

PHED 119 | Introduction to Mindfulness

Units:	2
Section:	50035 W 3-4:50 in KAP 165 50037 F 10-11:50 in LVL 3V
Term:	Spring 2025
Location:	
Instructor:	Christian Straka
Pronouns:	him/him What are pronouns?
Office:	PED 107
Office Hours:	Friday 8.30-10am
Contact Info:	cstraka@usc.edu

Brightspace: brightspace.usc.edu
IT Help: USC Information Technology Services Help
Phone: (213) 740-5555
Contact Info: <https://itservices.usc.edu/contact/>

Physical Education & Mind Body Health (PEMBH)

PEMBH Mission

Physical Education & Mind Body Health (PEMBH) provides a variety of opportunities for students to improve their general health and fitness through fitness related and recreational activities classes. Courses are designed to introduce students to various aspects of health and physical education principles. With this exposure, knowledge, and skill, students are better equipped to make choices regarding a healthy and active lifestyle. All classes stress the importance of exercise and leisure time activity to physical, mental, and social well-being.

Acknowledgement

PEMBH embraces an inclusive spirit, based on equity, diversity, and inclusion to achieve academic and institutional excellence. For PEMBH's acknowledgments and more information visit our website -- <https://dornsife.usc.edu/phed/about/>
[Additional Resources](#)

Course Description

This course is an introduction to mindfulness. Through it, students will learn the principles of practice, develop their own meditation practice, and apply principles to daily life. They will learn strategies to skillfully work with thoughts, emotions, and sensations, while developing their capacity to enhance mind-body awareness of present-moment experience. They will study theory and research in the field of mindfulness and the emerging science that shows promising, beneficial effects for physical and mental health and well-being. This course is designed for beginners and is also suitable for those with experience who want to refine their practice. Classes consist of a combination of lecture, practice, and discussion.

Prerequisite: None

Co-Requisite: None

Recommended Preparation: None

Learning Objectives

1. Synthesize theory, practice, and research in mindfulness and apply understanding to individual practice.
2. Develop and sustain a personal meditation practice.
3. Investigate mind-body awareness and connection and apply principles to enhance capacity for presence, connection, openness, and curiosity in experiences.
4. Describe and apply mindfulness principles to skillfully cultivate focus and concentration, including as they relate to working with emotions, thoughts, and sensations.
5. Describe and apply mindfulness principles as they relate to self-regulation in navigating difficult emotions and thoughts, including stress and anxiety.
6. Identify and apply techniques to skillfully cultivate emotions of well-being, such as kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity.
7. Apply mindful awareness in daily life, including as it relates to:
 - a. clarity in decision making and problem solving to skillfully respond, rather than react, to complex situations.
 - b. interpersonal relationships and relational mindfulness practices of active listening and mindful communication.
 - c. navigating change, time management, and exploring what it means to have a conscious and purposeful relationship with technology.

PEMBH Objectives

Students will understand the importance of sound health & fitness principles as they relate to better health & will be able to:

- Recognize the physical and mental benefits of increased physical activity.
- Examine the effect of nutrition, rest, and other lifestyle factors that contribute to better health.

Students will be exposed to a variety of activities providing them the opportunity to:

- Utilize physical activity as a tool to manage stress.
- Participate in a motivating and nurturing environment resulting in a greater sense of well-being and self-esteem.

Students will demonstrate proficiency through knowledge & acquired skills enabling them to:

- Develop an appreciation of physical activity as a lifetime pursuit and a means to better health.

PEMBH Policy for the use of AI Generators

This course aims to develop creative, analytical, and critical thinking skills. Therefore, all assignments should be prepared by the student working individually or in groups. Students may not have another person or entity complete any substantive portion of the assignment. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, using AI-generated text, code, or other content is prohibited in this course, will be identified as plagiarism and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Instructor Note: With new applications of AI, it can be a useful tool depending on its use. While plagiarism is a violation of university policy, in this course students are able to utilize AI in situations where it might be helpful for learning or creativity. This can include brainstorming topics, generating strategies for bringing mindfulness to daily life, or exploring ways to overcome obstacles in goal setting. Please use thoughtful discretion and also be aware of the limitations and potential pitfalls of AI. Helpful tips:

- Be thoughtful about when it might be useful or appropriate to use AI.
- The more refined your prompts are, the higher quality results you will receive.
- Do not assume that you will be given factually correct information or sources. Cross check the information you are given.
- AI is a tool that needs to be cited as a source when using it. Include a statement that includes the prompt you inputted and why you chose to use AI. Clearly attribute any material generated to the tool used. To not do so is a violation of academic integrity policies.

Course Textbook

Mindfulness for Young Adults: Tools to Thrive in School and Life, by Linda Yaron Weston

Available in print and e-book:

- [Routledge](#): 20% off for USC students with code EFL03
- Also available on [Amazon](#) and at USC Bookstore.

Course Textbook Reserves

- [USC Library Course Reserves](#) (login to USC Course Reserves ARES with USC Net ID)

Supplemental Book

Mindfulness in Plain English, by Bhante Guanaratana

- Available free online [here](#)
- Also available in print on [Amazon](#)

Communication

I encourage students to reach out by email and will try to respond as soon as possible, and within 48 hours.

Reflection and Evaluation

Reflection is an integral part of the learning and teaching process. As such, you will complete a series of reflections on your practice through the course. We will also complete mid- and end-of-course evaluations for the course so that it can best serve the needs of students. Please feel free to also communicate feedback to me through the semester in person or by email.

Grades

The impact of your practice will be felt in how much effort, time, and awareness you choose to invest in it. Grades are based on your willingness to show up for your personal and class practice and are based on your approach to the following criteria:

1. Presence: time and awareness to show up for your practice
2. Effort: diligence and precision with which you practice
3. Curiosity: growth through a nonjudgmental approach
4. Kindness: choosing gentleness and patience over harshness towards body, mind, and practice

All work is due on the assigned date and is to be typed and submitted to Brightspace. Format: submit as a Word or PDF document, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font, 1" margins, MLA format. Due dates under course outline. In the event that a due date falls on a university holiday, students are able to submit the following school day.

In-Class Participation (15% = 30 points; 2 points/week)

Attend class and participate in sessions. 2 points for each week. It is the responsibility of each student to accurately sign in. Participation is an essential component of this course and serves to deepen student inquiry and reflection of the course material. Students need to be present in class to earn participation points. There will be an absence make-up opportunity in Module 5.

5 Module Reflection Forms (50%= 100 points total; 20 points each).

Due Sunday midnight January 26, February 9, 23, March 9, April 6. They include:

- o Daily personal meditation practice log. 5-10 minutes per day recommended time Modules 1, 2 (weeks 1-4); 10-15 minutes per day Modules 3, 4 (weeks 5-8); 15-20+ minutes/day Module 5 (weeks 9-15). Or, you may increase depth by a self-chosen amount of minutes each week. You are welcome to use an app, guided meditations, or break up the time through the day.
- o Rubric Criteria: 8-10 points for meditation practice (presence, effort); 2-2.5 points for each of the written responses (thorough, reflective).
- o Workbook prompts. Choose 2 questions from the module to answer.
- o Class reflection prompts. Submit a reflection from class each module. Can be typed or submitted as a picture included in your document.
- o Outside meditation class. Attend a meditation class outside ours. Include reflection in Module 4 (week 8) form.

Mindfulness in Daily Life Group Strategy and Presentation (20%=40 Points)

Due Week of April 7 in class

1. Choose an area/topic in mindfulness you're interested in exploring with a group in Week 4. Areas of daily life can include relationships and communication, mindful eating, self-care and self-compassion, mindful technology use, mindful learning, mindful decision making, mindful movement, social justice, or the environment.
2. Choose a mindfulness strategy to apply to an area of daily life you'd like to try out regularly for 5 weeks (daily or minimum 3x week). While groups will choose a shared topic to explore as a community, they may all employ different strategies within it. You are welcome to explore apps that track progress or enhance your experience.
3. Organize a group in-class 15-minute per group presentation on your mindfulness topic and strategy. Include relevant research behind it (from credible, evidence-based sources; MLA format), reflections on how your strategy went, recommendations, or next steps. Presentations should be cooperative with each group member speaking, and interactive in nature (the class participates in the particular technique), and be visually displayed (ie. PowerPoint, Prezy, etc.).

Rubric Criteria: 8 points for each of the following:

- Content: clearly and concisely convey thoughtful ideas and examples
- Application: Understanding and application of mindfulness principles
- Voice: volume, clarity, emotion
- Stance: body language, eye contact, presence

- Style: effort, creativity, organization, applicability, interactivity, collaboration

Summative Exam (15%= 30 points)

Due week of April 28

Based on content from reading, class content, and discussions. Be sure to stay current on course reading and material, as not all content on exam will be discussed in class.

Grading Criteria

	% Grade	Points
Class Participation	15%	30
5 Module Reflection Forms	50%	100
Mindfulness in Daily Life Group Strategy and Presentation	20%	40
Summative Exam	15%	30
Total	100%	200 Points

Grading Scale

There are 200 total points possible. The overall grading scale is as follows:
 A 183 / A- 180 / B+ 174 / B 163 / B- 160 / C+ 154 / C 143 / C- 140 / D 120

COVID-19 (Class Guidelines)

USC (COVID-19) Resource Center <https://coronavirus.usc.edu/>

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading/Action Items
Week 1 Module 1: Principles <i>Week of 1/13</i>	What is mindfulness?; principles of practice Mindfulness and identity	Workbook: Module 1: 1.0, 1.1 Begin daily meditation practice (5-10 minutes/day)
Week 2 <i>Week of 1/20 (Holiday Monday 1/20 MLK)</i>	Effort and concentration; anchor Emerging science of mindfulness Technique: STOP: Stop, Take a breath, Observe, Proceed*	Workbook: Module 1: 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 Due Sunday, January 26: Module 1 Reflection Form (includes mindfulness article)
Week 3 Module 2: Body <i>Week of 1/27</i>	Mind-body awareness and connection Conscious breathing Technique: Body scan	Workbook: Module 2: 2.0, 2.1
Week 4 <i>Week of 2/3</i>	Standing meditation, walking, and mindful movement* Mindful eating Choose mindfulness in daily life groups	Workbook: Module 2: 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 Due Sunday, February 9: Module 2 Reflection Form (includes daily life area selection)
Week 5 Module 3: Heart <i>Week of 2/10</i>	Working with emotions: noticing and processing Compassion, kindness Technique: RAIN: Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Nonidentify, Nurture	Workbook: Module 3: 3.0, 3.1 Deepen daily meditation practice (10-15 minutes/day)
Week 6 <i>Week of 2/17 (Holiday Monday 2/17 President's Day)</i>	Working with difficult emotions; mindfulness and mental health Forgiveness, equanimity; joy, gratitude*	Workbook: Module 3: 3.2, 3.3 Due Sunday, February 23: Module 3 Reflection Form (includes midsemester evaluation)
Week 7 Module 4: Mind <i>Week of 2/24</i>	Working with thoughts: observation and visualization techniques Uncertainty and anxiety	Workbook: Module 4: 4.0, 4.1
Week 8 <i>Week of 3/3</i>	Resilience and post-traumatic growth Identity and social consciousness*	Workbook: Module 4: 4.2, 4.3 Due Sunday, March 9: Module 4 Reflection Form (includes outside meditation class)
Week 9 Module 5: Daily Life	Mindful communication Relational mindfulness; active listening and speaking	Workbook: Module 5: 5.0, 5.1

<i>Week of 3/10</i>		Deepen daily meditation practice 15-20+ minutes/day
<i>Week of 3/16: Spring Break</i>		
Week 10 <i>Week of 3/24</i>	Mindfulness in decision-making; boundaries; consent Technology*	Workbook: Module 5: 5.2
Week 11 <i>Week of 3/31</i>	Coping with change, loss, and impermanence Mindfulness and success	Workbook: Module: 5: 5.3, 5.4 Due Sunday, April 6: Module 5 Reflection Form (includes book reflection and make-up)
Week 12 <i>Week of 4/7</i>	Mindfulness in Daily Life Group Presentations	Due Week of April 7: Presentations (in class)
Week 13 <i>Week of 4/14</i>	Debrief presentations Practice: open awareness*	Presentations continued (if needed)
Week 14 <i>Week of 4/21</i>	Practice: open awareness* Review modules	End-of-Semester Evaluation
Week 15 <i>Week of 4/28</i>	Closing and next steps	Summative Exam

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Statement on University Academic & Support Systems

Student & Disability Accommodations

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu

Student Financial Aid & Satisfactory Academic Progress

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the [Financial Aid Office webpage](#) for [undergraduate](#)- and [graduate-level](#) SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

Support Systems

[Counseling and Mental Health](#)

(213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#)

988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline consists of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#)
(213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#)
(213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#)
(213) 740-2500

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#)
(213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#)
(213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)
(213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#)

UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#)

UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#)

(213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#)

(323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.