



**IMISA**

Institute for Mindfulness  
South Africa

# Sharing Mindfulness in Context: Training in trauma-sensitive mindfulness-based practices

## Introduction

Mindfulness is an innate capacity in all people. It allows us to be increasingly engaged with our lives in a more attentive, compassionate and non-reactive way. It can be developed and refined through practice and has real-world impact and implications in daily life. This inner resource is a critical and foundational skill, especially right now with the increasing turbulence and uncertainty that we witness around the world.

In South Africa we are faced especially with the challenge of intergenerational trauma and for many of our communities, ongoing and even continuous traumatic stress. This often results in high levels of reactivity, which perpetuates trauma into the next generation.

Many people have become disconnected from traditional resources to support them to navigate stressful experiences. Mindfulness is an easily learnable resource when it is shared in a trauma-sensitive way. By becoming more present to the here and now, by learning to regulate our attention and to bring more compassion to ourselves and each other, we have more control over our choices, and reactions may then become skillful actions. There is a large body of research which describes the mechanisms and benefits of mindfulness on the body, brain, mind and well-being. It is often misperceived as a Western and white-bodied practice. The reality is that this approach, ethos and practices are broadly accessible and applicable in diverse settings.

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The Institute for Mindfulness South Africa (IMISA) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to holding the essence of mindfulness in service of the development and application of contextually relevant mindfulness in South Africa. IMISA has been offering training in this approach in collaboration with Stellenbosch University (SU) for over a decade. The new tier one training will be offered exclusively by IMISA and will focus on enskilling people to be able to share mindfulness-based practices in a context-congruent and trauma-sensitive way. The settings in which these practices will be offered will be diverse, and as such the foundation of the curriculum will, by necessity and design, be relevant across all contexts, while allowing for adaptability and flexibility in its application. Tier two, which will focus on a more substantial training in mindfulness-based interventions, will be offered through Stellenbosch University, in collaboration with IMISA.

**Learning outcome:** To enable the capacity to guide and share trauma-sensitive mindfulness practices.

**The foundation:** The three intersecting and interdependent elements of the foundation are *security priming, regulation & compassion*:

Security priming disposes the nervous system towards a greater sense of care, comfort and safety within oneself and in relationships. Many people are primed in the opposite direction, towards insecurity. This arises out of dysregulation in attachment patterns, especially in early childhood, as well as individual, collective and intergenerational trauma. As a result, mutual- or co-regulation is an essential element in security priming, and over time, leads to an internalisation of this capacity as healthy self-regulation. These two capacities allow for the development of kindness and compassion, both towards ourselves and each other.

**The pillars:**

1. Holding environment
2. Relationality
3. Being embodied
4. Regulation
5. Context-sensitive adaptation

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The space in which these elements are developed, practiced and explored is a contained and *safe holding environment* in which *relationality* is the priority. This creates a learning environment which is infused with mindfulness and its core attitudes of kindness, patience and acceptance. This provides an opportunity to explore trauma-sensitive mindfulness practices as a *co- and self-regulatory skill*. Implicit in this approach is that developing a personal mindfulness practice and applying mindfulness in daily life is the basis on which it is shared with others.

**The structure:** Ten-weeks using the Mighty Networks online learning platform. The curriculum will include:

- Learning mindfulness and compassion-based practices
- Applying mindfulness in everyday life
- A basic introduction to the theory of mindfulness
- Becoming trauma-informed
- Exploring the basis of a holding environment
- Learning how to guide mindfulness practices (of different lengths)
- Working in small groups supported by mentors
- Half- and full day mini-retreats to deepen personal practice

**The process:** Learning will be multi-modal and will be supported by two primary tutors and small group mentors. The exploration of guiding trauma-sensitive practices and holding space for others will be explored in dyads, small groups and in the group as a whole.

**Benefits & application:** Cultivating mindfulness results in a richer, more open and less reactive engagement with present experience which leads to healthier choices which benefit both our own well-being and those with whom we are in relationship. The skills learned on the training will allow participants to use their own practice as a basis to share and guide others in their unique work contexts in a grounded, practical and caring way.

**The participants:** Community-based NPO staff, counsellors and care workers, corporate-based facilitators, private practice- and state-based mental health professionals, coaches, educators and faith-based ministers.

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**The collaborations:** IMISA seeks to collaborate with NPOs and corporates, in which these organisations will subsidize their employees to participate in the tier-one training to deliver mindfulness-based practices in a skillful, sensitive way into the contexts in which they are working. These will be stand-alone mindfulness offerings or inform the services which are already being offered.

Tier 1 Training will be offered twice in 2026, dates as below, and applications are now open:

- **First 2026 intake:** 18 April 2026
- **Second 2026 intake:** 1 August 2026

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