describe the setup and initial guided meditation session, led by a student teacher with the theme of "dealing with difficulties". This meditation was intended to help novice practitioners manage distractions, which are common in meditation practice, such wandering thoughts. In the second part I detail the 'whistle incident' itself by examining how it disrupted the session. In section 6.3, I analyse the initial segment of the 'inquiry' following the whistle meditation. Four female participants describe feeling overwhelmed and shaken by the unexpected whistle. While they express their distress, the student-teacher

who led the meditation fails to acknowledge the impact of his actions. This makes visible the expectations of a safe space during meditation and the need to be heard and understood in the 'inquiry'. In section 6.4, I examine the continuation of the 'inquiry' following the whistle meditation. Here, the tone shifts as two male participants offer more playful accounts, that are in contrast with the earlier women's responses. The student teacher then offers a mindfulness lesson, ("there is no obstacle, only experience") that fails to acknowledge the distress in the group. Finally, a participant provides feedback for the student-teacher and reframes her own challenge with the disruption as a valuable learning experience. In section 6.5, I offer an analysis of the repair work that followed. During this repair, the course leaders and participants collaboratively reframe the situation into a learning opportunity–one that emphasises self-responsibility. This framing focuses not on changing external circumstances but on exploring and managing the individual's response to them. By analysing the resolution of the breach, this section illustrates how moments of disruption can reinforce core principles of mindfulness.

Context

This chapter focuses on 40 minutes of a teacher training session. In it, I describe a breaching incident, participants' reactions, and the eventual repair. For context, this situation, like Sandra's raisin 'inquiry' in the previous chapter, took place on the third day of the second teacher training module. The day's schedule began at 9:00 with a silent meditation led by the course leader, followed by what would typically be the first day of an MBSR course: Sandra's raisin exercise and a session on auto-pilot. Then, the group progressed to three sessions that simulate the second day of an MBSR course: two sessions on perception and a session on 'dealing with difficulties'. This 'dealing with difficulties' session began at noon, lasted about 40 minutes in total, and is the focus of this chapter. I will describe the 40 minutes in full and in chronological order, each transcript is a continuation of the previous one.

6.2 Breaching the familiar: the whistle incident

This section describes how the breaching situation that I refer to as the 'whistle incident' unfolded. I will discuss it in two parts, focusing firstly on the beginning of the guided meditation (subsection 6.2.1) and secondly on the whistle incident itself (subsection 6.2.2). The guided sitting meditation was the fifth short session led by a participant on this day of the teacher training course. The theme of the meditation, 'dealing with difficulties', helps novice meditation practitioners to deal with naturally occurring distractions during meditation, such as distracting thoughts or an itching foot. The meditation was prepared and led by Mark.

6.2.1 Practising a guided sitting meditation

#03:08:15:0# - #03:13:12-0#

Marlene: okay we continue hm? and give Mark the undivided attention (1.4)
Mark: right. yes! I would like to explore with you all a little bit how we deal with obstacles (0.8) a:nd for this exploration I would like to use meditation, so I invite you to take your meditation posture (2.1)
Man: ((coughing)) (2.3)
Mark: and the idea here is when we take the meditation posture (0.7) uh:m dealing with obstacles during meditation (0.8) so how we can keep our mindfulness going with the- when we are confronted with obstacles (0.7) that is of course also (0.8) uh:m yes a sign of how we deal with it in real life, so outside, everywhere, when we meet obstacles (2.5) good! so then (0.9) maybe roll your shoulders back again with- uh (0.6) in the position where the spine is straight (1.3) that the shoulders can relax. find a safe
Man: [((coughing))]
Mark: [position for] the entire body, for the hands (2.7) and then (1.1) just connect (0.6) with your posture (5.0) just observe (0.7) how the breathing happens automatically (6.6) maybe you can develop anew a little fascination for (0.7) how the body automatically (0.7) gets the air it needs (1.3)
Man: [((clearing throat))]
Mark: [how it] works and flows out again (15) perhaps you can again put a special focus (1) on the exhalation (3.7) simply experience that the (0.7) exhalation happens over a longer period of time (3.8) that the exhalation (0.9) actually consists of many, many small moments (3) that can also be changed a little bit again and again (10) so you can really surrender yourself completely (1.7) to this observation of the breath (2.7) and turn all your mindfulness (1.9) to it (13.4) if then (1.9) your thoughts wander off (0.9) which is sure to happen (1.5) then it is no problem at all (1.4) if you notice it (2.5) then you can just bring your attention very gently and kindly (1.3) back to the breath (23.7) so we are sitting (1.7) with our mindfulness (2.4) fo:cused on the breath (9.7) what (1.1) if we now face (1) an obstacle (1.6) a difficulty (2.1) a challenge? (5.4) let's (1.9) explore this together (4.3)

Transcript 6.1: Mark creates a meditation space that promotes a sense of safety through his choice of words and soft speech. He begins by inviting participants to find a comfortable meditation posture that allows for relaxation (lines 4-15), he introduces a meditation anchor by asking to bring the attention to the observation of the breath (lines 15-28), and he suggests that a wandering mind is normal and can be dealt with by noticing it and bringing the attention back to the breath (lines 25-27). His voice is soft, he speaks slowly and leaves long pauses. He asks to find a "safe position for the entire body" (lines 12-14). The focus of his guidance is to notice what is happening internally on a moment-to-moment basis.

This subsection describes the first half of Mark's guided meditation (transcript 6.1). The transcript begins with the course leader structuring the process and giving the floor to Mark to lead a guided sitting meditation and 'inquiry' with the group (line 1).

Guided meditation with a focus on relaxation and on the breath

Mark asks the group to assume their meditation posture and gives some step by step guidance to find a straight yet relaxed sitting position (lines 4-14). His choice of words suggests a sense of safety in that he asks to find a "safe position for the entire body" (lines 12-14) or says "you can really surrender yourself completely" (line 23). The focus of his guidance is to notice what is happening internally on a moment-to-moment basis. This internal focus is supported–on a group level–by a rather quiet room as participants sit still and–on an individual level–by participants most likely having their eyes closed. It is also noteworthy to repeat that this is the third day of the teacher training course and the fourth meditation session of the day for the group. Spending more and more time in meditation generally makes it easier to access a state of relaxation.

His instruction to "find a safe position for the entire body" (lines 12-14) serves as a bridge for his guidance on the breath. Mark suggests to "observe how the breathing happens automatically" (lines 15-16), providing a few examples of how the breath flows in and out of the body in a certain rhythm. Throughout, Mark's voice is soft and gentle. He speaks slowly leaving longer and longer pauses in between sentences to the point where the pauses become longer than his words. His speech also becomes more pronounced further into the meditation, in that he emphasises certain words. For example, in the following sentence almost every other word is emphasised and each speech unit is followed by a palpable silence: "(10) so you can really surrender yourself completely (1.7) to this observation of the breath (2.7) and turn all your mindfulness (1.9) to it (13.4)" (lines 23-25). Notice that Mark uses "mindfulness" as a synonym for "attention". Typically, in the MBSR context, mindfulness and attention are different things and mindfulness is the awareness that arises when you pay attention in a certain way. During the meditation, the room is completely quiet apart from a man who is coughing a few times, sometimes interrupting the silence (lines 5, 31) and sometimes overlapping with Mark's speech (line 13-14). Towards the

end of the breath contemplation, Mark reminds the group that stray thoughts are not a problem; that they can simply notice it happening and focus their attention back on the breath (lines 25-27).

Guided meditation with a focus on obstacles

Mark introduced his session by saying that he would like to explore "how we deal with obstacles" using meditation (lines 2-3). He repeats that the meditation will be about "obstacles" (lines 7, 8, 10) which might help us face similar situation in real life (lines 8-10). Most obstacles that participants learn to deal with during the itself meditation are those that arise from the inside: distracting thoughts, feelings, or bodily sensations that take the attention away from the meditation anchor, in this case, the breath. Obstacles to meditation might also emerge on the outside, the most obvious one being noise. Usually, when sitting down for meditation, outside noises and distractions are reduced to a minimum to make an internal focus easier. (Consider in the previous chapter when the course leader asked the group to refrain from taking notes during the guided meditation, subsection 5.4.1, page 132.) However, it also normal that there are still outside distractions such as noises in the room (here, a man with a cough), or noises outside the room (here, birds chirping in the background). So it would be a possibility to integrate the existing tapestry of sound into the meditation instruction because there is a possibility that participants notice it and perceive it as an obstacle.

At about five minutes in, Mark again brings up the topic of obstacles "(9.7) what (1.1) if we now face (1) an obstacle (1.6) a difficulty (2.1) a challenge? (5.4) let's (1.9) explore this together (4.3)" (lines 28-30)

6.2.2 The whistle incident

```
     #03:13:12-0# - #03:20:05:3#
 1   Man: ((coughing)) (4.7)
 2   Mark: if the obstacle (0.8) distracts you, just come back to the fascination for
 3   the  [breath      ]
 4   Man: [((coughing))] (7.5)
 5   Mark: ((WHISTLE, 1.5))
 6   Some in the group: ((loud exhalation, groaning)) .hh
 7   Lina: ((giggle)) (1.6)£
 8   Someone: ((clearing throat)) (0.6)
 9   Mark: how was it?
10   Group: ((loud laughter))
11   Someone: ((coughing))
12   Women: ((scattered laughter, clearing throat))
13   Mark: no problem at all, that it's funny, maybe that's also an obstacle (1.2) or
14   maybe not
15   Someone: ((vocal exhalation)) h(h) (2.1)
16   Mark: ((WHISTLE, 1.7)) (2.7)
17   Someone: h (18.2)
18   Mark: ((WHISTLE, 1.7)) (1.8)
19   Someone: h (3.9)
20   Mark: what happens (1) when the difficulty occurs repeatedly? (10.1) ((during
21   silence: rustling, sounds like people shifting))
22   Mark: ((WHISTLE, 1.7)) (20.8) ((1st WHISTLE, 1)) (1.4) ((2nd WHISTLE, 1.1)) (1.4)
23   ((3rd WHISTLE, 1)) (1.3) ((4th WHISTLE, 1.2)) (1.2) ((5th WHISTLE, 1.1)) (1.1)
24   ((6th WHISTLE, 1.1)) (4) what happens when the difficulty changes? (1.9) the rhythm
25   changes? (30.1) and where is your attention (1.1) now? (15.9) ((WHISTLE, 1.7))
26   Woman: ((clearing throat)) (1.1)
27   Mark: ((WHISTLE, 3.4)) (7.7) is it different (1.1) when there is no more rhythm?
28   (1.3) when the difficulties just appear? (2.6) unpredictable (1m 18.6s) how does it
29   feel when we expect difficulties? (1.3) and then they don't come (53.1) which of
30   the two sounds (1.1) causes more difficulties for mindfulness? (1.3) this one
31   ((WHISTLE, 1.9)) (2.2) or (1.4) this (0.7) ((gong))
32   Lina: ((chuckling)) ((gong becomes quieter))
33   Someone: ((clearing throat)) ((gong becomes even quieter))
34   Mark: (?) then open your eyes again ((gong barely audible)) (3.7)
35   Some in the group: ((Soft talking))
36   Marlene: ((clearing throat)) ((clearing throat)) (4.5) ((gong ends))
```

Transcript 6.2: Continuation of the guided sitting which began in transcript 6.1. Mark interrupts a 7.5 seconds silence with an unexpected loud whistle (line 5). He then does not address the audible signs of distress (such as groaning, line 6), nor the visible signs of distress (people shifting their positions and covering their ears). Instead he continues to alternate long stretches of silence and erratic, loud whistling.

This subsection is a direct continuation of the previous subsection which ended with Mark's suggestion to explore "an obstacle, a difficulty, a challenge" (line 29, transcript 6.1). The focus of this subsection is the whistle incident in transcript 6.2. After Mark's suggestion to explore an obstacle, there is a cough in the room (line 1) and Mark says" if the obstacle (0.8) distracts you, just come back to the fascination for the breath" (line 2-3). Then, there is another cough in the room (line 3). His meditation instructions could easily be interpreted as referring to the coughing. Mark leaves long stretches of silence after each interruption.

Loud whistle in a completely silent room

Once the room has fallen silent again after the last cough, Mark leaves a pause of 7.5 seconds (line 4). He interrupts the silence with a loud, 1.5 seconds long whistle (line 5). On the recording, you can hear some participants exhaling loudly and groaning. Lina giggles briefly and someone clears their throat (lines 7-8). My own immediate reaction is to jump in my seat and feel a rush of warmth throughout my body. I was very suddenly jolted out of a quite relaxed state, which was unexpected and frightening. When Mark asks "How was it?" (line 9) the group bursts into a short loud laughter that is followed by rustling sounds and a few women who giggle briefly. Mark incorporates this laughter reaction into his instruction when he says "no problem at all, that it's funny, maybe that's also an obstacle (1.2) or maybe not" (lines 3-4). He does not consider that he might have scared people and appears to interpret the laughter in the group as a reaction to something humorous.

Mark creates an 'unsafe' meditation space for the following reasons. It can be assumed from the above observation and knowledge of a typical MBSR classroom that during a meditation, participants–like myself– have their eyes closed, are focused on their inner experience, are reasonably relaxed, and possibly in a meditative state. *Any* type of unexpected sound in this environment would probably jolt people's attention to the outside environment. I.e. in this room there is sometimes a loud doorbell that occasionally interrupts meditation sessions. However, in an MBSR classroom it would be completely unexpected for the teacher to introduce a sound. There are other styles of meditation where the sound of bells may be used as a meditation object as a means to *support* meditation. When Mark blows the whistle, he intentionally introduces a sound to *disrupt* meditation. This in itself would probably be irritating because it is so unexpected. Mark, however, blows the whistle at such an intense pitch that it makes people shift their position, groan, cover their ears and laugh.

Long stretches of silence and unpredicted whistling

As Mark's guided meditation continues, he goes back to meditation instructions in a gentle and soft voice, stretches of long silences (the longest is 1m 18s, line 28) and blowing the whistle

very loudly in an unpredictable pattern. At one point, he blows the whistle six times in a row (lines 22-24). I am not able to continue with my meditation after the first whistle because of my strong negative reaction to it. My heart races and my breathing is heavy and I watch Mark closely which allows me to cover my ears every time he moves the whistle towards his mouth. I notice that others in the room also fidget and cover their ears. The first few whistles are followed by loud exhalations but after a while no reactions from the group are audible.

When Mark continues whistling for the rest of the session, he further adds factors that are in opposition to creating a safe space. He ignores the most intense reactions in the group in two ways. He does not incorporate any adverse reactions into his guided meditation and he does not adjust the intensity of his whistling. In this aspect, he is not teaching from 'present moment awareness' because it would be difficult to not be aware of the agitation in the room and several people covering their ears. Further, he keeps up the unpredictability of the situation by switching between guiding the meditation in a way that would normally invite relaxation and then interrupting the meditation by whistling erratically. Mark ends the practice after a total of 12 minutes, i.e. 5 minutes of quiet meditation and 7 minutes of erratic loud whistling during the meditation. When ending the practice, Mark says "which of the two sounds (1.1) causes more difficulties for mindfulness? (1.3) This one ((WHISTLE, 1.9)) (2.2) or (1.4) this (0.7)" (lines 29-31). Lina, the woman who giggled after the first whistle, promptly reacts to this with a short giggle (line 32). Mark ends the practice by sounding a gong.

The course leaders did not interfere at any moment. Mark continued with intense, unpredictable whistling without acknowledging the group's reactions–but neither did the course leaders. The fact that the whole session was allowed to continue until Mark ended it gave it a touch of legitimacy and normalcy. What is more is that it was conducive to a group dynamic that made it difficult to get up and leave the group. The laughter in the group also possibly added another barrier to express some form of opposition to what was happening.

6.3 Revealing broken expectations of trust and safety

Mark followed his guided meditation with an 'inquiry', as expected. In this section, I will examine the first four 'inquiries' in which participants all expressed great distress. They expressed how the sudden, unexpected sound of the whistle shook their sense of safety and trust within the meditation setting. They provide descriptions of what expectations they had how they experienced the breach. Mark does not address these accounts, so each 'inquiry' that follows does not only not resolve the relational rupture, it appears to escalate the breach further.

Here is an outlook of the four 'inquiries': The first 'inquiry' (subsection 6.3.1) with Susanne sets the tone for the other three. Susanne expresses a sense of fear and broken trust that Mark leaves unaddressed. I look at this first 'inquiry' in terms of the *four elements of 'inquiry'* and show in which places they are disrupted. The second 'inquiry' (subsection 6.3.2) is with Marion and continues the same themes as the 'inquiry' with Susanne. Mark acknowledges that the relationship to him has been affected but still fails to address or repair it. In the third 'inquiry' between Lina and Mark (subsection 6.3.3), Lina offers a yet another subjective account of how she experienced the whistle. She offers a description of her embodied response and explains that the sudden noise made her think of war memories. Mark asks her to *explain* rather than *explore* her reactions which contradicts the 'allowing' atmosphere that is typical of 'inquiry'. Interestingly, Lina maintains that she was still 'mindful' despite the adversity, which Mark does not address. Lastly, in this section I analyse the 'inquiry' with Marion (subsection 6.3.4) who expresses how she is angry with Mark for destroying her safe space. Mark attempts to reposition her account as "stressed mindfulness" and then invites participants with less adverse reactions to speak up.

Together, these accounts make explicit the participants embodied reactions to the whistle and their broken expectations in terms of a meditative setting and guided meditation.

6.3.1 Susanne: from mindfulness to fear and broken trust

In this subsection, I describe Mark's initiation of the 'inquiry' which leads to the first 'inquiry' between Mark and a woman called Susanne. My focus is on the elements of inquiry–sequence organisation, phenomenological mapping, objectives and preference organisation. I will use these elements to discuss how the co-accomplishment of mindfulness broke down for Susanne due to the whistling and was not restored in the 'inquiry'.

```
     #03:20:05:3# - #03:21:46:4#
 1   Mark: maybe first the question, who perceived the whistling as a difficulty?
 2   Group: ((scattered soft laughter, someone blowing their lips))
 3   Mark: really? (0.5) all hands went up? maybe someone could describe who perceived
 4   that as a difficulty (0.7) uh:m yes what happened there (1.7)
 5   Susanne: yes I was totally scared
 6   Mark:     [mm=hm    ]
 7   Susanne: [I didn't] expect it at all and um
 8   Marlene: ((clearing throat))
 9   Susanne: immediately perceived it as physical pain (1) and um (0.7) I didn't dare
10   to- uh to go back, so the first time I put my hands down again (0.6) and (0.6) when
11   the second time came, I thought, now I don't want to have it again and then um I- I
12   just kept covering my ears because I was afraid that I would get this fright again,
13   so (0.5) the fright has completely taken me away from uh:m being mindful- so I was
14   only mindful towards caution, so it has completely changed, the- the uhm the focus
15   has completely moved somewhere else
16   Mark: what pulled you out of mindfulness then uh: what was that?
17   Susanne: the shock. [so-      ]
18   Mark:               [the shock]
19   Susanne: and the fear
20   Mark: and the fear
21   Susanne: the caution I had to keep then, I was very careful that my ears were
22   really closed up
23   Mark: mm=hm
24   Susanne: and then afterwards I focused more on when do you start talking so that I
25   could hear the talking again, but then I didn't trust you any more and thought,
26   AFTER THAT HE WHISTLES WHILE HE SPEAKS
27   Group: ((loud laughter))
28   Mark: really a big difficulty ((Laughter becomes softer and stops))
29   Susanne: yes that was a really[big obstacle suddenly so, yes]
30   Some in the group:            [((clearning throat))         ]
31   Mark: maybe someone else who perceived that as a difficulty, yes
```

Transcript 6.3: Mark initiates the 'inquiry' with the group (lines 1-4). Susanne describes feelings of fear, shock, physical pain, how she protected herself from this overwhelm, and how the unpredictability of the situation made her lose trust in Mark as the facilitator of the practice.

Initiating the inquiry

In the first four turns of transcript 6.3, Mark initiates the 'inquiry' after the guided sitting meditation he just led. He opens the 'inquiry' with a direct question to the group: "maybe first the question, who perceived the whistling as a difficulty?" (line 1). The question invites the group to reflect on the disruption caused by the whistle. The phrasing of his question steers the conversation towards the idea of difficulty. The group responds with scattered, soft laughter and

someone blowing their lips (line 2). These reactions are similar to when the whistling happened during the guided meditation. Mark responds to the group by expressing surprise "really? (0.5) all hands went up?" (line 3). He then invites participants to share their personal experiences with this "difficulty" (line 4) in more detail. Susanne is the first participant to answer Mark's question by which she self selects for the first teacher-participant dyad (lines 5-29, transcript 6.3).

Elements of inquiry

The *sequence organisation* in this transcript follows the typical structure of MBSR 'inquiry' and also reveals the impact of the whistle's disruption. Susanne recounts her emotional and physical reactions to the whistle. She describes the immediate shock and ongoing effects, such as a shift in focus and a loss of trust in Mark. Mark responds minimally ("mm-hm", lines 6, 23), repeats select phrases, such as "the shock" and "the fear" (lines 18, 20), asks a clarifying question ("what pulled you out of mindfulness then, uh: what was that?", line 16), and repositions her account as "really a big difficulty" (line 28). While this aligns with the structure and linguistic tools of 'inquiry', Mark's responses lack the depth to transform Susanne's difficulty into a constructive learning moment. His abrupt decision to move on to another person, without addressing the emotional weight of her account (line 31), seems almost trivialising. Susanne's description provides a *phenomenological map* of how the whistle disrupted her mindfulness practice. She recounts feeling "totally scared" (line 5) and experiencing "physical pain" (line 9). Her immediate reaction was to cover her ears, saying, "the first time I put my hands down again" (line 10) and "I just kept covering my ears" (line 12). The whistle shifted her focus from mindfulness to self-protective vigilance: "I was only mindful towards caution" (lines 13-14). Additionally, she expresses a loss of trust in Mark due to the unpredictability of the whistling. She says "then I didn't trust you anymore and thought, AFTER THAT HE WHISTLES WHILE HE SPEAKS" (lines 25-26). She indicates that the incident disrupted both her internal experience and her relationship with Mark as the teacher. The *objective* of 'inquiry' includes articulating subjective experiences and linking them to personal insights and mindfulness themes. While Susanne achieves the first part of this objective by sharing her subjective reality, her account reinforces her

difficulties rather than fostering insight. She explicitly describes how the whistling pulled her out of "being mindful" (line 13) into a state of caution and mistrust. This undermines the cultivation of mindfulness. Typically, in 'inquiry' regarding *preference organisation*, the teacher practices what can be called 'the art of allowing'. This involves affirming what a participant shares and leaving pauses for reflection. This provides space for insights to unfold. While Mark's questions and affirmations initially align with Susanne's narrative and support her in describing her experience, he does not ask clarifying questions to deepen the exploration of her experience or leave silences to allow for reflection. By abruptly moving on to the next person, Mark disrupts this process. His decision undermines the art of allowing, leaving Susanne's distress and mistrust unaddressed.

Failure to co-accomplish mindfulness

The loud whistling during the guided sitting meditation significantly disrupted the silence that is typical in places where mindfulness is practiced. Susanne says that she "didn't expect it at all" (line 7). Her reactions included shock (line 17), fear (line 5), physical pain (line 9), a vigilant focus on Mark (line 24), and self protection by covering her ears (line 12). She explicitly says that she could no longer practice mindfulness (line 13). Mark's responses also reflect a challenge in embodying mindfulness because he does not acknowledge or address these reactions. During the meditation some participants–like Susanne–covered their ears and kept their eyes open and in this first teacher-participant dyad, Susanne recounted the extent of her adverse reactions. Furthermore, the group laughs at situations, where laughter seems misplaced–both right after the initial shock of the whistling and when Susanne explains how she lost trust in Mark because of the unpredictability of the whistling (lines 24-27). This introduces a certain ambiguity and could be a response to tension. It could also indicate a collective difficulty in maintaining a mindful presence after the incident. Together, these dynamics illustrate how the breach caused by the whistling and lack of repair in this first 'inquiry' disrupted the co-accomplishment of mindfulness within the group and between Mark and Susanne. This emphasises the potential importance of trust and safety in co-creating a setting that allows for the practice of mindfulness.

6.3.2 Juliane: fear and broken trust remain unresolved

The focus of this subsection is the second teacher-participant dyad of the 'inquiry', this time between Mark and Juliane. Juliane's account deepens the themes that Susanne introduced earlier, particularly the breach of trust, emotional and physical impact, and the shift towards self-protection. This indicates an ongoing struggle to restore mindfulness and relational safety after the whistle incident. Mark does not address the breach or reframe it as a learning opportunity.

```
     #03:21:46:4# - #03:22:39:1#
 1   Juliane: I also found it very difficult uh and it affected my trust in you. At the
 2   beginning I felt so wonderfully guided and supported and really accompanied and
 3   then this whistle blew and the trust was gone. I also had to cover my ears
 4   Mark: mm=hm
 5   Juliane: and I found- I didn't know what would happen and it was clear that I could
 6   only protect myself from it happening again
 7   Mark: mm=hm
 8   Juliane: It totally frightened me=
 9   Mark: =so really a physical-
10   Juliane: I felt it physically
11   Mark:    [so a pain-     ]
12   Juliane: [and there was a] tension, it was- it just went through me here once (1.7)
13   and um (0.5) there really came this issue of breach of trust really strongly
14   Mark: mm=hm so also quite personally
15   Juliane: yes
16   Mark: hm (0.8 ) ok. can you rebuild that?
17   Group: ((laughter))
18   Juliane: yes. ((laughter in the group fades)) I was so scared myself
19   Mark: yes.
20   Juliane: what steps it made then.
21   Mark: yes. but it really changed a lot for both of you [yes?      ]
22   Juliane:                                               [extremely.]
```

Transcript 6.4: Juliane explains feelings of fear and physical sensations, emphasises that it made her lose trust in Mark, and how she protected herself in the situation.

Broken trust, emotional and physical impact

The theme of broken trust intensifies in this dialogue. Juliane explicitly articulates how the whistle disrupted her initial sense of safety and guidance. She says "at the beginning I felt so wonderfully guided and supported and really accompanied and then this whistle blew and the trust was gone" (line 1-2). This mirrors Susanne's earlier account of broken trust and emphasises the relational dimension of the breach for Juliane. Unlike Susanne, Juliane does not describe her internal world independent of Mark but alludes to his role in it. However grammatically, she does not give agency to Mark. She uses indirect constructions and gives agency to the whistle. Instead of saying "*you* guided a wonderful practice", she says "I felt wonderfully guided" (line 2) and instead of "then *you* blew the whistle", she says "then this whistle blew" (line 3).

Similar to Susanne, Juliane also describes feelings of fear ("it totally frightened me", line 8, "I was so scared", line 18). Regarding the whistle's physical effects, again Juliane's account parallels Susanne's earlier account: "I felt it physically" (line 10), "and there was a tension, it was- it just went through me here once" (line 12). Susanne earlier said that she "perceived [the whistle] as physical pain" (line 9, transcript 6.3). Juliane also echoes Susanne's focus on hypervigilance and caution. She describes how the whistle left her feeling that "it was clear that I could only protect myself from it happening again" (line 5-6). This loss of trust and the shift to self-protection show how the mindfulness principles of open awareness and acceptance were no longer met.

Lack of repair

When Juliane repeats how the "breach of trust" (line 13) effected her negatively, Mark acknowledges the connection Juliane established between her experience and his behaviour. He says "so also quite personally" (line 14) which Juliane affirms immediately and without hesitation (line 14). Mark's response, while acknowledging the breach, does not fully address the relational repair required. His question "can you rebuild that?" (line 16) acknowledges the need for repair but does not assume any responsibility in it. Rather, it appears to shift responsibility back to Juliane. This seems to imply that trust repair lies primarily with person effected by the breach of trust rather than being co-constructed. His question elicits laughter from the group, which again seems misplaced. It might serve to diffuse some tension or reflect discomfort, as the issue of trust repair remains unaddressed. Juliane replies "yes" (line 18) and says that she was "scared" ("erschreckt": includes the element of surprise) of the "steps it made" (lines 18-20). Her choice of grammar suggests that she was powerless to the chain of events that was set in motion for her. Still, Juliane's voice is firm and serious throughout her account, also during the short burst of laughter in the group. Just like with Susanne, Mark does not fully engage with the emotional depth of Juliane's account. The failure to address her experience leaves the physical and emotional impact unresolved and allows it to linger. Mark ends both Susanne's and Juliane's accounts by acknowledging that "it really changed a lot for both of you" (line 21) which Juliane

eagerly affirms by saying "extremely" (line 22), talking over Mark.

6.3.3 Lina: unresolved relational tensions

In this subsection I explore the ongoing relational tensions that were made explicit during the preceding inquiries. Both Susanne and Juliane articulated a breach of trust and described intense emotional and physical reactions to the whistle. However, so far, these issues remain unaddressed by Mark. In this third 'inquiry', Lina shares her experience, which includes a description of an embodied response and how it brought up memories of war. She eventually frames her reaction as an example of maintaining mindfulness amidst adversity. However, the conversation reveals subtle contradictions and relational complexities that continue to leave the relational tensions unresolved and hinder the co-accomplishment of mindfulness.

An embodied reaction and laughter

In transcript 6.5 on the next page, Lina enters into the conversation without an indication of a pause which makes it appear as though she is eager to speak. She is fluent in German with some grammatical errors. She builds on what the previous two speakers said in a calm, friendly and serious voice. "I want to take it even, the shock and trust one step further even (1.3) I had immediately thought of war (0.6)" (lines 1-3). In response, someone in the group can be heard clearing their throat. Lina goes on to explain that whilst quickly realising that the sound was not an "alarm" (line 5), "the very FIRST reaction was, this is coming" (line 6). She describes a sensation of "warmth that goes from the bottom to the top" (lines 8-9). Unlike Susanne and Juliane, Lina addresses the laughter that for her came with the realisation that it is "nonsense" (line 12). She gives an example of a similar experience in her life when someone "stupid" (line 14) used a siren and makes clear that she doesn't "find jokes like that funny" (lines 15-16). Mark's response disrupts this reflective process by questioning her laughter "why did you laugh if you didn't find it funny?" (line 20). Lina replies that "it was the stress" and the realisation that it was not an alarm, "it's not that" (line 22). This marks a tonal shift in Lina's voice and with a smiley tone, she labels Mark "clown-like" and "funny" (line 23). She laughs (line 24)

```
     #03:22:39:1# - #03:25:51:0#
 1   Lina: it- I want to take it even, the shock and trust one step further even (1.3) I
 2   had immediately thought of war (0.6) I immediately-
 3   Someone: ((clearing throat)) [((clearing throat)) ]
 4   Lina:                        [and                 ] then very quickly I thought, no,
 5   that's not an alarm (0.7) that- (0.8) with me that was really with a- I come from
 6   Israel hm? (.h, 0.9) uh:m the very FIRST reaction was, this is coming, yes?
 7   Mark: [mm=hm    ]
 8   Lina: [so that- ] (.h, 1.1) and I could f- everything (1.3) this warmth that goes
 9   from the bottom to the top
10   Mark: mm=hm
11   Lina: and all of a sudden laughter, all of a sudden like thi::s it (0.5) is
12   nonsense, yes? it's not that
13   Mark: mm=hm (0.8)
14   Lina: and I had already had this experience once in my life because of a stupid (?)
15   uh::: who played, who really started with a siren (.h, 0.8) uh::m- I don't find
16   jokes like that funny, but it wasn't that (1) and then (0.4) I could laugh about it
17   very quickly
18   Mark: mm=hm
19   Lina: but that's (0.5)  [with me-]
20   Mark:                   [?       ] why did you laugh if you didn't find it funny?
21   you found it-?
22   Lina: I think it was the stress that just bro- yes so, it's not that, yeah? (0.6)
23   and you are so clo:wn-like, yes, funny and then you::- you wanted to make(h) a
24   point ((laughter)) about(h) ob(h)stacles and(h) you(h) suc(h)ceeded very(h)
25         [well(h) .hh ]
26   Mark:  [my intention]
27   Lina: exactly (h) £you succeeded very well (.h, 0.6) and then I thought to myself
28   but£ (0.4) yes, that's brave ((laughter)) because(h) £I mean, if I£ (0.8) had been
29   traumati:sed by(h) the war or something, then it would have been completely
30   different for me. It doesn't matter, hm, so I have the war story and then I- I then
31   stretched my legs forward, which for me is a bit like .h hh yes, so now everything
32   is good, nothing happened and we are all here and we are all alive and yes, life
33   goes on=
34   Mark: and then you have this- the- the- (0.9) the out uh- did you get out of this
35   hm? panic, fear
36   Lina: [mm=hm      ]
37   Mark: [out of this ] memory [did you]?
38   Lina:                       [yes    ]
39   Mark: find out by breaking off the meditation? (0.9)
40   Lina: that was broken off for me. that was broken off for me. I was so heav- but no
41   actually I don't want to see it like that, hm? because when I think of Jon Kabat-
42   Zinn, I had been so with myself, I was so-
43   Mark: mm=hm
44   Lina: I was able to perceive everything very precisely, it was very meditative
45   what(h) was(h) happening(h) with(h) me(h)
46   Mark: mm=hm
47   Lina: uh::m (1.9) yes, this warmth is still there: afterwards I have- I: felt ok
48   afterwards, when you continued: whistling was- was ok
49   Mark: mm=hm
50   Lina:  [was ok                  ] but that was-
51   Mark:  [that was the first time ]
52   Lina: but that was the first time, so that scared(h) me so much that(h)-
53   Mark: was it the same for the others with the difficulties, that the difficulties
54   with the- with the other whistles: were no longer there? Or were they then- (0.7)
55   so did- did that change a lot?
```

Transcript 6.5: Memories of war. Lina describes that the sudden and unexpected sound of the whistle brought back memories of war, and with it fear, physical sensations, and that she when she realised "we are all alive" (line 32), she used laughter and movement to deal with the situation.

and playfully praises Mark ("you wanted to make(h) a point ((laughter)) about(h) ob(h)stacles and(h) you suc(h)ceeded very(h) well(h)", lines 23-25). Mark talks over Lina and acknowledges her compliment when he says "my intention" (line 26). Lina continues in a smiley, laughing way praising him again "you succeeded very well" (line 27) and "that's brave" (line 28). She

still speaks in a smiley voice when she says "if I (0.8) had been traumati:sed by(h) the war or something" (lines 28-29). It makes it difficult to hear her words because her voice sounds so merry. She creates a further distance to the mention of a possible trauma when she says "it doesn't matter" (line 30). Her tone of voice is in contrast with the adverse experience she describes. In fact, there was a marked shift from her initial congruence between her verbal content and tone–serious and reflective–to her verbal content and tone after Mark's interruption that encourages her to *explain* rather than *explore* her reaction. Her laughter here could help to mitigate a potential conflict or simply preserve relational harmony.

Maintaining mindfulness amidst adversity

Lina then makes five statements in a row to re-assure composure "so now everything is good, nothing happened and we are all here and we are all alive and yes, life goes on" (lines 31-33). The first two utterances are juxtapositions that effectively negate the distress she just described. The next three statements are interesting because alluding to being alive and the continuation of life includes its opposite "life did not end". This could indicate that the severity of the shock she possibly felt registered as one of life and death, as the startle response is a reflex that we have no control over. At this point, Mark interrupts Lina again and stutters when putting together a question. He effectively asks if she escaped the panic and memory of war by "breaking off the meditation" (lines 34-39). Lina immediately affirms this twice, then backtracks, saying that "when I think of Jon Kabat-Zinn" (lines 41-42) "I was able to perceive everything very precisely, it was very meditative" (line 44). She possibly alludes to Jon Kabat-Zinn's definition of mindfulness as "awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally". With this understanding, the events, her experience of it, and Mark's role in it did not pose an obstacle to mindfulness for her. Lina earlier said that Mark was successful in introducing an obstacle to meditation, now she says that the events did not impact her ability to remain mindful. This could be understood as a contradiction or as viewing meditation and mindfulness as two separate things. She underlines her point of remaining mindful by mentioning that she can still feel "this warmth" (line 47), thus sharing her present moment experience

and phenomenological map. She also explains that the repetition of the whistles "was ok" and that it was "the first time that scared(h) me so much" (line 52). At this point, Mark interrupts Lina's reflection again and asks the group whether they also experienced a change from the first to the other whistles, whether the "difficulties [...] were no longer there" (lines 53-54).

Despite Lina's efforts to share her personal reflections, the unresolved relational tension continues to hinder the co-accomplishment of mindfulness. On the one hand, there is Mark's subtle questioning of Lina's accounts and his interruptions, and on the other hand, there is Lina's adjustments in tone and content. This reveals a certain power imbalance that disrupts mutuality. Moreover, it disrupts the possibility to fully explore Lina's subjective experiences.

6.3.4 Marion: destroying the safe room

This subsection explores the fourth 'inquiry' following the guided sitting meditation, this time between Mark and Marion. Marion explicitly accuses Mark of "destroying her safe room" and describes how this left her unable to meditate. Instead she found herself in a state of self-protection. Mark reframes her distress as "stressed mindfulness" and continues to dismiss the relational tension. By failing to address Marion's concerns, Mark still undermines the possibility for a repair of the relational rupture caused by the whistle and preceding inquiries.

#03:25:51:0# - #03:27:19:#

1 **Marion:** no, they were still there. [I also wanted to-]
2 **Mark:** [yes but wha-]
3 **Marion:** I have to say something now, I'm really cross with you. you made me- I can
4 only support that, also [what Juliane]
5 **Mark:** [mm=hm]
6 **Marion:** umm said, you destroyed my safe room, because I take it very personally
7 [just now]
8 **Mark:** [mm=hm]
9 **Marion:** I'm noticing. I'm really cross, still, and [um]
10 **Mark:** [mm=hm]
11 **Marion:** because I sat down here in this room and then this came and this knocked me
12 out so much, this also really hurt me and then I was out and then I was just alert
13 and- and uh wanted to protect myself and I thought umm
14 **Mark:** ((cymbal))
15 **Marion:** and(h) I(h) thought(h)
16 **Group:** ((Loud laughter, 5))
17 **Marion:** you sit down, eh? ((Group laughter softer))
18 **Group:** ((Loud laughter, 4.2, ends abruptly))
19 **Marion:** how do I protect myself now and then at some point I covered my ears
20 because I couldn't stand it any more, I just didn't want it any more
21 **Mark:** mm=hm
22 **Marion:** but I didn't meditate any more. (0.7)
23 **Mark:** mm=hm
24 **Marion:** that was over. (1.2)
25 **Mark:** uh can I ask, were you mindful? (1.1)
26 **Marion:** I was alert, I was uh in stress mode [and and]
27 **Mark:** [why in stress?]
28 **Marion:** uhm yes:
29 **Mark:** stressed [mindfulness]
30 **Marion:** [the sound made] me n- (0.6) is that mindful? I- I was just, I was
31 paying attention, where is new danger coming from (0.6) maybe, if you want to call
32 it mindful, I- I see it (0.5) yes, maybe, so I was directing my- my senses to this
33 [danger]
34 **Woman:** [((sobbing))]
35 **Mark:** there- there were people- because- because when I asked at the beginning, not
36 all hands came up (0.6)

Transcript 6.6: Marion expresses her distress after Mark's interruption. She accuses him of "destroying" her "safe room" (line 6). She describes how his actions disrupted her ability to meditate and how her focus shifts to self-protection. Mark frames her descriptions as "stressed mindfulness" (line 29).

From safe room to self protection

In abstract 6.6, Marion inserts herself into the conversation with Mark as the fourth woman to speak after the guided meditation. This 'inquiry' follows Mark's earlier interruption of Lina's account and his question to the group about whether their difficulties with the whistling had resolved. Marion begins with an emphatic negation: "no, they were still there" (line 1), immediately contradicting Mark's framing. She asserts herself further and says "I have to say something now, I'm really cross with you" (line 3), before delivering a direct accusation: "you destroyed my safe room" (line 6). She speaks with agitation in her voice when she says "because I sat down here in this room and then this came and this knocked me out so much, this also really hurt me and then I was out and then I was just alert and- and uh wanted to protect myself" (lines 11-13).

Marion's description of her experience highlights how Mark's actions disrupted her sense of security. This shift from safety to self-protection fundamentally undermined her ability to meditate. It illustrates how her "safe room"–both physical and psychological–was compromised, contradicting the core principles of mindfulness. As Marion continues her account, Mark touches the cymbal in front of him. Whether accidental or intentional, this action interrupts her. She repeats her last words with spurts of breathiness that indicate laughter (line 15). The whole group then bursts into laughter (line 16). Again, the laughter seems misplaced and might temporarily diffuse some tension but also risks trivialising Marion's distress. When the laughter becomes softer, Marion says "you sit down, eh?" (line 17) in a joking way to which there is another burst of laughter that ends abruptly. She then resumes her account with the same serious tone as before and describes how she had to cover her ears and was no longer able to meditate (lines 19-24).

Stressed mindfulness

Mark then asks Marion "were you mindful?" (line 25). This redirects the conversation to an analytical focus and effectively shifts attention away from Marion's emotional experience. Marion replies that she was "alert" and in "stress mode" (lines 25-26), but Mark interrupts her to probe further: "why in stress?" (line 27). Marion starts to answer his question "uhm yes: the sound made me n-" (line 30) at which point Mark talks over her again and suggests a formulation, "stressed mindfulness" (line 29). Marion then wonders out loud "is this mindful?" (line 30) but explains that she was "paying attention where is new danger coming from" (line 31). His question takes her focus aways from what she set out to say. She now stumbles a bit and no longer sounds assertive. Marion agrees with Mark that "if you want to call it mindful, I- I see it (0.5) yes, maybe, so I was directing my- my senses to this danger" (lines 31-33). Her reflective exploration of whether her heightened alertness constituted mindfulness demonstrates self-awareness. It also reveals how Mark's reframing undermines her emotional clarity.

At this point, a woman in the room is heard sobbing (line 34). This amplifies the emotional weight in the room. Rather than addressing this or Marion's concerns, Mark shifts focus to the group's earlier responses. He says "when I asked in the beginning, not all hands came up"

(line 36). This statement directly contradicts his earlier claim that "all hands went up" (transcript 6.3, line 3). With this, he invites perspectives that might be less problematic while leaving Marion's concerns unaddressed.

Conclusion

This section illustrated how the breach introduced by the whistling escalated in the accounts of Susanne, Juliane, Lina, and Marion. It highlights a breach of safety and trust and the absence of a shared mindfulness practice. In each account, the participants expressed their distress, ranging from fear and self-protection to anger and a sense of betrayal. Throughout these interactions, there was no co-accomplishment of mindfulness—or rather the (inter-subjective) resources for doing so had been fractured and lost—as the participants remained individually focused on their distress. The lack of repair prevented any shared resolution.

6.4 There is no obstacle, only experience

I have described 'inquiry' as an 'inquiry project' that typically unfolds in three distinct phases: (1) the teacher initiates the interaction, (2) the teacher and participant collaboratively transform the participant's subjective account into an intersubjective object of study, and (3) the teacher uses this object of study, along with a repositioned account of the participant's experiences, to teach mindfulness (see 4, section 4.5). The previous section focused on the second phase, where four women shared how the loud whistling during silent sitting meditation negatively impacted them. Their accounts revealed significant distress and a rupture of trust and rapport with Mark. This section explores the continuation of the 'inquiry' and Mark's mindfulness lesson. This marks phases two and three of the 'inquiry' project. Subsection 6.4.1 highlights a shift in tone as two male participants–unlike the earlier women–provide less emotionally charged and more playful accounts of the whistle's impact. Subsection 6.4.2 examines Mark's transition into the third phase, where he offers a mindfulness lesson to the group. Finally, Subsection 6.4.3 focuses on the feedback of a participant from the group regarding Mark's teaching performance. In her

feedback, the participant repositions her own difficulty with the whistle as personal insights.

6.4.1 Alexander and Rober: A shift in tone

```
     #03:27:19# - #03:28:21:8#
 1   Mark: yes [Alexander ]
 2   Alexander: [So for    ] me it was no problem at all. (0.7)
 3   Mark: was no problem=
 4   Alexander: Nothing, no (0.7) The noise came, it disappeared again, then it came
 5   several times and disappeared again (1)
 6   Robert: For me it was [also like that ]
 7   Alexander:            [for me         ] it was completely ok
 8   Robert: I was startled the first time (0.5) but not so brutally (?) (0.5)
 9   Mark:   [mm=hm]
10   Robert: [And  ] then alright but then much easier and afterwards I took it like a
11   game, so (1.5) then I thought of the train, you know, because in the- in the- in
12   the station, you know the (?) whistles
13   Mark: yes yes.
14   Robert: maybe he works at the railway
15   Some in the group: ((laughter))
16   Robert: I(h)- I(h) thought(h) like(h) that(h)
17   Mark: Yes, I think a lot certainly depends on, that there can also be a symbol
18   (0.8) behind it. For example, I wasn't aware that there-
19   Robert: yes yes
20   Mark: somehow, that I can now evoke the war, that is completely- completely-
21   Lina: I wouldn't have thought so, either, eh? because that has nothing to do with
22   it, but (1)
23   Mark: but that's maybe- ok what did we actually want to learn now?
24   Some in the group: ((laughter))
```

Transcript 6.7: Alexander and Robert downplay the impact of the whistling. Alexander describes it as “no problem” (line 2) and Robert frames it as a “game” (line 11). Unlike the women, they express little emotional distress.

In this subsection, the ‘inquiry’ continues and introduces the perspectives of two male participants, Alexander and Robert. In their accounts, they downplay the impact of the whistle. They describe their experiences with humour and a lack of emotional distress. This is in stark contrast with the intense, personal reactions that were expressed in the preceding transcripts.

No problem at all

Alexander, the first man to speak, describes the whistling as unproblematic: “for me it was no problem at all” (line 2). Unlike the preceding women, Alexander does not delve into his inner experience or express emotional or physical reactions. His calm, friendly tone and long pauses further convey a lack of distress. Robert follows and echoes Alexander’s sentiment. He acknowledges that he was “startled the first time” (line 8) but downplays the intensity and adds that it became “much easier” (line 10). Robert even reframes the experience as playful. He likens

it to a railway whistle and jokes about Mark's potential occupation at a train station (line 14). This elicits a short laugh from the group. While the women described feelings of vulnerability, distress, and the need for protection, the men adopt a more lighthearted tone. They minimise the event's emotional impact and frame it as manageable.

Mark's way of guiding the 'inquiry' shifts noticeably in this dialogue with Alexander and Robert. Earlier, he interrupted the participants and redirected their focus. Now, Mark appears to align more comfortably with the men's interpretations. When Robert jokes about the railway whistle, Mark supports the humour and expands on it by suggesting symbolic associations (lines 17-20). He expresses surprise that "there can be a symbol (0.8) behind it", referencing Lina's account that he "wasn't aware" that he could "evoke the war" (lines 18-20). This contrasts with his handling of Marion's distress, where he challenged her reactions and reframed them as "stressed mindfulness" (see subsection 6.3.4). Mark's final question, "what did we actually want to learn now?" (line 23) prompts a laughter response from the group.

The contrast between the women's and men's accounts reflects a general tension in the co-accomplishment of mindfulness. The women's responses, particularly Marion's, highlighted a breach of safety which undermined a collective "safe room". In contrast, the men's accounts suggest that this breach was not universally felt. While their humour may have even helped re-establish a sense of safety for some, the lack of acknowledgment and exploration of the women's distress possibly leaves a collective safe room fractured. The relational tensions raised earlier remain unresolved and continue to hinder the group's ability to embody mindfulness *together*. Moreover, the breach highlights an ongoing negotiation of an "object of study" for the mindfulness lesson. Potential themes have emerged previously, such as the breach of trust, fear, self-protection, trauma, anger, inability to practice mindfulness, and the destruction of the safe room. However, Mark has yet to explicitly address these themes. Now, less emotionally charged themes and potential candidates for an object of study were introduced by Alexander and Robert, such as the subjective experience of noise (lines 4-5) and reframing the whistling as a game (lines 10-11).

6.4.2 'Mindfulness' lesson focused on the teacher, not the participants

In this subsection, I will focus on the third phase of Mark's 'inquiry' project, his mindfulness lesson. Mark delivers it in two parts. Firstly, he summarises the insights from the whistling by himself and then again in dialogue with Marlene, who asks him about his intention. Mark's main insight is that there is 'no obstacle, only experience'. This mindfulness lesson is not based on the most relevant issues for the participants. Instead, it is mostly based on Mark's own perspective, as he says explicitly.

Mark's first mindfulness lesson: the obstacle is how you deal with it

```
     #03:28:21:8# - #03:29:06:6#
 1   Mark: Well, what I- what I ((laughter in the group ends)) think is that the
 2   obstacle, that is [for now-  ]
 3   Mark:             [((cymbal))]
 4   Mark: £I'll finish this£ because the ((sound of the cymbal ends)) object itself is
 5   not the obstacle (0.7), I think that's the important insight (0.7) but for example
 6   the symbolic power (0.5) or how you deal with it, how you- yes, how one perhaps
 7   receives it
 8   Man: ((clearing throat))
 9   Woman: [((giggling))]
10   Mark: [or          ] where you feel- where you just feel- you just feel safe and
11            [this obstacle means insecurity ]
12   Woman:   [((giggling))                    ]
13   Mark: but it doesn't have to be like that (0.8) I think that's the important thing,
14   that's what I wanted to say
15   Woman: ((giggling)) (1.1)
16   Marlene: thank you Mark
17   Woman: ((Loud giggle)) (3)
```

Transcript 6.8: Mark provides a mindfulness lesson from the guided meditation and 'inquiry'. His insight is that "the object itself is not the obstacle" (lines 4-5) but rather "how you deal with it" (line 6). He suggests that feeling "safe" changes how obstacles are perceived (line 10-11).

Mark starts speaking over the fading laughter of the group (transcript 6.8, line 1). At first he stammers, sounds a cymbal when he talks about "the obstacle" and then concludes with the "important insight" that "the object itself is not the obstacle" but rather "the symbolic power (0.5) or how you deal with it" (lines 4-6). He explains further that "you just feel safe and the obstacle means insecurity ((someone giggling)) but it doesn't have to be like that" (lines 10-11). Throughout his summary about what was learned from the session, a woman giggles loudly while Mark speaks (lines 9, 12, 15). Mark does not allude to any of the participants' accounts and he does not give reasons for his conclusion, nor is it entirely clear. It sounds like he is saying that those who had positive associations with the whistle dealt with it better than those who had

negative associations with it. Marlene thanks Mark which signals the end of his time as a teacher in this session.

Mark's second mindfulness lesson: there is no obstacle, only experience

```
     #03:29:06:6# - #03:31:19:8#
 1   Marlene: yes, how did you do? and what was your intention? (0.8)
 2   Mark: yes, my intention was really to say (1.3) that it- well, I was quite aware
 3   that it is a sharp sound, that it is unpleasant (0.8) a:nd still:, so in my world,
 4   and that is just, perception is very different, it is something that you can
 5   incorporate into meditation. That is something that- I would have been scared too,
 6   for sure, but then I would have processed it somehow (0.7) the next time (0.7)
 7   That's why I wasn't so aware that it could touch such, for example elements of
 8   trust (0.9). And I was also not aware uh:m that it could have such a symbolic
 9   power. That is also - that is also somehow difficult then. (0.9) But actually I
10   wanted to say it- actually I meant to say that there is no obstacle at all, there
11   is only experience (2.1) yes (1.1)
12   Thomas: that is actually quite interesting (1.1)
13   Mark: yes=
14   Woman: hh
15   Marlene: Ok. and how have you been? (0.9)
16   Mark: uh:m (1.2) yes I was- well I was- now with the feedback, which was very
17   authentic, that- thank you very much for that, of course I was really touched, I
18   wanted to- [now I really didn't want anyone here ]
19   Woman:     [((Loud breathing noises, sighing))   ]
20   Mark: uh::
21   Marlene: ((Clearing throat))
22   Mark: so to speak, so to push over the cliff, that- that wasn't my intention at
23   all, of course. I didn't think that it could have such power (1.5) yes (1.7) I have
24   an important- important aspect, that we have not considered yet- what I actually
25   also wanted to say (1) that the whistling, that can simply be in- integrated into
26   the meditation (0.6) while when the gong sounds, you are out (0.5) and then it is
27   much more difficult (0.7) to be mindful (1.8) [That's why-]
28   Marlene:                                      [Again      ] can you-
29        [so now I haven't- ]
30   Mark: [yes when the gong-] when the gong sounds, then you stop with the medita[tion]
31   Marlene:                                                                    [yes ]
32   Mark: and then this contact to mindfulness is much more difficult to maintain for
33   me (0.6) than to meditate through any disruptive elements (1) that was actually
34   another important (0.6) message that I wanted to get across. That the dangerous
35   sound is the gong
36   Marlene: aha, because then it's more or less finished.
37   Mark: hm exactly
```

Transcript 6.9: Marlene asks Mark about his intention with the whistle (line 1). Mark explains it as a lesson on perception and meditation. He downplays the group's distress and compares the whistle to the gong, which he finds harder to handle (lines 25-27). His response reflects his own experience and dismisses the participants' accounts.

In transcript 6.9 Marlene has the floor again and she asks Mark how he was doing and "what was your intention?" (line 1). This allows Mark to elaborate on why he introduced the whistle and what he had hoped to achieve with it. He admits that he was aware that the whistle was "a sharp sound" and "unpleasant" (line 3). He used it to show that "perception is very different, it is something that you can incorporate into meditation" (lines 4-5). He precedes his explanation with "in my world" (line 3), thus explicitly referencing his own perspective. He also expresses

a lack of understanding for the strong reactions in the group when he says "I would have been scared too, for sure, but then I would have processed it somehow (0.7) the next time" (lines 4-5). He proceeds to say that it was unexpected for him that the issue of trust came up as well as that there could be "such a symbolic power" (lines 8-9). Mark wraps this up with "actually I meant to say that there is no obstacle at all, there is only experience" (lines 10-11). Mark arrives at this conclusion from *his* view on the world and how he imagines *he* would have dealt with the situation. Second course leader Thomas comments Mark's explanation by saying that it is "actually quite interesting" (line 12). Marlene then repeats her question "and how have you been?" (line 15). Mark responds that he was "really touched" by the feedback "which was very authentic" (lines 16-17) to him. A woman is heard sighing heavily when he says this. Mark goes on to say that he did not want to "push" anyone "over the cliff" (line 22), a metaphor that matches the intensity that Lina expressed when she alluded to life and death situations such as experiencing war and realising that everyone is alive after the shock of the first whistle (subsection 6.3.3, transcript 6.5, lines 2 and 32). This could be an opportunity acknowledge the hurt he caused. However, Mark is downplays his role "I didn't think that it could have such power" (line 23). He then re-iterates his lesson that "the whistling, that can simply be in- integrated into the meditation" (lines 25-26). With this statement he dismisses the experiences of participants who had adverse reactions. He denies their reality further when he contrasts this 'simple' task of meditating through the whistling with the "much more difficult" task of remaining mindful "when the gong sounds" (lines 26-27). He concludes that "the dangerous sound is the gong" (lines 34-35). No one in the group has alluded to this, quite the opposite, i.e. Lina associated the *whistle* with an alarm during a time of war (transcript 6.5) and Marion described she was alert to danger and had to protect herself from it (transcript 6.6). He explains that when the gong sounds "then this contact to mindfulness is much more difficult to maintain for me" (lines 32-33), again explicitly drawing his conclusion from his own experience. Introducing the gong as the more dangerous sound possibly reduces the need to admit to any wrongdoing. No one would expect an apology for sounding a (dangerous) gong in a meditation session, hence there is no need to apologise for sounding a (comparatively harmless) whistle.

6.4.3 Repositioning external difficulties as personal insights

The teacher training session comprises four distinct phases: (1) meditation and 'inquiry' led by a student-teacher, (2) self-reflection on the teaching experience by the student-teacher, (3) feedback from a course participant, and (4) feedback from the course leader. Mark led the meditation and 'inquiry', and reflected on the experience with Marlene. This subsection focuses on the feedback provided by a course participant, Anja (transcript 6.10).

```
     #03:31:19:8# - #03:32:11:4#
 1   Marlene: hm: mm=hm mm=hm (1.2) good. will you get some feedback? ((Laughter))
 2   Sorry, £but I think [actually they have already come£ ]
 3   Some in the group:  [((soft laughter))               ]
 4   Marlene: £but maybe once again£ [officially  ]
 5   Mark:                           [yes but now-]
 6   Marlene: a feedback [yes  ]
 7   Mark:               [right] after what I've said now, maybe some more feedback (1.3)
 8   Anja: Uhm I found uh you had uh- I uh felt uh very good in the meditation, it was
 9   very well structured for me and I was able to participate in everything, I also uhm
10   per- perceived whistling as- as disturbing, and then- but I was also able to
11   recognise my own patterns through it so- .h and I also found it very interesting at
12   the end with this gong uhm and I then dealt with the question of why the gong is
13   more pleasant than whistling, so that was, uhm (5.8)
14   Mark: °thank you also for the feedback° (1)
```

Transcript 6.10: Marlene invites feedback from the group, and Anja shares her experience. She describes the meditation as "well-structured" and the whistle as "disturbing" (lines 9-10). She reframes her difficulty as an insight, recognising her "own patterns" (line 11). (The pound coins in the transcript indicate a smiley voice/suppressed laughter.)

After Mark's self-reflection, Marlene moves the group into the feedback phase. She asks Mark if he would like to receive feedback from the group (line 1). She laughs at her own suggestion and then quickly apologises. With a smiley voice, she acknowledges that feedback has "already come" but suggests that perhaps this time it could happen "officially" (lines 2-4). Mark agrees and notes that he is interested in feedback "after what I've said now" (line 7). This suggests that he believes his prior explanation might have altered how his teaching is perceived. Anja provides feedback for Mark. She describes his meditation as "very well structured" (lines 8-9). However, she then addresses the whistling and admits that she found it "disturbing" (line 10). Yet, Anja immediately reframes her difficulty as a source of insight and says "I was also able to recognise my own patterns through it" (lines 10-11). Anja then speaks about the gong but does not agree with Mark's classification of the gong as 'dangerous'. She wonders instead "why the gong is more pleasant than whistling" (lines 12-13). Despite reframing her difficulty, Anja does

not engage with the experiential categories of referencing thoughts, bodily sensations, or feelings. Her feedback focuses on her meditation experience and the sounds involved. She offers no critique or commentary on Mark's handling of the 'inquiry' phase. After a long pause of nearly six seconds, Mark softly thanks Anja for her feedback (line 14). The extended silence, possibly in combination with non-verbal cues, signals the end of her turn.

6.5 Repairing the relationship and transforming the experience

In this subsection, I describe the repair work that followed the 'whistle incident'. Firstly, in subsection 6.5.1, I talk about how Marlene and Mark jointly reframe the incident as a learning opportunity. Marlene positions the adverse reactions in the group as a realistic scenario that MBSR teachers may face. She suggests that any unexpected stimuli can trigger strong reactions. This framing also avoids direct critique of Mark and allows him to save face. Secondly, in subsection 6.5.2, I describe how Marlene engages in an 'inquiry' with Juliane to address the concerns she earlier addressed at Mark. This moves her focus from her "lack of trust" in Mark towards "self-protection" and "self-responsibility". Thirdly, in subsection 6.5.3, I discuss how Marlene guides Mark towards embodying key MBSR teaching principles, such as equanimity and non-reactivity. She does so by explicitly saying it and also implicitly through modelling these principles herself. Marlene ultimately transforms the whistle incident and Mark's 'inquiry' into a mindfulness lesson for the group. Finally, in subsection 6.5.4, I explore how the group discusses the concept of "safe space" in MBSR and whether there is a difference between men and women. Thomas and Marlene agree that maintaining a safe space is a shared responsibility among teachers. Marlene concludes the session with the same mindfulness lesson as Mark, that "there is no obstacle, only experience", only that it is now based on participants' accounts. This positions the 'whistle incident' as a learning opportunity on two levels: in terms of mindfulness and in terms of learning how to teach mindfulness.

6.5.1 Transforming the whistle incident: face-saving feedback and indirect critique

In this subsection, I describe the collaborative effort between Mark and Marlene to reframe the whistle incident as a learning opportunity. In transcript 6.11, Marlene provides feedback for the first half of Mark's guided meditation and gives him a face-saving opportunity to distance himself from the whistle. Then, they both collaboratively reframe the situation as a learning opportunity.

```
     #03:32:11:4# - #03:34:42:3#
 1   Marlene: good (2) uh:m (3.9) I think you said with a few sentences in the
 2   beginning, that was also perfectly ok uh said, roughly what it's about, not yet
 3   anticipated, that was important that you didn't anticipate anything. you can safely
 4   say that the topic is obstacles uh now in this case. And I also found the way you
 5   introduced us (0.7), that above all, I noticed that you had a few uh:: instruction
 6   aids uh instruct- uh said phrases that made me really interested, the breath uh-
 7   you talked about fascination, and I asked myself, is this perhaps already a bit too
 8   mu:ch, because there is the topic of attachment, but I noticed that it sharpened my
 9   interest (0.6). So I found that, uh- I found that helpful, this guidance into it.
10   Also your voice, friendly, uhm (0.6) uh loving, yes I don't know if you like to
11   hear that, yes loving, £men maybe don't necessarily hear it like that£ I was
12   actually able to give myself in trustingly ((clearing throat)) (0.7) a:nd uh:m yes
13   that's a big to:pic, the bi- uh the topic of obstacles uh. Would you also do that
14   in the course [with the wh-]?
15   Mark:          [Noo=noo=noo ] that [I have- ]
16   Marlene:                           [ok.     ]
17   Group: ((Loud laughter))
18   Mark: ((Laughter in the group becomes softer)) Now I have this here- ((Laughter
19   ends)) I really only designed it for us like that=
20   Marlene: =OK.
21   Woman:   [((Giggling))              ]
22   Marlene: [I'm glad: I'm glad. and it ] seems you've learned a lot now eh? from this
23         [sequence]
24   Mark: [yes     ] I learned a lot from the feedback, yes definitely, yes=
25   Marlene: =yes, that it  [really-                ]
26   Mark:                   [that was not difficult ] to understand
27   Marlene: yes. BUT it's not only with whistle sounds like that (0.8) eh? We can use
28   a formulation (0.5) [IT MAKES         ] (0.6)
29   Marlene:            [((snaps fingers))]
30   Marlene: and there comes a situation to my mother or to anyone who said that and
31   just hit me, I'm saying just anything (0.6) eh? (0.5) it can  [always           ]
32   Marlene:                                                      [((snaps fingers))]
33   Marlene: happen
34   ?: ((clearing throat)) (0.6)
35   Marlene: That's supposed to take the pressure off a bit hm? (0.5) It's just a
36   matter of how: do you collect the feedback?
37   Mark: mm=hm (0.6)
38   Marlene: yes? (0.7) so in the course I wouldn't use a whistle, but something can be
39   with quite a lot of things something can be triggered, the reaction (0.7) and here
40   we have two, three (0.7) intense reactions. (1.1) uh: and there it is important
41   that you take your time to be there (1.1)
42   Mark: [mm=hm]
```

Transcript 6.11: Marlene provides feedback on the first, unproblematic part of Mark's guided meditation (lines 1-12) and gives him a face-saving opportunity to distance himself from the whistle (lines 12-20). They collaboratively reframe the whistle as a learning experience (lines 22-26). Marlene compares the whistle to other triggers and offers corrective feedback on how to conduct 'inquiry' in face of adverse reactions (lines 27-41). (The pound coins in the transcript indicate a smiley voice/suppressed laughter.)

Reframing the whistle as a learning opportunity

Marlene starts her feedback by commenting on the first part of Mark's meditation session, the part before the whistle. She addresses the qualities of Mark's voice, which she describes as "friendly" and "loving" (line 10). She qualifies the term "loving" with "I don't know if you like to hear it", referring to the fact that Mark is a man (lines 10-11). She alludes to her own experience when she says that because of this friendliness she was "able to give myself in trustingly" (line 12). Her perspective aligns with earlier accounts where participants pointed out that they felt safe and supported in the beginning of Mark's guided meditation.

Marlene then focuses on the 'whistle incident' by referring to the broader "big topic" of obstacles (line 13). She asks "would you also do that in the course with the wh-?" (lines 13-15). With this, she leaves the evaluation of whether this was appropriate or not to Mark. He interrupts her with a repeated, emphatic "no" (line 15). This is followed by a loud laughter from the group and Mark's clarification, "I really only designed it for us like that" (line 19). He thus positions the whistle as context-specific to the teacher-training course. Marlene's immediate "OK" (line 20) is abrupt and pronounced. Her subsequent repetition of "I'm glad" (line 22) and the framing of the sequence as a learning experience ("it seems you've learned a lot now eh? From this sequence?", line 22-23) shifts the focus from potential judgment to reflection. Marlene does not explicitly condemn the whistle which allows Mark to save face. Mark aligns with her framing and affirms "I learned a lot from the feedback, yes definitely, yes" (line 24). This mutual focus on learning allows both Marlene and Mark to sidestep a critique of the whistle's appropriateness.

For adverse reactions, take your time and be present: normalising the whistle

Marlene then moves to a broader reflection on unintended triggers in an MBSR setting. She suggests that, like "whistle sounds" (line 27), even a seemingly benign "formulation" (line 28) can provoke adverse reactions. Marlene emphasises this point by snapping her fingers when she describes how certain phrases might evoke memories of past negative experiences: "IT MAKES ((snaps fingers at the same time)) and there comes a situation" and "it can always ((snaps fingers)) happen" (lines 28-33). This example of how certain words can remind someone of being struck

illustrates how such triggers can be unpredictable and deeply personal. By likening the 'whistle incident' to other potential triggers, Marlene normalises the event. She also takes explicit blame away from Mark when she says "this is supposed to take the pressure off a bit" (line 35) and by acknowledging that "quite a lot of things" (line 39) might inadvertently provoke "intense reactions" (line 40). Marlene then offers corrective feedback by highlighting how important it is to take time and be present to engage with these reactions: "it's just a matter of how: you collect the feedback" (lines 35-36) and "it is important that you take your time to be there (lines 40-41). This links to the *preference organisation* of 'inquiry' in which the teacher responds primarily affirmatively to participants and allows time for reflection, practising the 'art of allowing'. The phrasing "be there" (line 41) can be understood as a suggestion to be present with 'what is', that is to embody mindfulness. This feedback is pointed, as Mark had previously failed to take sufficient time to address participants' responses during the 'inquiry'.

6.5.2 Illustrating 'inquiry' in action: taking responsibility for your own distress

In this subsection, Marlene finally addresses Juliane's distress and models the practice of 'inquiry' in the process. She demonstrates the importance of "taking your time" in the 'inquiry', a point she made earlier when she offered corrective feedback to Mark. She does so by allowing Juliane to express her emotions without directing or resolving her distress. This helps shift Juliane's focus from the distress caused by Mark to self-care. Marlene guides Juliane to recognise her ability to take responsibility for her own emotional well-being and then generalises this insight to the group.

Addressing the breach of trust and modelling inquiry

In this next sequence, Marlene addresses Juliane directly. She has just told Mark that it is important he take his time to "be there" (transcript 6.11, line 41). She now extends this point and says that this includes being there "even it it's unpleasant" (transcript 6.12). Marlene provides the example of Juliane mentioning a "breach of trust" (lines 1-2), and then addressing her personally,

```
     #03:34:42:3# - #03:36:22-3#
 1   Marlene: [that you] even if it's unpleasant and I mean, uh, Juliane has told about
 2   a breach of trust (2.1) How are you at the moment [Juliane ]?
 3   Juliane:                                          [hh      ] (0.9) ~Not so good~ hh
 4   (1.6) Well, I'm also very angry, I uhm can share that uhm your words uhm, but it's
 5   so awful when this trust is touched and it was like, I trusted you so much, I think
 6   if I hadn't trusted you at the beginning and had kept my distance, then it wouldn't
 7   have been so awful and I got so involved (0.9) and it ((pronounced with
 8   outbreath/sigh)) was like smashed away. And I think that's exactly what was so
 9   awful, I felt taken by the hand and then just let go.
10   Marlene: mm=hm
11   Juliane: and that is an absolute absurdity for me. And of course there are things
12   that come up, I can cope with it, but it triggers, I immediately had tears in my
13   eyes, I have now fought, now they are there .h and I realise something like that
14   must (0.6) not at all happen. Now, of course, I also work in an area .h (1) where I
15   know that something like this can happen very very quickly
16   Mark:     [mm=hm ]
17   Juliane: [and   ] that you really need to cop a look at everything, you need feelers
18   everywhere uhm, because with every word, as you say, something happens here and
19   there, then nothing happens and there again and you can't monitor that and you
20   don't have that under control (0.7), but now(h) this, that was just ~the extent~.
21   That was too big for me and I was annoyed how then you said, in your (h) sentence
22   at the [end   ]
23   Mark:  [sorry ] (0.8)
24   Juliane: um ( 0.7) I can't get it together now, hey I want to be taken seriously in
25   what just happened (0.6) and I didn't feel taken seriously
26   Marlene: mm=hm
27   Juliane: and then I cried
28   Someone: ((clearing throat))
```

Transcript 6.12: Marlene models 'inquiry' by allowing Juliane to express her distress. She demonstrates the importance of "taking your time" in the 'inquiry' by not interrupting Juliane. Juliane openly shares her feelings of betrayal and anger.

asks her how she is feeling "at the moment" (line 2). Juliane answers with a crying voice and turns to Mark when she says "I trusted you so much" (line 5). She recaps that she is "very angry" (line 4) and blames her distress on the fact that she trusted Mark. She says "if I hadn't trusted you at the beginning [...] then it wouldn't have been so awful" (lines 6-7). She emphasises her point with a metaphor "I felt taken by the hand and then just let go" (line 9). Juliane goes on to stress the intensity of what happened by calling it an "absolute absurdity" (line 11). She recounts how she initially suppressed her tears but eventually broke down, and that "something like that must (0.6) not at all happen" (line 14). She relates to the point that Marlene made earlier, that anything can potentially be a trigger, when she explains that she knows from her line of work[1] that "something like this can happen very very quickly" (line 15), that "you need feelers everywhere" (lines 17-18) but ultimately cannot control what might happen. However, she repeats again in a crying voice that she takes offence at "the extent" (line 20) of what happened. She then elaborates further that she was "annoyed" (line 21) at what Mark said. Mark says "sorry"

[1]Juliane works with patients who are mentally ill.

(line 23) whilst Juliane is talking. She pauses briefly and then says in a firm voice "hey I want to be taken seriously in what just happened (0.6) and I didn't feel taken seriously" (lines 24-25).

From breach of trust to self reliance

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    #03:36:22-3# - #03:38:13:2#
 1  Marlene: how are you now, you have now told what you [experienced?]
 2  Juliane:                                             [yes         ]
 3  Marlene: how are you doing now?
 4  Juliane: I can cope with telling you that
 5  Mark:    [mm=hm      ]
 6  Juliane: [and I know ] that's not building up anything now. You are not the course
 7  leader and the participant, we have a different relationship and I am ext-
 8  extremely glad(h) that(h) I can also share this so openly
 9  Marlene: [ok. ok     ]
10  Juliane: [I can then ] simply put it aside again and realise that this is an issue
11  for me, trust and breach of trust, um yes, I know that now, you(h) know that now(h)
12  too(h) and everyone has their own issues and that was totally triggering now
13  Marlene: ((clearing throat))
14  Juliane: I am, as far as noises are concerned, I know that from myself, a chain can
15  go off very quickly, I have to protect myself very much (1) and uhm then it was so
16  clear, mindfulness doesn't matter to me at all now, it's only about protecting
17  myself, that's my focus and I can do that
18  Mark: mm=hm
19  Juliane: So there was also a certainty in me, [I  ]
20  Marlene:                                     [ok.]
21  Juliane: can take care of myself
22  Marlene: ok, ok=
23  Juliane: =yes that-
24  Marlene: That's it, so you have a possibility at this moment. And what helps you to
25  take care of yourself? (1.4)
26  Juliane: Yes, by responding to what is happening with me
27  Marlene: ok. (0.9)
28  Juliane: Yes, by getting in touch with it and realising that there is no one to
29  take care of me. It's me
30  Marlene: ok=
31  Juliane: =yes.
32  Marlene: and how do you take care of yourself? Yes, when you say responding, what
33  does that mean exactly? What [does]
34  Juliane:                     [yes ] at that moment it was, it was too loud for me
35  and I didn't trust anymore, I didn't know, is there another whistle coming or not,
36  and now I just cover my ears, I get out=
37  Marlene: =ok.
38  Juliane: So I still had contact but uh like  [cotton wool ]
39  Marlene:                                     [yes         ]
40  Juliane: in the ears
41  Marlene: yes
42  Juliane: I didn't want to break the connection
43  Marlene: °ok°=
44  Juliane: =eh?
45  Marlene: °ok° so you took care of yourself and looked at what you needed to protect
46  yourself a bit, [eh?]
47  Juliane:        [yes]
48  Marlene: for some it's covering your ears, for others it's sound out uh- out uh uh-
49  not listening anymore basically. There are different ways, the important thing is
50  that we find a way for ourselves. Ok, thank you very much. Thank you very much
51  (0.6)
```

Transcript 6.13: Marlene helps Juliane shift from focusing on her distress to recognising her ability to take responsibility for her emotional well-being. Juliane reflects on self-care strategies, and Marlene emphasises the importance of self-reliance.

In transcript 6.13, the 'inquiry' between Marlene and Juliane continues. Marlene repeats her initial question about how Juliane is doing in this moment. Juliane replies that talking about

the experience helps her cope with the situation. Juliane emphasises that it is important to her that Mark and her are not "the course leader and the participant, we have a different relationship" (lines 6-7). She discusses that it helps her to share and reflect upon her experience with Mark. She goes on to detail her experience by framing her issues as familiar to her. Specifically, she mentions "trust and breach of trust" (line 11) and "noises" (line 14) as generally problematic for her. She acknowledges that during the incident, mindfulness was no longer a possibility when she recounts "mindfulness doesn't matter to me at all now, it only about protecting myself" (lines 16-17). When Juliane says that "there was a certainty in me, I can take care of myself" (lines 19-21) she expresses something that is within her control. Marlene picks up on this shifting narrative with a third position action. She says "so you have a possibility at this moment" (line 24) which represents a repositioning of what Juliane has shared in terms of self-responsibility in the present moment. Further shifting the focus towards what is within Juliane's sphere of influence, Marlene asks her "what helps you to care of yourself?" (lines 24-25). Juliane replies "by responding to what is happening with me" (line 26). This suggests that while at the mercy of something external, she still has the ability to respond. She elaborates this point when she says "by getting in touch with it and realising that there is no one to take care of me. It's me" (line 28-29). This emphasises the importance of self-reliance and self-care. In this moment, Juliane accepts full responsibility for her emotional well-being, acknowledging that no one else can manage her feelings for her–she is the one who must respond. She describes practical actions she took during the incident, such as covering her ears and creating a metaphorical buffer ("like cotton wool in the ears", lines 38-40) to maintain some degree of connection while protecting herself (line 42). Juliane has expressed in many ways that the distress she felt was caused by Mark misguiding the practice and that she did not feel taken seriously by him during the 'inquiry'. Marlene does not engage with the contents of Juliane's distress, which is typical of MBSR 'inquiry' (see 'Foundational elements of 'inquiry', 4.4). Initially, Juliane's focus was on the relational rupture and her need to protect herself from external triggers. Over the course of the conversation, Marlene guided her to realise her ability to self-protect, take responsibility for her emotional state, and respond to her needs. When she delivers her mindfulness lesson in her

third position action, Marlene repositions Juliane's account by focusing entirely on the aspect of self care (lines 45-50). She first addresses Juliane directly (lines 45-46) and then bases the teaching on what Juliane has shared and generalises it to the rest of the group (line 48-50).

#03:38:13:2# - #03:43:02-6#

Marlene: So I think that's important he? [Because]
Mark: [yes]
Marlene: things come up, also what Nadine said, there was a rage there
Mark: mm=hm
Marlene: and that's the challenge, that we come he? that we don't take it personally, but that we then explore it (1.3) We- I would then be interested in what- what thoughts are there now? So you know?
Mark: mm=hm
Marlene: uh
Mark: yes
Marlene: again these three levels or? that shows I'm interested in it and there you are challenged not to react because you feel hurt now or whatever, how have you been? How did you feel when she said that? (0.8)
Mark: Yes, I hm- how did I feel, well I felt (1) sad- sad that I triggered that, because of course that was not my (1.1) u:hm yes my intention
Marlene: ((clearing throat))
((helicopter sound starts and gets louder))
Mark: I am- well, it was a mixture of sad and surprised (1.5)((helicopter sound very loud)) because I couldn't imagine ((helicopter sound becomes quieter)) that it would (?) such a (0.6) cut- (1) would so vehemently interfere with uh well-being (helicopter sound barely audible))
Marlene: yes (1.6) yes
Mark: insofar it was this- this mixture
Marlene: ok yes. ((helicopter sound ends)) That is also a knowing, isn't it? Yes that is the resonance, isn't it? Because it's not easy to collect all this feedback, he? But then see, ok that is her reaction [to it, that is]
Mark: [mm=hm yes]
Marlene: her reaction, her reaction and so on, Sebastian's reaction, hm? And try with equanimity, hm? (0.8) to explore everything (0.5) yes
Mark: mm=hm
Marlene: but what's important for me uh, if I could just at this point- uhm (0.9) uhm (1.4) appreciating what's there, taking it seriously, and also staying there as long (1.3) as you- the feeling that is important right now, this[appreciation]
Someone: [((clears throat))]
Marlene: this recognition of what is there uh (0.6) uh (0.5) must take place and also the process- now I'm going back to the obstacle, hm? It remains a bit factual, we really want to say, ok, it was an obstacle for you, not for you, for me it was just fright and then it was simply an experience (0.8) and if I'm not attached to it, fright is not an obstacle but it is an experience (0.5) so uh that we- that you then filter this out [the process-]
Mark: [mm=hm]
Marlene: the individual processes and then afterwards you can summarise, say, that an obstacle on the one hand (0.5) is not an obstacle per se, but the way we deal with it or what we think about it. Then it becomes an obstacle, when we say I'm just tired (0.6) and it's ok, and I fall asleep and it's ok, that's not an obstacle, but then I fell asleep, I'm tired, I'm scared, and it goes on (0.8) he? that's important that we understand the participants- obstacle is very much something subjective, it's- and this refers to stress (0.8) what I call stress (0.6) uh it doesn't mean that the trigger has this stressor but the way I relate to it (0.8) How I relate, what I think, how it should feel, what is a proper meditation, how someone should speak. All these things, then when I appraise, then it becomes an obstacle or not (1) things like this (0.5) the participants need to understand (0.9) And at the same time we want to take them seriously (0.7) I- In their suffering, in their anger, in their sadness, in their joy and everything
Mark: mm=hm (1.2)
Marlene: and that's uh- that's maybe quite- well I don't want to say it's good that it happened here but (0.7) uh that can happen in the course (0.9) and not only with whistling (4) with cour- (0.6) course participants among themselves because someone breathes loudly or always- always always has something to say for example, yes so (2.2) good (0.6) uh:m was there something else uhm (0.6) but generally I have experienced you as interested, I have basically experienced you as interested and fully involved, so that uh- (0.7) I actually found that really uh good. something else, it is not mindfulness that focuses, but attention focuses
Mark: mm=hm (0.8)
Marlene: you said that a few times, huh?
Mark: yes yes
Marlene: it's not mindfulness that focuses, it is the attention ˚that focuses˚(4.2)

Transcript 6.14: Marlene reframes the whistle incident to teach key insights about 'inquiry': obstacles arise from our relationship to them, not the events themselves. By validating participants' emotions and modelling equanimity, she demonstrates how to explore intense reactions in inquiry.

6.5.3 Transforming disruption into insight: teaching mindfulness through adverse reactions

The focus of this subsection is transcript 6.14 (previous page). In it, Marlene teaches how to embody equanimity and non-reactivity as an instructor during the 'inquiry' (*the art of allowing*). She does so through explicit instruction and implicit modelling. She explicitly tells Mark to not take participant reactions personally. This would develop equanimity and create safe space for participants. At the same time she models what she means in the 'inquiry' with Mark, where they jointly explore Mark's own reactions and emotions. Marlene then uses the whole situation to transform the whistle incident and Mark's 'inquiry' into a mindfulness lesson.

Exploring everything with equanimity

Marlene addresses Mark again and emphasises the importance of not taking the participants' reactions personally, saying "that's the challenge", "that we don't take it personally, but that we then explore it" (lines 5-6). She references an earlier 'inquiry' in which Marion had expressed a "rage" (line 3). Marlene makes it even more explicit what she means by 'exploration' and refers to the "three levels" (line 11) of 'inquiry'[2]. Marlene explains that "that shows I'm interested in it and there you are challenged not to react because you feel hurt" (lines 11-12). Marlene immediately models what she means, and asks Mark how he felt when Marion expressed her anger (line 13). She then gives Mark time to reflect upon his experience, scaffolding Mark's account with minimal affirmative answers (lines 14-24). Mark recounts feeling "sad and surprised" (line 18) because he did not expect to "vehemently interfere with well-being" (line 20). This is when Marlene explains that it is important to explore the participants' experiences with equanimity: "that is her reaction to it, that is her reaction, her reaction and so on, Alexander's reaction, hm? And try with equanimity, hm? (0.8) to explore everything" (lines 26-29). She frames reactions in terms of equanimity, thus suggesting that Mark should neither over-identify with nor

[2]This refers to how an MBSR teacher should ideally conduct an 'inquiry': the first layer guides a participant towards an intentional awareness of an experience (*noticing*), the second layer explores the mind's relationship with this type of noticing, and the third layer integrates both layers and explores the broader implications of these insights (see 2.3.3).

dismiss his reactions. It is about "appreciating what's there, taking it seriously" (line 32). The important teaching point is that Mark should focus on exploring participants' responses within the subjective reality of the participant, rather than feel offended by them.

Making the same point about obstacles

Marlene then somewhat paradoxically makes the same teaching point that Mark made earlier. She emphasises that it is necessary to teach from the present moment, whatever that may be: "this recognition of what is there uh (0.6) uh (0.5) must take place" (line 35). With this recognition or "appreciation" (line 33), it becomes possible to say "it was an obstacle for you, not for you, for me it was just fright and then it was simply an experience (0.8) and if I'm not attached to it, fright is not an obstacle but it is an experience" (lines 37-39). Marlene's reference to nonattachment is not to be understood not as *detachment*, but instead in the Buddhist sense as the "subjective quality of not being stuck or fixated on ideas, images, or sensory objects and not feeling an internal pressure to acquire, hold, avoid, or change" (Sahdra, Shaver, and K. W. Brown (2010, p. 118), in Whitehead et al., 2018, p. 3).

Mark's earlier teaching that "the object itself is not the obstacle, but how you relate to it is the obstacle" (see transcript 6.4.2) was now effectively repeated by Marlene. However, this time it emerged directly from the group's shared experience of the whistling incident and the adverse reactions it provoked. By acknowledging both the disruptive nature of the whistle and the participants' emotional responses, Marlene transformed the event into a teaching moment. Importantly, Marlene did not dismiss the participants' reality. Instead, she validated their experiences of breach of trust and anger, and used these reactions as a foundation for her teaching. She has demonstrated that the content of the experiences is in a way irrelevant; what matters is the process of exploring these experiences. With this, Marlene has demonstrated how an MBSR teacher embodies the inner quality of equanimity during the 'inquiry'.

Explicit instruction and implicit modelling

By reframing the disruption as a learning moment, Marlene transformed the whistle from a distressing event into an intersubjective learning object–a shared experience through which the group could deepen their understanding of conducting 'inquiry' amidst intense reactions. This allowed Marlene to weave together two critical lessons: the methodological approach of 'inquiry' and the core mindfulness insight that "the object itself is not the obstacle, but how you relate to it". Just as the whistle is not inherently problematic, neither are adverse reactions in a group. They are both opportunities to explore different subjective experiences. In this teacher training context, Marlene explained a core principle of 'inquiry' and modelled it in action at the same time.

6.5.4 A safe space for all

In this subsection, the concept of a "safe space" in MBSR is discussed by the course leaders and the participants. Firstly, the second course leader Thomas explicitly names what constitutes a safe space and suggests that it is a joint responsibility of MBSR teachers to protect it. He implicitly references a gender dynamic in his account. Secondly, the implied gender dynamic is made explicit by course participants who suggest a separate MBSR course for men. Marlene then reiterates that MBSR teachers have a joint responsibility to maintain a safe space for all, regardless of gender.

A protected space and the guts to disturb it

```
     #03:43:02-6# - #03:45:16#
 1   Thomas: it was very nice
 2   Marlene: right. would you like to say something else?
 3   Thomas: um, yes, I find- well, so for me it was very uh:m very educational again
 4   and maybe it is also educational for all of us simply to uhm realise uhm- how (1.3)
 5   in the courses uh we also have a protected space and we do a lot to create this
 6   protected space as such and the- the- the feeling of security of each individual is
 7   a valuable asset uh that we have to create in the first place for someone to open
 8   up and uh we are well advised as uh- as MBSR teachers uh not to turn the screws too
 9   much from our side uh (0.5) uhm because what uh Be- Marlene said happens
10   automatically and [uh           ]
11   Marlene:          [((chuckling)) ]
12   Thomas: both with- with ourselves unintentionally and through other u:hm
13   participants in the course. But this- this feeling of a protected space uh:m I
14   still find that very uh:m I'll just say a valuable asset (3.9) and uh we can also
15   hh through- uh: I understood your intention very well and I found it super ((soft
16   laughter)) £ I thought wow, super, he has some guts£  [((soft laughter))]
17   Marlene:                                              [((soft laughter))] yes:::?
18   Thomas: and I was so- also for me it was ok like that, um yes (1.1) and it was- uh
19   it had a certain um (1.7) actually something (1.1) h how should I say, something
20   uh: (3.2) something aggressive, too, which is also connected with the- the- the
21   fright, no? and I think that uh: (0.7) uhm that's why I can also uh empathise with
22   the reactions °uhm ok (0.8) full stop°
```

Transcript 6.15: Thomas emphasises that the creation of a safe space is a joint responsibility of teachers (line 7) and that the whistle was "very educational" for him (line 3). His account contains mixed messages, on the one hand condemning it as "aggressive" (line 20) and empathising with the participants who had adverse reactions (lines 21-22), and on the other hand praising Mark for his courage (lines 15-16).

In transcript 6.15, the second course leader Thomas also provides feedback for Mark and the rest of the group regarding the whistle incident. He begins with praise, saying "it was very nice" (line 1) and that he found it "very educational" (line 3). With this, Thomas aligns with the framing of the whistle incident as a learning opportunity. He then emphasises the foundational role of a protected space, suggesting that it is a co-creation: "we do a lot to create this protected space as such" (lines 5-6). He elaborates that this space requires fostering people's sense of safety because, according to Thomas, this is a necessity for vulnerability: "the feeling of security of each individual is a valuable asset uh that we have to create in the first place for someone to open up" (lines 6-8). Thomas suggests that maintaining this space is a deliberate effort that needs to be created by MBSR teachers (line 8). Referring to Marlene's earlier suggestions that even an unfortunate choice of words can be triggering for some participants, Thomas says "we are well advised as uh- as MBSR teachers uh not to turn the screws too much from our side" (lines 8-9). This can be understood as an indirect critique of Mark's whistle, aligning with Juliane's earlier critique that "something like that must (0.6) not at all happen" (transcript 6.12, lines 13-14).

However, Thomas immediately weakens his argument as he then praises Mark's intention and bravery, "I understood your intention very well and I found it super ((soft laughter)) I thought wow, super, he has some guts ((soft laughter))" (lines 15-16). His statement reveals a contradiction between his advocacy for safety and the way he frames Mark's breach of this space. In the context of how the situation unfolded, these contradictory statements seem to suggest that the breach might hold different meanings for men and women. For the women participants who spoke, the breach evoked distress and likely disrupted their sense of emotional security. For the men who spoke, the breach was seen as playful and manageable. Thomas' seeming incongruence could also be seen as a way to address both of these perspectives. However, praising Mark rather than holding him accountable risks undermining the safe space, at least for the participants who experienced distress. Marlene interjects Thomas' account with a long-drawn-out, questioning "yes:::?". With this, she subtly challenges Thomas' positioning of the whistle as an act of courage but without directly opposing it. He then distances himself again from the positive appraisal of the whistle and labels it as "something aggressive" (line 20), acknowledges the "fright" (line 21) it caused, and says that he could "empathise with the reactions" (lines 21-22).

Safe space as a shared but subjective construct

The group conversation continues in transcript 6.16 on the next page. Woman 1 seemingly picks up on the implicit gender dynamics and suggests a men-only MBSR course: "I was thinking maybe it would be good for a MBSR course for- just for men" (line 1). She phrases her suggestion using hedging–"maybe" (line 1), "kind of" (line 4), "I have the feeling" (line 4)–and explains it with her impression that the men did not "feel [the whistle] as too much" (line 5). Woman 2, Thomas, and Marlene acknowledge this possibility of gender differences (lines 14-16). However, Marlene immediately opposes the suggestion of an MBSR course for men "because they are also often traumatised" (line 10). With this, Marlene acknowledges men's vulnerabilities. She reiterates the critical role MBSR teachers play in fostering safety when she says "we as teachers really try to offer a safe uh uh space" (line 20-21). She emphasises that a sense of safety is a subjective experience ("not all participants feel that the same space is safe", lines 21-22), which

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     #03:45:16# - #03:47:27-3#
 1   Woman 1: I was thinking maybe it would be good for a MBSR course for- just for men
 2   (0.6)               [I could             ]
 3   Some in the group:  [((short soft laugh))]
 4   Woman 1: kind of imagine that that- because I have the feeling the men here, they
 5   didn't find that so- (0.5) feel it as too much or not (0.7)
 6   Woman 2: I don't know, but-
 7   Marlene: yes
 8   Woman 2: but then don't let them play with (?) so
 9   Group: ((Loud laughter)) [((Laughter))  ]
10   Marlene:                 [I AM NOT SURE ] because they are also often traumatised
11             [do you understand? ]
12   Woman 2: [yes, yes           ] I uh  [uh- ]
13   Marlene:                             [I   ] yes::
14   Woman 2: but I really believe that there: is a difference
15   Thomas: that may well be (1.1)
16   Marlene: Maybe, but it also comes (0.5) a bit with the practice, you know, because
17   uh (0.9) that becomes more and more an experience simply, and yes it is fright
18   (0.6) and yes it is a bad thought (0.8) experience, coming back to the breath, so
19   (0.5) that is what you probably all experience, too. that it increases, that you
20   don't always stay uh with every fright, right? but I think it's good, we as
21   teachers really try to offer a safe uh uh space, but precisely, not all
22   participants feel that the same space is safe (0.8) We just have to be aware of
23   that, that can happen again at any time (2.7) Good, that was a great learning field
24   for all of us (2.8) How are you feeling right now, Mark? (1.2)
25   Mark: Yes, I don't know, I think I still have to process it a bit
26   Marlene: mm=hm (1.5)
27   Mark: It's just like you say, it's difficult- or this safe space that's also
28   important to me of course (1.1)  [but I wanted-       ]
29   Someone:                         [((clearing throat)) ]
30   Mark: There's just the question, I didn't- I didn't think I'd touch the safe space.
31   That's just something .hh you don't know, isn't it?
32   Marlene: yes. yes (2.2) yes: so really (3.9) [thank you. I think we end (0.6) here ]
33   (3)
34   Some in the group:                           [((soft talking))                    ]
35   Marlene: we go on, yes, he?
36   Mark: yes
37   Marlene: is it good for you?
38   Mark: yes it's good
```

Transcript 6.16: A safe space for all

is why teachers need to be able to accommodate unexpected triggers ("that can happen again at any time", line 23).

She also suggests that mindfulness practice influences this subjective sense of safety: "it also comes (0.5) a bit with the practice" (line 16), "that becomes more and more an experience simply, and yes it is fright (0.6) and yes it is a bad thought (0.8) experience, coming back to the breath" (lines 17-18). This reiterates Mark's and her earlier mindfulness lesson that *there is no obstacle, only experience*: something becomes an obstacle only through the way we perceive and appraise it. In light of this understanding, it makes sense why Mark's disruptive whistling is not explicitly condemned but reframed as "a great learning field for all of us" (lines 23-24). The incident simply reinforces the idea that discomfort can become a foundation for learning and self discovery.

Individual accountability and shared efforts to maintain a safe space

Mark's role in the disruption reveals a tension between individual accountability and the shared responsibility for maintaining the safe space. Mark deflects responsibility for the distress caused by his earlier action when he says "I didn't think I'd touch the safe space. That's just something .hh you don't know, isn't it?" (lines 24-25). Marlene finishes with a concern for Mark's well-being. She asks him: "how are you feeling right now, Mark?" (line 24). This is a demonstration of the mindfulness principle non-judgment, in the sense that she embodies it even toward someone who may have contributed to a relational rupture. Mark acknowledges "this safe space that's also important to me of course" (lines 27-28). This closing exchange between Marlene and Mark reaffirms the shared responsibility of both teachers and participants to co-create a safe space for everyone.

6.6 Conclusion to the chapter

This chapter illustrated how the four elements of 'inquiry' (see 4.4), the transformation of experience in the 'inquiry project' (see 4.5) and the embodiment of mindfulness in moments of teaching (see 5.7) hold true and are pronounced in moments of disruption.

Section 6.2 outlined the 'whistle incident', a guided meditation led by student teacher Mark during which he repeatedly blew a loud whistle in the middle of it which was very disturbing to the group. It was especially disturbing because he initially created a familiar and safe space and guided a meditation with a focus on finding a relaxed posture and using the breath as a meditation anchor. Mark was supposed to practise guiding a meditation from the second MBSR course day that would teach how to deal with obstacles that might arise during meditation such as feeling distracting from an active mind or a noise in the room. The whistling was thus completely unexpected and caused strong reactions in the group, such as loud exhales, shuffling and laughing. Mark ignored the adverse reactions, addressed the laughter in his instruction, and continued with the guiding the meditation and whistling erratically. Section 6.3, is a series of four 'inquiries' after Mark's guided meditation in which four female participants made their distressed reactions

explicit. They emphasised how their ability to practise mindfulness was disrupted because they were in a state of fear and alertness. They also described how they had lost trust in Mark and felt unsafe with a need to protect themselves. Mark violates the atmosphere of 'allowing' that is typical of 'inquiry' because he cuts the participants' accounts short, interrupts them, and asks them to *explain* their reactions rather than *explore* them. When he repositions a participant's account as 'stressed mindfulness', this seems to sidestep what was most important and relevant to the participant. In these 'inquiries' that focus on the breach, the participants' explain their expectations of a mindfulness setting in terms of the four elements of 'inquiry' and with a strong focus on their own inner experience. As their expectations remained unfulfilled, there was no co-accomplishment of mindfulness. As the 'inquiry' continues in section 6.4, Mark asks participants to speak up who had less reactions to the whistle. In contrast to the four women's accounts, two men share their perspectives and explain how the whistle was no trouble to them. They however talk in a more distanced manner, not alluding to their bodily sensations, emotions or thoughts but rather sharing associations they had with the whistle. Together, these six 'inquiries' (or rather teacher-participant dyads when considering the 'inquiry project') could serve as the basis for Mark's mindfulness lesson. Instead, Mark alludes to his own perspective and suggests that 'there is no obstacle, only experience' as the insight to take away from the meditation. This means that his mindfulness lesson is not based on the participants' accounts but *his own* perspective. He further dismisses distressed reactions and minimises his own responsibility by suggesting that the "dangerous" sound in the meditation is the gong, not the whistle, because it signals an end to the meditation. Interestingly, when a participant provides feedback for Mark on his teaching, she frames her difficulty with the whistle as a learning opportunity. This repositioning of whistle is further continued in the repair work led by the course leader that followed in section 6.5. Mark and the course leader Marlene jointly transform the 'whistle incident' as a learning opportunity, both in terms of mindfulness and in terms of learning how to teach mindfulness. Marlene offers some corrective feedback in saying that it is important to be present with participants and take time during the 'inquiry'. She then models this instruction by conducting an 'inquiry' with Juliane, the participant who was stressed the most by the whistle.

During this 'inquiry', Juliane's focus shifts from blaming Mark for her upset towards taking self responsibility for her well-being. Marlene then addresses Mark again and explains that it is important to embody equanimity and non-reactivity when conducting the 'inquiry', that is not to take participants' reactions personally. Rather through these qualities he can offer a safe space that allows participants to explore *their own subjective* experience. Again, Marlene does not only say this explicitly but immediately models what she means by offering Mark said space to reflect upon his teaching experience again. Ultimately, Marlene finishes the 'inquiry' with Mark with a third position action, a mindfulness teaching, which is incidentally the same as Mark alluded to earlier, that "there is no obstacle, only experience". What matters is how you appraise a certain situation. Lastly, both course leaders agree that MBSR teachers have a joint responsibility to offer and protect a safe space. A discussion about whether or not there is a difference between men and women is refused by Marlene. She maintains that the ability to withstand these types of adversity comes from practising mindfulness.

Perspectives on power

In this thesis, I have taken an ethnomethodological approach which means that I stayed close to describing members's methods and refrained from analytic interpretation. Still it is interesting to consider other perspectives of my data such as the power dynamics during the whistle incident. When Mark blew the whistle, no one challenged him or left the room, even though a number of people were visibly distressed. The teacher trainer Marlene could have responded differently, in particular she could have framed the incident as unacceptable and address the distress in the room more directly. She reformulated the learners' accounts and reframed the situation as a learning experience. While this exemplifies the MBSR way of dealing with any type of challenge, her response might arguably also serve to diminish the emotional impact that the participants describe. Also, this response gives her the authority in the situation because she interprets it on the behalf of the participants. In this sense, Marlene benefits from her institutional status as a teacher. It could be interpreted from a perspective of Sacks 'membership categorisation' (Sacks, 1972) that Marlene's status or category as a teacher comes with certain

expectations, such as who has the authority to frame the setting. These hierarchies are enacted despite the fact that the class was initially framed as egalitarian when Marlene emphasised in the beginning that she was one of the participants.

Viewed from another perspective, the whistle incident could also reveal the exercise of power in a more horizontal way. This means that it is not just the teacher who exercises power from a higher hierarchical stance but also the other participants in the room. This peer-to-peer perspective means that other participants might want to appear to be 'good students' and frame and display their insights in a way that is congruent with the MBSR notion of transforming their personal difficulties into general learning themes. This type of dynamic is discussed by Scott as 'performative regulation' (Scott, 2011, 49ff.) in the context of re-inventive institutions, see also 2.4.1. Scott argues that peers exercise power horizontally by observing each other's conduct and practising self discipline: "mutual surveillance that takes place between individuals within the same stratum of an institutional hierarchy" (Scott, 2011, p. 50). The way Anja gives feedback for Mark's session and frames her experience as a learning opportunity could be interpreted as an example of this type of 'performative regulation' (see subsection 6.4.3).

This illustrates that it is possible to view my data through different lenses, and one that seems particularly interesting is an analysis of power relations. I have instead offered an ethnomethodological description of the whistle incident where I stayed closely to how participants themselves made sense of and responded to the disruption. This focus on the members' methods has allowed me to offer a description of the setting from the members' own perspective. In this case it highlights the pedagogical environment of this particular MBSR classroom, even in the face of a disruption that could also be considered harmful.

Chapter 7

Discussion

7.1 Introduction

In this thesis I set out to answer the research question: *how do MBSR teachers and learners co-accomplish a therapeutic setting?* I analysed naturally occurring talk in an MBSR course and an MBSR teacher training, as well as a focus group with MBSR student teachers, using ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. My focus was the group-based dialogue 'inquiry' in which participants reflect their meditation experience with the teacher.

My findings and the answers to my research question may be summarised in three points. (1) MBSR 'inquiry' can be described in terms of what I call the *art of allowing*. This refers to a dialogical atmosphere of allowing in terms of *what* is talked about and *how* it is talked about. The *art of allowing* consists of the structural elements of 'inquiry' (sequences organisation, phenomenological mapping, objectives, preference organisation; see 4.4), the embodiment of mindfulness by the teacher (see 5.7), and the transformation of the participant's experience through dialogue (see 4.5). (2) This work is co-accomplished (see 5) by both teacher and learner in 'inquiry'. The teacher guides and scaffolds this process, and ultimately uses repositioned accounts by participants to teach mindfulness. (3) These interactional patterns are robust, even in a breaching situation of someone continuously blowing a whistle during a silent meditation and *not* practising the art of allowing in 'inquiry' (see 6). They are also robust in the sense that

the same process applies for teaching *mindfulness* and teaching *how to teach mindfulness* in a teacher training context.

In the remainder of this chapter I will first elaborate on the *art of allowing* (section 7.2), then discuss potential applications, directions for future research and my theoretical contribution (section 7.3), then offer a conclusion (section 7.4).

7.2 The art of allowing

I have shown in this thesis how MBSR 'inquiry' is a structured conversational pattern that is similar to classroom and psychotherapeutic settings with some features that are specific in an MBSR context. I refer to these patterns as the *art of allowing* to capture that it is geared towards an open exploration of what is present for a meditator, which reflects in the contents and the structure of the dialogue itself. In this section, I highlight parallels to existing research in related fields and features of the dialogue that are unique to MBSR 'inquiry'.

7.2.1 Practical enactment of Buddhist principles

The focus of MBSR is the practice and cultivation of mindfulness, which is one aspect of the Noble Eightfold Path. While mindfulness-based programs are marketed as science-based and secular (P. J. Hemming and Arat, 2024), its Buddhist roots and alignment are no secret (Kabat-Zinn, 2017b). Secular mindfulness-based programs such as MBSR seem to increase spirituality in participants, even after the program has ended (Landau and Jones, 2021). The possible dilution of Buddhist practices is of concern to the Buddhist community in the sense that the teachings might not be accurate and ethics might not be included explicitly (Monteiro, Musten, and Compson, 2015). A commentary by Lindahl (2015) discusses that the notion of 'suffering', assumed to be compatible between Buddhist and psychological views, needs more empirical evaluation. My contribution is to show that upon close linguistic inspection of the actual practise in a real life context, Buddhist principles are deeply engrained in the conduct of MBSR 'inquiry'. What is talked about in 'inquiry' easily aligns with Buddhist principles and conveys a similar rela-

tionship to the Buddhist notion of 'suffering' and its liberation. In MBSR, suffering is more commonly referred to as 'discomfort' or 'unpleasant experiences'.

Objectives of 'inquiry'

How much Buddhism is actually in the MBSR classroom? Its Buddhist influence becomes evident from observing the *objectives of 'inquiry'*, its goal being to convey the course themes through dialogue. The specific objective of each 'inquiry' is of course context-dependent. In my thesis, I described two objectives as an example, namely 1) noticing and exploring bodily sensations, and 2) turning towards difficulty with curiosity (see 4.4.3). These objectives are foundational and come up in various forms and shapes throughout the course. When a participant experiences an unpleasant bodily sensation, both objectives naturally appear together. For example, say a participant experiences an itching foot during the body scan meditation, they are typically encouraged to explore various facets of the itching sensation (such as intensity, location, consistency etc, and possibly if it is connected to other sensations, or thoughts or feelings) rather than scratch it. The dialogue usually focuses on noticing and exploring an experience—not on changing it.

This process is closely related to Buddhist teachings, particularly Vipassana or insight meditation and reflects several of its core principles. In fact, consider how these two foundational *objectives* of 'inquiry' can easily be aligned with the Four Noble Truths (see 2.3.1, Bodhi, 2005; Pali Canon: Samyutta Nikaya LVI, 11). "First Noble Truth (dukkha). The truth that every existence is at its core full of suffering." In Buddhism, "suffering" can be recognised when it is fully known and not avoided. This reflects in the MBSR *objective* to 'notice and explore experiences as they are', whether they are pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. "Second Noble Truth (samudaya). The truth that the reason for this suffering is to be found within the beings themselves." In the Buddhist understanding, suffering comes from our inner attitude towards things, e.g. to be attached to pleasant things and wanting to avoid unpleasant things. Again, this reflects in MBSR 'inquiry', where participants are invited to notice and explore their automatic reactions, e.g. to resist scratching an itching foot. This might lead to the insight that the itching is not the cause

of discomfort but the impulse to avoid it. "Third Noble Truth (nirodha). The truth that there is a way out of this suffering." This refers to the end of suffering which is possible when there is no more craving or attachment. This Buddhist principle is again mirrored in the invitation during 'inquiry' to not react to an itch and notice how it might change or even dissolve. "Fourth Noble Truth (magga). The truth about the path that leads out of this suffering, namely the Noble Eightfold Path." This last Truth provides a practical way out of suffering that includes the cultivation of wisdom, ethical conduct, and meditation. In essence, MBSR and 'inquiry' in particular appear to provide a practical, experience-based route to many of the insights found in Buddhist contemplative traditions — without mentioning Buddhism. The next dimension of *phenomenological mapping* also aligns with Buddhist principles upon close linguistic inspection.

Phenomenological Mapping in 'inquiry'

I discussed the contents of 'inquiry' as *phenomenological mapping* in my thesis (see 4.4.2). In 'inquiry' the MBSR teacher speaks with a participant to explore their lived inner experience during meditation. This exploration is focused on the inner world of bodily sensations, thoughts, emotions and reactions. This specific focus of inner phenomena is typical of Vipassana meditation (Bodhi, 1994). With the term *phenomenological mapping* I describe the phenomenological nature of the dialogue, in the sense that inner phenomena are explored without a preconceived notion and not interpreted. The teacher typically asks questions to elicit details about the experience in the moment and mirrors back what was said. This reflecting back of what was said often contains the use of reformulations. However, different from reformulations as a 'third turn repair' (Schegloff, 1997) or in the context of psychotherapy (Knol et al., 2020), reformulations in 'inquiry' often contain a depersonalised article (Stanley and Longden, 2016). For example, the participant may be talking about 'I cannot feel *my* feet' and the teacher asks a clarification question such as 'what do you feel in *the* feet', thus reformulating the article. This specific use of reformulations creates a linguistic distance between the speaker and their feet. This could be linked to a central Buddhist principle, that of non-self (anatta) (c.p. MN 35; Bodhi, 2005). This reformulation may help to detach from an automatic identification with a sensation and reflects

the Buddhist notion of observing experience without having a fixed sense of self.

Embodied teaching of 'inquiry'

The creator of the MBSR program Jon Kabat-Zinn highlights how teachers need an 'embodied presence' which includes an understanding of the dharma, essentially an understanding of Buddhist principles, e.g. "the lawfulness that the Buddha discovered, described, and offered skillful methods for developing" (Kabat-Zinn, 2017b, p. 1128). For Kabat-Zinn MBSR teachers need to understand the dharma in order to teach mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2017b, p. 1130). In my thesis, *embodied teaching* refers to the requirement that the teacher embodies certain qualities when teaching MBSR. This is understood by the members in my data as a including qualities of presence, authenticity, and a Buddhist mindset. In chapter 5, I provided evidence that embodiment of mindfulness is important to novice teachers and touches every aspect of their lives. Members enact the art of allowing of 'inquiry' in the context of a focus group. The importance of having a grasp of Buddhist ideas is particularly highlighted during the teacher training course I observed. For example, during a feedback on how to conduct the 'inquiry' following the raisin exercise, the course leader emphasises that it is important to differentiate between "perception itself" and "image that comes up in the mind", as they are two different things. She alludes to the Buddhist notion of 'conditional emerging' (paticca samuppada) (Bodhi, 1994). 'Inquiry' into sensations often leads to an understanding of how bodily sensations, emotions, and thoughts are interconnected. A participant might notice that an unpleasant sensation triggers a cascade of thoughts or emotions. This illustrates the Buddhist insight that experiences arise due to conditions rather than independently. It is explicitly suggested as a possible objective in 'inquiry'.

7.2.2 Transformation in a dialogical atmosphere of allowing

Sequence organisation of 'inquiry'

My focus in this paragraph is on a structural aspect of 'inquiry', that of *sequence organisation*. Through conversation analysis, I identified that MBSR 'inquiry' sequences consistently follow a

triadic structure: initiation, response, and feedback. This structure closely mirrors patterns found in therapeutic and educational settings, as shown in the work of Peräkylä et al. (2008) and Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974). This confirms the findings by Crane, Stanley, et al. (2015) who also analysed MBSR 'inquiry' sequences and found that are organised similarly to classroom settings. I argue that the organisation of MBSR 'inquiry' is more closely aligned with sequence organisation found in psychotherapy. CA research that is concerned with the pyschotherapeutic process analyses sequences that enable a *transformation of experience* (Peräkylä, 2019, p. 265). This 'psychotherapeutic project' refers to a transformation of referents, emotions and relations over the of four action sequences, namely 'prior action', 'target action', 'response', and 'third position' (Peräkylä, 2019, p. 267). The transformation of experience that takes place in MBSR happens through a similar series of sequential actions. The main difference is that the referentiality of MBSR 'inquiry' is focused on the inner experience of the participant in the moment (or very recent moment) and is concerned mainly with the noticing and exploration of bodily sensations, thoughts, and emotions. In MBSR, this sequence allows a collaborative exploration of participants' experiences that transforms their initial responses into mindfulness learning themes for the group and deeper reflections for the individual. The teacher initiates the conversation by asking participants to reflect on their internal experiences. For instance, a teacher might ask, "What did you notice during the meditation?" Participants respond by sharing a physical sensation, an emotional response, or a thought. The teacher provides feedback that reframes or deepens their understanding. This feedback often serves as a reflective mirror aimed to help participants gain new insights into their experiences. The structure facilitates a process where meaning is co-constructed through the interaction itself.

Preference organisation of 'inquiry'

In 'inquiry' both difficulties and silences are not dispreferred. For example, a participant might express a difficulty with focusing on their breath during a guided meditation because their mind wanders. They might interpret this as a failure of their ability to do the exercise correctly. The teacher will typically not offer a solution to overcome the difficulty, e.g. how to stay with their

breath. Rather, the teacher might express an understanding for the difficulty, and possibly ask about what they *did notice* if not their breath, or simply just nod and stay silent. The teacher hence models a preference for exploring and staying with discomfort, rather than seeking solutions. The silences in this context offer the participant an opportunity for reflection at their own pace, rather than uncomfortable spaces to be filled with words. The *preference organisation* in 'inquiry' is hence oriented towards patience and presence and not interpretation or direction. With this the interlocutors perform several mindfulness attitudes, for example 'non-judging' (closely paying attention to your experience in the moment, Kabat-Zinn (2013, p. 21)), 'patience' (allowing experiences to unfold in their own time, Kabat-Zinn (2013, p. 23)), 'non-striving' (simply allowing and practising 'non-doing', not striving towards a goal, Kabat-Zinn (2013, p. 26)), 'acceptance' (seeing things as they really are which is considered healing, Kabat-Zinn (2013, p. 27)), and 'letting go' (letting things be and not being attached or wanting to change them, Kabat-Zinn (2013, p. 21)). The preference organisation in 'inquiry' makes these attitudes available to participants as a lived and shared practise. In doing so, 'inquiry' creates conditions for what Herrera et al. (2023) describes as "moments of meeting" in psychoanalytic therapy. These are relational events in which change is not initiated through an interpretation of the therapist, but through a form of relating that emerges in the interaction itself. Just as Herrera shows how therapeutic transformation can arise through mutual presence, this study demonstrates how MBSR 'inquiry' similarly transforms experience. A preference organisation that allows and normalises silence and difficulty is different from conventional preference organisation. This expands the range of how to relate to inner experiences within this space. By mutually engaging in this dialogue, teacher and learner co-produce a therapeutic setting in which this form of relating is considered normal. This thesis also contributes to the conversation analytic literature on silence in psychotherapy (e.g., Levitt (2001)), showing how silences in MBSR are actively shaped and rendered meaningful.

7.2.3 Co-accomplishing a transformation of experience

In the previous sections, I have talked about 'inquiry' in terms of how its structural dimensions can be seen as a practical enactment of Buddhist principles. I already touched on the co-accomplishment aspect of 'inquiry' when I discussed how difficulties are repositioned as insights. In this subsection, I would like to make the collaborative effort of 'inquiry' even more explicit. I said how *embodied teaching* contains the internalisation of Buddhist teachings for its members and in the context of teacher training. Here, I want to discuss how embodiment is a joint effort between the teacher and the participant that contributes to the transformative nature of 'inquiry'.

The co-accomplishment in MBSR teaching is done through an embodied focus, unlike traditional pedagogical models that focus on verbal instructions. Fidyk (2013, p. 114) describes this focus as 'a pedagogy of presence' which is "rooted in an ontological way of being, not an epistemological doing" and places a high value on silence. In Western societies silence in classrooms is often undervalued, even though it can be a used as productive and beneficial pedagogical tool (Su, Wood, and Tribe, 2023). Teachers are not just listened to, they also model how to sit, how to breathe and how to respond. Their embodiment becomes a relational resource and an invitation for the learner to experience, mirror and internalise certain ways of being and interacting. The teacher demonstrates mindfulness with their own being and "personal familiarity with it so that the whole teaching process becomes an in vivo experience of mindfulness", as Crane, Kuyken, et al. (2010, p. 78) described. The MBI:TAC evaluates the inner quality of embodiment as critical for effective teaching (Crane, Soulsby, et al., 2021). This is also in line with Kabat-Zinn (2017b, p. 1130) description of the MBSR program to be critically depending on the "embodied presence, understanding, and lived experience of the instructor". Santorelli (2016, p. 48) used the metaphor of the teacher as an "instrument through which the entire MBSR program unfolds". MBSR teachers create a space in which the meaning can emerge between participants rather than delivering an interpreted and evaluated version of the participants' experiences. In the book chapter "Being is relational", McCown (2016) describes the importance of the relationship between the teacher and the course participants, which becomes apparent in my study.

Further explorations could include a deeper analysis of the ingredients of the teacher-participant relationship, such as care, commitment in mutual spiritual growth, and as an epistemological practice of a shared understanding (see Eichel, 2024). Embodied teaching can only be accomplished in co-creation: "when mindfulness is seen as a relation achievement [...], the pedagogy is the practice, and the practice has no end" (McCown, 2016, p. 56).

Exploring *any* experience with self-responsibility

The transformation of experience that took place in the cases that I described in this thesis were based on the personal and subjective accounts of participants. In fact, when their true experience was not acknowledged, as in the breaching situation, participants protested that they wanted "to be taken seriously and feel understood" (see chapter 6). Order was ultimately restored in the classroom by acknowledging everything that had happened and reframing it as a learning opportunity. Interestingly, the breach did not cause a breakdown of the therapeutic setting. Rather, the repair simply displayed the same interactional patterns of 'inquiry' that I described earlier, including welcoming discomfort, reframing the experience, and orienting towards personal responsibility over blame. While many participants communicated that they felt a lack of a 'safe space', safety was not restored by condemning the whistler's behaviour but rather by framing safety in a specific way. In the 'whistle incident' group safety was viewed as the capacity to *relate to difficulty* within a shared framework, rather the *absence of difficulty*. Hence the breach revealed how participants and teachers restored the setting by drawing on their familiar practices. Participants were active contributors to the ongoing co-accomplishment of a safe space. This was supported by how teachers embodied and thus modelled a desired stance, both in MBSR and in MBSR teacher training (see 5.7).

This usage of 'what's there' is similar to the concept of 'utilisation' in Ericksonian therapy where "any experiences or actions presented by the client [are used] to facilitate growth" (J. Leslie, 2018, p. 27) and therapeutic change is brought about by incorporating elements of the client's behaviour or attitude into the therapy session. In my data of MBSR 'inquiry', elements of the participant's accounts are utilised to cultivate a mindful relationship with *any* experience

and form the basis of a mindfulness lesson.

7.3 Applications and future research

In this section, I want to highlight possible applications of my research and directions of future research. I will discuss these along three themes that emerged in my findings, as I have described MBSR 'inquiry' as the *art of allowing* in terms of linguistic components, embodiment, and interactional work.

Conversational sequences in 'inquiry'

I have analysed the three-turn sequence organisation typical in MBSR 'inquiry', that is initiation, response and third position action. Future research could focus on specific interactional mechanisms within these sequences such as adjacency pairs (e.g. question and answer). Specifically, it would be valuable to explore and categorise the types of initiation questions that MBSR teachers use and how participants respond. This research could also address the timing within these adjacency pairs. In my study, I have discussed how silences are used as pedagogical tool to allow time for reflection. This concerns silences in between and within turns. Silences in classroom settings have been found to be valuable in a systematic review on 'pedagogies of silence' (Su, Wood, and Tribe, 2023). So it could be valuable to be able to be able to tell with greater accuracy when and how silences are used within 'inquiry'. For example, what effect does meditation have on silences? What difference is there regarding the use of silences at the beginning of an MBSR class vs. towards the end when participants have spend about an hour in silent meditation? How does the teacher's use of silences effect the participants? This research of categorisation and timing of adjacency pairs could also include study of overlaps and interruptions. In addition to studying adjacency pairs, future research could focus on the role of referents in MBSR conversations and how these referents might change over the course of an MBSR course. I have described how in 'inquiry', referents typically focus on participants' internal experiences with regard to bodily sensations, thoughts, and emotions. However, at the

beginning of the course, participants are not familiar with this focus and they tend to bring up the contents of their thoughts, e.g. they might talk about what they were thinking about rather than that noticing having thoughts (see 4.4.4 for an example). However, in the teacher training context, participants frame their accounts almost exclusively within the typical MBSR referentiality of sensations, thoughts and emotions (see chapters 5 and 6). It would be interesting to explore how these referents change over time through 'inquiry' and the influence of the teacher's questions on this change. Further research could also explore the role of metaphors in 'inquiry' as they play a crucial role in MBSR (Stanley and Kortelainen, 2019). Teachers often use metaphors to guide participants through the reframing of their experiences. For example, Jon Kabat-Zinn uses the metaphor "full catastrophe living" to refer to how embracing life with all its conditions, including the painful ones, is healing and transformative (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. xxvi). Apart from metaphors, poems play a large role in MBSR and are often used for contemplation or as third position actions to teach a mindfulness lesson. I will present one of such poems in my conclusion below (see 7.4). Another possible direction for future research is non-verbal communication. In this study I have focused primarily on verbal interactions. However, non-verbal cues such as posture, gestures, facial expressions, and body language in general may play a vital role in the co-creation of a therapeutic setting. By analysing how teachers and participants use non-verbal communication to complement their verbal exchanges, future research could provide a more comprehensive understanding of 'inquiry'.

An obvious application of my research is to inform MBSR teacher training, as the conduct of 'inquiry' is difficult to learn for new teachers. My work could also inform therapists that use mindfulness-based approaches such as acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT).

Interactional work

In this thesis, I have explored the co-accomplishment of a therapeutic setting in MBSR 'inquiry' which has implications for understanding processes that facilitate personal growth and transformation. This has implications for therapeutic contexts such as psychotherapy but also for other non-therapeutic contexts such as sports coaching, education, and healthcare. In sports coach-

ing, there is the notion of 'somatic reflection' which describes paying close attention of bodily movement (Toner and Montero, 2022), not unlike the reflection that takes place in MBSR 'inquiry' (see 4.4.3). The findings from my study also have practical implications for healthcare, particularly in improving patient-practitioner communication.

I have touched on several topics on a surface level which would be beneficial to study in greater detail. In particular, these concern the hierarchical role of the MBSR teacher, the issue of trust and safety in a group context, and gender dynamics. The authority of the teacher in the MBSR setting is assumed to be non-hierarchical in advance and emerges through interaction. In my study the emergence of authority becomes most visible in the way the expectation of the teacher training course is framed to be non-hierarchical and then enacted in a way where the course leader clearly has authority (see chapter 5. Smoliak et al. (2022) observed a similar emergence in emotion-focused therapy, where professional authority is collaboratively negotiated in interaction. This could be an interesting direction for future research to study the role of the teacher in MBSR and in what ways authority is negotiated and enacted. Next, in chapter 6, my focus was on the breach in the MBSR teacher training course which led to several participants experiencing a 'breach of trust' and 'destruction of their safe space'. While this allowed me to infer that hence 'trust' and 'safe space' are important element of the therapeutic setting in MBSR, it would be valuable to dedicate further study into the specifics of these notions in the MBSR context. The strategies for managing breaches and restoring trust and safety can be applied in various group settings, particularly those that emphasise self-awareness and experiential learning. For example, in psychotherapy, these insights could inform practices where reframing clients' experiences play a role in the therapeutic approach. In educational contexts, the notion of co-creating a 'safe' environment can be integrated into classrooms. Also in chapter 6, the breach exposed a difference between men and women. Members made it explicit and wondered to what extent the breach impacted men and women differently. It was only women who raised the issue of a lack of safety and trust, whereas men also framed the breach in terms of humour and bravery. Future studies could explore the role of gender dynamics within MBSR settings. How do teachers' and participants' gendered identities influence the co-accomplishment of trust

and safety?

Theoretical Contributions

Theoretically my thesis contributes to broader understandings of institutional talk by providing a situated account of the co-accomplishment of a therapeutic environment. I stayed close to what members actually said and did and described their own methods that make the space meaningful for them. My analysis complements existing sociological work on subjective change, particularly Susie Scott's work on re-inventive institutions (Scott, 2011; Scott, 2016). Like Scott's work, I draw attention to how institutional aims are enacted through everyday interaction, only without an analytic lens.

More broadly, my research contributes to ongoing theoretical debates about the visibility and observability of internal experience. Meditation is often viewed as a solitary and 'internal' practice, that is inaccessible to sociological observation (Liberman, 1999, p. 55). What happens 'on the cushion' during meditation is assumed to be private. My findings challenge this perspective by showing that meditation—at least in the context of MBSR—is made sense of through social interaction. Participants articulate their inner experiences in MBSR 'inquiry' and teachers help shape the meaning of these experiences. This is particularly true in MBSR teacher training, where student teachers are experienced meditators who routinely share their 'inner' perspectives in a structured way (they refer to their emotions, bodily sensations and thoughts, and their relationship to these referents). In the context of MBSR 'inquiry', the 'inner' experience becomes a practical concern in everyday interaction and thus becomes available to sociological observation. In this respect, the MBSR classroom serves as *perspicuous settings* for examining how these experiences are made public and made sense of in real time: "A perspicuous setting makes available, in that it consists of, material disclosures of practices of local production and natural accountability in technical details with which to find, examine, elucidate, learn of, show, and teach the organizational object as an in vivo work site" (Garfinkel (2002, p. 181) in Eisenmann and Lynch (2021, p. 6)).

Finally, while my analysis has not pursued a direct account of power or inequality, it opens

the space for these concerns to be explored. I studied a setting with a white, middle-class, and educated cohort, which does not matter in an ethnomethodological analysis unless it is made relevant by the members themselves. However, from a different analytical stance it still raises the question about who can access mindfulness programmes and who is implicitly excluded. Crane, Callen-Davies, et al. (2023) point out that MBSR was originally intended to address both individual and collective forms of suffering, yet the field has often prioritised individual well-being and remained inaccessible to many. There is a growing recognition of this inequality that "systemic social inequities that influence access to public services have not been addressed in the [Mindfulness-Based Program] MBP field" (Crane, Callen-Davies, et al., 2023, p. 1). It would be speculative to as to how the socio-economic background of the participants in my study influenced the power dynamic in the classroom. Yet, the in situ study of power relations in this particular therapeutic setting might yield interesting findings of how equality or inequality is accomplished moment-to-moment within the interaction itself. As Scott (2011) argues, power in therapeutic institutions is often exercised not only top-down by the teacher but also horizontally, that is peer-to-peer through 'performative regulation'. This type of analysis could offer an interesting direction for further research.

7.4 Conclusion

In my literature review, I have discussed how mindfulness is a trend within therapeutic culture (see chapter 2). I discussed several critiques of therapeutic cultures, namely that public issues are repositioned as private troubles, normal behaviour is pathologised, suffering is made normal or even considered a central component of healing, well-being is commodified, and vulnerability is normalised. Therapeutic cultures may be understood as an institution-as-interaction in which members uphold and perpetuate their internalised framework of discourse, behaviours, and rituals, thus preserving power through their interactions (Scott, 2011). In order to gain a deeper understanding of therapeutic culture in terms of what it might actually mean for individuals, I have argued for a need to study a therapeutic subculture empirically and from within.

Mindfulness is situated within the concept of therapeutic culture by authors such as Nehring, O. J. Madsen, et al., 2020 whilst others describe the therapeutic culture "assemblage" (Stanley and Kortelainen, 2019, p. 36). Critics have argued that mindfulness is an ideal neo-liberal self-technology (Purser, 2019). My aim is not to make any claims regarding the societal impact of mindfulness but rather to look at what actually happens in the classroom. What are elements of the 'social imaginary' (that is the shared understanding, beliefs, discourse, rituals, etc) of those who practise and teach mindfulness? My analysis shows that what they co-accomplish is understood by the members themselves as 'therapeutic' as in the Merriam Webster dictionary definition of the term as 'having a beneficial effect on the body or mind'. Moreover, we learn about the context in which these interactions take place, what embodiment of mindfulness means to members and how they express it, some specifics of how the embodiment of mindfulness is expressed and how this is similar to a 'transformation of experience' in a psychotherapeutic project, and how mindfulness is taught by repositioning subjective experiences as a basis for universal mindfulness lessons–which according to the members is done from a place of embodying mindfulness whilst teaching. This interactional lens offers a counterpoint to critiques of therapeutic culture that emphasise its tendency to individualise responsibility (Illouz, 2008). While self-responsibility is a strong theme in MBSR it is not enacted in isolation. Instead, the notion of self-responsibility is shaped through the shared practice of 'inquiry'.

Normalisation of vulnerability

In the analyses in this thesis, the inquiries took place directly after a guided mindfulness meditation (chapter 4: after a short standing yoga practice and after a body scan meditation, chapter 5: after the raisin exercise, chapter 6: after a sitting meditation). There is a certain pattern of openly sharing private concerns that we have seen in all three findings chapters. In the introductory round of my MBSR class, the participants did not know each other, yet they volunteered very private and intimate details about the distress they experienced in their lives (chapter 4). Similarly, the participants of the focus groups immediately volunteered information that might otherwise be shared with close family or friends (chapter 5). In the teacher training, there was

already an established familiarity as it was in the middle of the course (chapter 6). 'Inquiry' typically takes place in the context of a safe space.

I have shown what it means for teachers to teach from a place of "embodying mindfulness" and how that reflects in how 'inquiry' is conducted. (1) Transformative sequences. Sequences are transformative in the sense that a subjective experience of a participant is collaboratively transformed into an inter-subjective object of study. This serves as the basis for a mindfulness lesson for the whole group. (2) A teacher and a participant co-explore facets of the participants' inner landscape. What is explored needs to be relevant to the participant in the moment, consider the group dynamic, and the learning theme. (3) Objects of study can be thoughts, emotions, sensations, or phenomena, similar to Buddhism. A teacher embodies a phenomenological stance that overlaps with Buddhist philosophy. 'Inquiry' is geared towards (Buddhist) insights such as: noticing and exploring personal difficulty as a foundation for insights about the self, direct perception ≠image in the mind, interdependent arising, etc. (4) Objects of study can be a difficulty. Teacher and participant linguistically practise the *art of allowing*. Resistance towards difficulty is affirmed and accepted but not problematised. Silences are utilised to allow introspection.

Valuing self responsibility

I have shown how meaning is co-accomplished in mindfulness training through the embodied moment-by-moment interactions of 'inquiry'. By calling this process *art of allowing*, I have attempted to capture the phenomenological stance of mindfulness (e.g. attending to present moment awareness, suspending judgment, not interpreting experiences) and the interactional work that sustains it. There is an ongoing discussion about the role of mindfulness in addressing broader societal issues (e.g. Crane, Callen-Davies, et al., 2023). In chapter 6 of my thesis, the breaching situation makes visible a tension between individual and social responsibility and shows how self responsibility is socially enacted in 'inquiry'. Participants who were upset about the whistle initially blamed the person whistling for their distress and perceived lack of safety. They were then guided to explore their reaction from within and realise that they could protect themselves and learn from the situation—to be responsible for whatever was within their

individual sphere of influence. A poem by Portia Nelson that is often cited in MBSR courses inadvertently exemplifies this tension by describing a journey towards greater self awareness:

Autobiography in five short chapters by Nelson (1993, 2f.)

I

I walk down the street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I fall in.

I am lost ... I am hopeless.

It isn't my fault.

It takes forever to find a way out.

II

I walk down the same street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I pretend I don't see it.

I fall in again.

I can't believe I'm in the same place.

But it isn't my fault.

It still takes a long time to get out.

III

I walk down the same street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I see it is there.

I still fall in ... it's a habit.

My eyes are open.

I know where I am.

It is my fault.

I get out immediately.

IV

I walk down the same street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I walk around it.

V

I walk down another street.

The poem is often recited to describe the journey of cultivating mindfulness. It describes a progression of awareness that goes with a progression of accountability, an increased ability to act, and less suffering. The ability to act is limited to an action that is self serving, in this case to take another street. In the poem, there is no consideration of making the street safe for others, once the protagonist has become aware of the hole and managed to avoid it.

In the end, the *art of allowing* makes visible a balance between inner awareness and outer complexity, between self-responsibility and the social world in which it takes shape.

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Appendix A

Jefferson transcription

Symbol	Definition and use
[yeah] [okay]	Overlapping talk
=	End of one TCU and beginning of next begin with no gap/pause in between (sometimes a slight overlap if there is speaker change). Can also be used when TCU continues on new line in transcript.
(.)	Brief interval, usually between 0.08 and 0.2 seconds
(1.4)	Time (in absolute seconds) between end of a word and beginning of next. Alternative method: "none-one-thousand-two-one-thousand…": 0.2, 0.5, 0.7, 1.0 seconds, etc.
Word	Underlining indicates emphasis. Placement indicates which syllable(s) are emphasised.
Wo:rd	Placement within word may also indicate timing/direction of pitch movement (later underlining may indicate location of pitch movement)
wo::rd	Colon indicates prolonged vowel or consonant. One or two colons common, three or more colons only in extreme cases.
↑word ↓word	Marked shift in pitch, up (↑) or down (↓). Double arrows can be used with extreme pitch shifts.
WORD	Upper case indicates syllables or words louder than surrounding speech by the same speaker
°word°	Degree sign indicate syllables or words distinctly quieter than surrounding speech by the same speaker
<word	Pre-positioned left carat indicates a hurried start of a word, typically at TCU beginning
word-	A dash indicates a cut-off. In phonetic terms this is typically a glottal stop
>word<	Right/left carats indicate increased speaking rate (speeding up)
<word>	Left/right carats indicate decreased speaking rate (slowing down)
.hhh	Inbreath. Three letters indicate 'normal' duration. Longer or shorter inbreaths indicated with fewer or more letters.
hhh	Outbreath. Three letters indicate 'normal' duration. Longer or shorter inbreaths indicated with fewer or more letters.
whhord	Can also indicate aspiration/breathiness if within a word (not laughter)
w(h)ord	Indicates abrupt spurts of breathiness, as in laughing while talking
£word£	Pound sign indicates smiley voice, or suppressed laughter
#word#	Hash sign indicates creaky voice
~word~	Tilde sign indicates shaky voice (as in crying)
(word)	Parentheses indicate uncertain word; no plausible candidate if empty
(( ))	Double parentheses contain analyst comments or descriptions

Transcript A.1: Glossary of Transcript Symbols (Jefferson, 2004), table taken from University Transcriptions (2024).

Appendix B

Introduction round

#00:01:49-3# - #00:02:47-8#

Susanne: "Um, I had a lot going on, I became a mother at a very young age and am now a single parent and um, I also had intensive drug experience before that. And now I'm actually on the road to recovery and have been in therapy for one and a half years. And yes, in principle everything is going great. I am very happy and my son is doing well. And everything is great most of the time (laughs). But I would also like to be more relaxed and to radiate more calmness, to be able to relax better and to get to know myself better and to be more myself again. And do something for myself again, exactly, that's why I'm here (very quietly)."

#00:02:50-9# - #00:03:42-1#

Annie: "Um, yes, my name is Annie, um, I am um, well, there's more happening in my life right now than I can handle right now, so (laughs) I'm on a trip for three months, I'm pregnant and I'm without a job right now and I've just got a flat, so that's all that's coming together at once. And um yes so I wish that I can somehow process this better and um um yes so that I can then um somehow become more relaxed or somehow relax better."

#00:03:45-4# - #00:04:46-2#

Christine: "Um, I am Christine, I am um, I was a single parent for a very long time. I have been separated from my partner for four years, my former partner, the father of my daughter. And then I worked a lot again as a single parent and then I've had a new partner for two years and I actually thought I was doing well and then last year I went into hospital with a suspected heart attack and it turned out that it wasn't anything physical, it was all psychosomatic. And I also had panic attacks and I didn't know myself and I've always been a very hectic, nervous person and it was much worse. And um I have actually always done a lot of sports except for last year and yoga again. I also tried meditation but somehow I couldn't get into it on my own. And when I read about this course I thought, I've never heard anything about it before and I thought that's exactly what I'm looking for. Right, and that's why I'm here now"

#00:04:47-9# - #00:06:28-1#

Toby: "I have a 15-year-old daughter and her mother lives in France, so that means I'm really on my own as far as raising her is concerned. The reason why I'm here today is that I got the diagnosis last year that I have shortness of breath at night and also heart problems later on and I've put on a lot of weight because of the stress. And yes, somehow I have to do something about it and um I'm here today actually to do a bit of research into the causes. [...] because my life has always been very hectic, I'm not used to it, I've always had 90-hour weeks in the last few years. that was so normal for me, um it's not quite healthy. [...] I said it's good to learn a few more techniques. What can I do to calm down again"

#00:08:47-6# - #00:09:36-2#

Verena: "so [the meditation] is not about making anything go away um it's about being in a different relationship with what is, so that means even if you meditate regularly and practise mindfulness, all these catastrophes that accompany you in life will continue to accompany you. They don't stop all at once (laughs) um and all these frustrations that you are exposed to, they continue, but what might change is the way I deal with them, the way I relate to myself, namely more gently and kindly"

#00:01:49-3# - #00:02:47-8#

Susanne: "Ähm bei war eben auch sehr viel los, ich wurde sehr jung Mutter und bin jetzt auch alleinerziehend und ähm habe davor auch schon intensiv Drogenerfahrung gehabt. und jetzt bin eigentlich schon auf dem Weg der Besserung und bin auch schon seit eineinhalb Jahren in Therapie. Und ja prinzipiell läuft das alles super. Ich bin sehr zufrieden und meinem Sohn geht es gut. und alles ist klasse meistens (lacht). aber ähm ich würde mir schon auch mehr Gelassenheit wünschen und dass ich mehr Ruhe ausstrahl, mich besser entspannen kann und mich besser kennenlerne und wieder mehr bei mir bin. und mal wieder was für mich tue genau, deshalb bin ich hier (sehr leise)"

#00:02:50-9# - #00:03:42-1#

Annie: "Ähm, ja mein Name ist Annie, ähm ich bin ähm, also in meinem Leben passiert gerade irgendwie ja mehr als ich irgendwie gerad so verarbeiten kann also (lacht). ich bin ähm war erst auf ner Reise drei Monate, bin schwanger und ähm hab bin jetzt gerad ohne Arbeit und hab gerad ne Wohnung also das hat jetzt alles was so auf einmal zusammenkommt. und ähm ja also ich wünsch mir, dass ich irgendwie das irgendwie besser verarbeiten kann und ähm ähm ja also dadurch auch dann ähm irgendwie entspannter werd oder irgendwie besser entspannen kann"

#00:03:45-4# - #00:04:46-2#

Christine: "Ähm ich bin Christine, ich bin ähm ich war halt auch sehr lange alleinerziehend. ähm bin aber schon seit vier Jahren von meinem Partner meinem damaligen Partner getrennt, dem Vater der Tochter. und ähm hab dann noch mal sehr viel gearbeitet war alleinerziehend und hab aber dann hab seit zwei Jahren einen neuen Partner und ich dachte eigentlich es geht mir gut und bin aber letztes Jahr dann mit Verdacht auf Herzinfarkt ins Krankenhaus gekommen und es hat sich rausgestellt, dass das nichts ähm Körperliches ist, sondern alles psychosomatisch. und ich hatte dann auch Panikattacken und ähm also ich kannte mich selber nicht. und ich war immer schon ein sehr hektischer nervöser Mensch und es war dann noch viel schlimmer. und ähm ich habe eigentlich immer viel Sport gemacht bis auf letztes Jahr und mal wieder Yoga. ich habe auch mal Meditation ausprobiert aber ich bin alleine irgendwie nicht reingekommen. und als ich eben von diesem Kurs gelesen habe dacht ich, ich hab davor noch nie was gehört darüber und dachte genau das ist es was ich suche. genau und deswegen bin ich jetzt hier"

#00:04:47-9# - #00:06:28-1#

Toby: "Ich habe eine 15 Jahre alte Tochter ähm und äh die Mutter lebt in Frankreich also das heißt ich bin wirklich auf mich allein gestellt was die Erziehung angeht ähm die ähm. der Grund warum ich jetzt heute hier bin ist, dass ich ähm ja seit letztem Jahr die Diagnose halt auch bekommen hab, dass ich halt Atemnot hab nachts und also geht halt auch in Richtung Herzprobleme nachher und ähm äh ja. sehr viel durch den Stress halt auch zugenommen hab und (unverständl.) ja also irgendwie muss ich was dagegen tun und ähm ich heute hier eigentlich auch so ein bisschen für Ursachenforschung. […] weil mein Leben ist halt immer sehr hektisch äh gewesen schon, ich bin das gar nicht gewohnt ähm, ich hab also in den letzten Jahren immer wieder so 90 Stunden Wochen gehabt. das war für mich so normal ähm deshalb (unverständl.) ist halt nicht ganz gesund. […] trotzdem habe ich gesagt ist es mal ganz gut, wenn man auch ein paar Techniken dazu lernt, was kann ich denn tun, um auch mal wieder runter zu kommen."

#00:08:47-6# - #00:09:36-2#

Verena: "also es geht nicht darum irgendwas wegzumachen ähm sondern es geht darum die Dinge, anders in Beziehung zu sein mit dem was ist, also das heißt auch wenn man regelmäßig meditiert und Achtsamkeit praktiziert, diese ganzen Katastrophen, die einen im Leben so begleiten, die werden einen auch weiterhin begleiten. die hören nicht auf einmal auf (lacht) ähm und diese viele Frustrationen, denen man so ausgesetzt ist, die gehen weiter, aber was sich möglicherweise ändert ist der Umgang damit, also die Beziehung wie ich wie ich mir selber begegne, nämlich sanfter und freundlicher."

Appendix C

Focus Group Excerpts

C.1 Focus group 1 - question 1

Ava, Bea, Carina, and Daniel were participants in the 'basic training' course (part one of the MBSR teacher training course). They had just finished a first introductory session with the whole group and stayed 30 minutes longer for this focus group interview with me. They all signed consent forms before we began. The following transcript is an excerpt of a much longer conversation. It is everyone's answer to my first question why they decided to participate in the teacher training course.

Transcript C.1: Excerpt from the first meeting with the focus group, first question

Verena: so I thought- because I mean you all know each other now, but I don't know you um maybe we can do a little round of introductions um where you maybe just say your name again and why you're doing this training. so what's your motivation? (...) just whoever likes
Ava: me? ((laughing)) I'm Ava and why I'm doing the training um i've been studying mindfulness for ages. also yoga, and I also have a [deleted for anonymity] who is depressed, that's how I came across MBSR, I was so enthusiastic about it back then that I said I really wanted to learn it too
Verena: oh because he did it?
Ava: I told him that-
Verena: aaaah
Ava: so I made him realise that he should do it
Verena: yes
Ava: and unfortunately he forgets a lot of things, because he is also epileptic and unfortunately has dementia, but ((laughing)) I help him again, that also helps, mindfulness also helps him a lot and yes, I am a business coach, trainer and consultant in an entrepreneurial context myself and I very much want to bring that into companies and the world is opening up more and more ((laughing)) and companies are opening up more and more, in terms of stress, they really want to deal with it because they know that employees are now suffering a lot as a result and that this also affects efficiency and, of course, because they have a responsibility and I would like to teach that to the people there.
Verena: hm=hm
Ava: that's why I'm learning it, because I'm so enthusiastic myself and yes
Verena: yes thank you
Ava: you're welcome
Bea: yes for me, I'm a computer scientist, very technical environment, also in the machine industry and um maybe that would also be a reason um I was also looking for a balance um that's one and also privately a lot of difficulties and challenges also um psychological problems from my boyfriend um and he was recommended at the time - so I had asked how he could be helped
Verena: hm=hm
Bea: and um then MBSR was mentioned and um I worked it out for myself that I also wanted to get to know this path of mindfulness and yes, then also at work very stressful, very so that it was really too much for me last year and I'm also looking a bit for a way somehow, don't know if I'll keep it or something new, in any case um I also held training courses in this work context, so accompanying leadership
Verena: hm=hm
Bea: I trained as a trainer and I know that I really like to mediate
Verena: hm=hm
Bea: passing on knowledge, that- that gives me a lot of joy and, um, yes, and that fits together in such a way that, **on the one hand, I would like to deepen what is valuable for me even more and because I can possibly imagine that it will be a way to pass it on** and, yes, let's see
Verena: hm=hm yes. exciting (...) I just make a few notes in between, because then I can just ask questions later, so right
?: do you want them (unintelligible)?
Verena: no, no, I write- I have- that's fine
?: ok
Verena: just a cue, then I know what I want to ask #00:04:10-9#
Carina: I am Carina
Verena: hm=hm
Carina: umm I'm a marketing manager at a startup and (unintelligible) point that I still had the feeling of being internally driven by the demands of others, my own demands
Verena: hm=hm
Carina: and I got into this stress spiral and was looking for a way to get out of it and that's when I came across the MBSR course. um I did it and as you said earlier ((laughing)) something really big happened in me where I said oah ((laughing)) um I then also introduced a daily meditation practice um for myself um so I take half an hour every day to meditate or do the body scan or yoga and I am very much freed from this burden of stress
Verena: hm=hm
Carina: um, over time this inner desire arose more and more, I need something for my heart for the job I'm doing now, which is very number-based, which is very head-oriented, very top-heavy, um, and then I read through the whole thing a bit and **thought hey this basic training is a way to deepen this for myself for now**
Verena: hm=hm
Carina: **but I can definitely imagine passing it on later on**

Verena: so I thought- because I mean you all know each other now, but I don't know you um maybe we can do a little round of introductions um where you maybe just say your name again and why you're doing this training. so what's your motivation? (...) just whoever likes
Ava: me? ((laughing)) I'm Ava and why I'm doing the training um i've been studying mindfulness for ages. also yoga, and I also have a [deleted for anonymity] who is depressed, that's how I came across MBSR, I was so enthusiastic about it back then that I said I really wanted to learn it too
Verena: oh because he did it?
Ava: I told him that-
Verena: aaaah
Ava: so I made him realise that he should do it
Verena: yes
Ava: and unfortunately he forgets a lot of things, because he is also epileptic and unfortunately has dementia, but ((laughing)) I help him again, that also helps, mindfulness also helps him a lot and yes, I am a business coach, trainer and consultant in an entrepreneurial context myself and I very much want to bring that into companies and the world is opening up more and more ((laughing)) and companies are opening up more and more, in terms of stress, they really want to deal with it because they know that employees are now suffering a lot as a result and that this also affects efficiency and, of course, because they have a responsibility and I would like to teach that to the people there.
Verena: hm=hm
Ava: that's why I'm learning it, because I'm so enthusiastic myself and yes
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Bea: yes for me, I'm a computer scientist, very technical environment, also in the machine industry and um maybe that would also be a reason um I was also looking for a balance um that's one and also privately a lot of difficulties and challenges also um psychological problems from my boyfriend um and he was recommended at the time - so I had asked how he could be helped
Verena: hm=hm
Bea: and um then MBSR was mentioned and um I worked it out for myself that I also wanted to get to know this path of mindfulness and yes, then also at work very stressful, very so that it was really too much for me last year and I'm also looking a bit for a way somehow, don't know if I'll keep it or something new, in any case um I also held training courses in this work context, so accompanying leadership
Verena: hm=hm
Bea: I trained as a trainer and I know that I really like to mediate
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Bea: passing on knowledge, that- that gives me a lot of joy and, um, yes, and that fits together in such a way that, **on the one hand, I would like to deepen what is valuable for me even more and because I can possibly imagine that it will be a way to pass it on** and, yes, let's see
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?: do you want them (unintelligible)?
Verena: no, no, I write- I have- that's fine
?: ok
Verena: just a cue, then I know what I want to ask #00:04:10-9#
Carina: I am Carina
Verena: hm=hm
Carina: umm I'm a marketing manager at a startup and (unintelligible) point that I still had the feeling of being internally driven by the demands of others, my own demands
Verena: hm=hm
Carina: and I got into this stress spiral and was looking for a way to get out of it and that's when I came across the MBSR course. um I did it and as you said earlier ((laughing)) something really big happened in me where I said oah ((laughing)) um I then also introduced a daily meditation practice um for myself um so I take half an hour every day to meditate or do the body scan or yoga and I am very much freed from this burden of stress
Verena: hm=hm
Carina: um, over time this inner desire arose more and more, I need something for my heart for the job I'm doing now, which is very number-based, which is very head-oriented, very top-heavy, um, and then I read through the whole thing a bit and **thought hey this basic training is a way to deepen this for myself for now**
Verena: hm=hm
Carina: **but I can definitely imagine passing it on later on**

C.2 Focus group 4 - question 1

This is the last focus group meeting with Ava, Bea, Carina, and Daniel. The highlighted parts are quoted in chapter 5, subsection 5.2.1 to explain what the participants gained from the teacher

training.

Transcript C.2: Excerpt from the fourth meeting with the focus group, first question

Verena: Yes, thank you very much for being here and for all the hours we've spent together and for sharing your experiences. I find that very exciting, the picture that is emerging. Yes, now it's the last time. In other words, I would like to start again with the question, yes, how are you doing? And, in other words, perhaps reflecting on the module, what have you taken away from it? But maybe also, what have you taken away from the whole training programme? And also the question of what happens next? I mean, you've probably already talked about all this, I don't know. Yes, well, the question of what happens next, so, do you do this advanced module or, well, what do you take with you?
Ava: Should I start?
(Laughter)
Verena: If you like.
(Laughter.)
Ava: No pressure. (Laughter.) So to the last question, yes, I'll carry on. And I hope that everything works out with [location of the training], just as I had planned. And let's see.
Verena: So, you'll continue your training in [location of the training]?
Ava: [location of the training]. It starts in March and that suits me very, very well time-wise. And unfortunately not in [other location of the training]. Therefore-. I hope that everything works out with the places. That we can all start there. At least those who want to. And what did it do to me? Well, this time it was-. Well, it was always different, actually. Each module had its own qualities. And I don't quite know, it was just much, much more this whole feeling, which I also said at the end, in the feedback round. Namely, that I would also like to make this emotional world of mine more present and I noticed that more strongly in this module. **Also this bond with the group and somehow, as I said, it doesn't feel like a separation or an end, but simply a path that we are walking together. Even if I might not see some of them as often, it's still a bond.** It's totally funny, also what we were just talking about outside, namely that this mindfulness brings in such depth, I think. Even if you haven't exchanged so much, you still have a connection with the people you've travelled this path with. And that's a completely new experience for me, I have to say. I have to interact with most of them quite a lot to feel that kind of connection. And here it was simply, I don't know whether it was [participant], who was also one of our members, who said something so beautiful the day before yesterday: "Let go, let go, be carried". And that was just really like-. So, this time it was so extreme for me that I felt it myself. Where I said, "How beautiful!". And that just increases with every time. Maybe it's also addictive, I don't know.
Group: (Laughter)
Ava: **For me, it's always an expansion with every area, what you discover about yourself in terms of mindfulness and what you discover together with other people. It's just something much, much more amazing, where you say "Wow, there's always more"** and that's really interesting, where I say - or it seems that way to me. I'm just talking about me. And, yes, in this module it was just the same feeling again.
Bea: So. (Laughter.) Everything is fine. So, I'm actually still thinking about whether I'm going to do it, but from my inside, yes. I-. So, there's already an inner yes, but it still needs a bit of maturity. And I'm also thinking more and more about actually doing it in [location of the training]. For various reasons here too. So, time is one reason, and people I met on the basic course, who I value, are also doing it there. (Laughs)
Verena: I see. Are there some from the basic course then? I see.
Bea: So that then also-. Well, that, yes, I can well imagine that. And since this switch has only happened in the last few days, I still need to mature a bit. So. So much for that. Then the question was, how am I doing now? Yes, very, very well, interestingly enough. **Well, I can see the heaviness that I have in my life or the baggage and yet I've been able to find something inside for myself, like I've found more of my strength. So, I don't know, I feel like I've suddenly realised my strength. And I'm so radiant, I don't know.** I don't know how to say it. Well, it's something that when I had my eyes closed while meditating, there was a lot, a lot of radiance in the module. A lot of this glow, where I still don't know exactly what I'm going to do with it. But it's definitely, so now, I'll leave the esoteric stuff out of it and I feel more calm, more anchored. Exactly. And I realise how much good it does me to treat myself to times like this, when I'm in wonderful hands - well, I'm in wonderful hands in this group. The community also makes me resonate with it, which means I find it wonderful here in the group. And that also sustains me. So, I'm not just beaming from myself, but it's really the community experience, which is very, very nice and very energising for me. Exactly. And the second question was?
Verena: So, exactly, how are you doing with the module now and then with the whole training programme?
Bea: Yes. **And the whole training programme has enriched me a lot overall. I would say that I've been very enriched and grateful.** Yes.

Verena: Thank you.
Carina: Is it okay if I carry on?
Daniel: Sure, if you want to.
Carina: I'm just trying to find the beginning. Maybe I'll start with the module now. I found it the most exciting module for me because it was about guiding others, in small groups. And I perceived myself in a completely different way during those minutes we had there and found it really exciting.
Verena: What did you guide?
Carina: First the raisin exercise
Verena: Ah yes.
Carina: Then a breathing meditation. Unfortunately I wasn't there yesterday.
Ava: Body scan.
Bea: Bodyscan was then.
Carina: Body scan. That's right. So, the first steps. And it's quite different when you have to speak yourself than when you hear it. And I found it very exciting to observe how much comes from the head and how much comes from the gut, in other words, how much really comes from within. And how much comes across to others, even if you are unsure. That this is also present. And, yes, I think that was the most valuable realisation of the module. **When I look back at all the modules, yes, it was like an accompaniment to, yes, my life. So, I was very emotional today because I'm thinking about resigning.**
Verena: Your job?
Carina: Mhm. (Affirmative.)
Verena: Did that occur to you now?
Carina: I've been carrying that around with me for a long time (18 sec.) yes, and somehow through mindfulness or the modules, I got closer and closer to myself and realised more and more, okay, what you're doing doesn't feel good. And now I'm just at a point (?okay, stop doing that one thing) where I might really want to go into another (?field). And then to really listen to myself, what I want and what I want to give to the world. Why I am actually here. And not to be lived like this, well, right now it feels more like I'm living what I'm somehow told to live. (11 sec.) And I can already feel the deep desire to continue living mindfulness. But I would just give myself a few weeks to think about it. If I do the advanced course, I'd like to do it in [location of the training] because I've already done two silent retreats there and I've simply fallen in love with this place. I love this (?forest) that is there. The peace that the place radiates and I could well imagine doing it there. Yes. So, all in all, it feels more like the basic training has now shown me the way to get out of my work. To put it in general terms.
Verena: Yes. Some things are changing.
Carina: Mhm. (Affirmative.) Yes.
Daniel: Yes. **I have the feeling that I have embarked and am still embarking on a journey where I am, let's just say, packing in more and more that has to do with mindfulness. So it's becoming more and more a part of me, of my identity, which on the one hand fulfils me and on the other hand I'm just looking, okay, there are still areas - when it comes to work, I've already changed, that was also a reason. So, because I did this training here, I've already changed my job, where I have less responsibility, where I have less stress.** But I just want more. So, I'd like to continue my training in [other location of the training] because the schedule suits me pretty well. Yes. But [location of the training] is also beautiful, so, I would- (Laughter.) (B?: ... #00:11:51#.) I was also in [location of the training] and it was so, just, so, what we experienced there, the location, that was so-, there would be other dates, ... #00:12:00# really. Yes. So, yes. And what have I learnt? Maybe I'll start with this module now. That feedback is incredibly valuable. That unfortunately I don't have that on my own at home, including these, for example, these ...#00:12:20# exercises. I also find it valuable to exchange ideas with someone who perhaps has a completely different view of things and can provide other valuable impulses. Yes. But in general, there was also a lot of technical input from [teacher] and [teacher]. Yes, I can't say that this module was better or worse. For me, every module has something that stimulated something in me or got something rolling. I also found this perspective of actually teaching very exciting. So, also this-. So, this physical experience. So, guiding that. Well, I found it very, very strange for me at the beginning. Well, I somehow felt a very strong connection. Even stronger than when I usually just listen and then join in. More so because I was really the creator. So, I found that a very impressive experience. Yes, and overall, mindfulness is simply a thing that I fell in love with. I've said that many times, I think. Yes. I just want to keep doing it and I started doing it when I was in a very bad personal situation. Because I have a child with [an illness] and I would say that mindfulness has simply enlarged the vessel. My son had [an illness] again shortly before the silent retreat, well, on the day of the silent retreat, I think I've already mentioned it here. And then it wasn't clear whether I would be able to go there at all, but I went anyway and I simply realised that I could get out of the low again more quickly. Yes. Whether it's through all these standard exercises, this body scan and so on, or simply this attitude towards the whole thing. And being able to let go and simply anchor yourself in your breathing again. These are also valuable things that really support me in my situation. I'm grateful for that and just want to keep going.
Verena: Wow. Yes, thank you. You can definitely feel the atmosphere here in the room. (Laughter.) (?I have to) look at the clock. I-. What would you say mindfulness is? (9 sec.)