# Session Eight

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# Session Eight Facilitation Outline

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**Goals:**

- Summarize the sessions and bring all the parts of the curriculum together clearly identifying those elements related to our natural transition to Motherhood and those elements that are mindfully focused.
- Discuss the session journey and identify which pieces resonated with mothers.
- Take a moment to write a letter of gratitude to baby.
- Discuss the Circle of Security
- Close the circle and inspire continued mindful practice and connection going forward.
Arrival & Welcome

Pause for Practice - 4-5-6 Compassion Pause

“I have arrived, I am here.”

Check-In

Review and Reflect

Session Seven Reflections

- What are some of the additional things they were able to identify that they were grateful for surrounding their baby and partner?
- What specific things did they identify that their partner brings to the relationship?
- Based on the discussion of John Gottman’s elements of successful partnerships, how are they contributing to the success of their partnership?
- How did the nightly gratitude journaling go? Did they notice a difference in making attempts to focus on the good?

Readings for Session Eight

A Serving of Gratitude May Save the Day
By: John Tierney
Published: NY Times November 21, 2011

Understanding the Science of Gratitude
By: Joel and Michelle Levey.
Published: Huffington Post July 11, 2011.

The Health Benefits of Journaling. Psych Central
Group Reading: Poem - Begin with Love After Love

The time will come when,
with elation you will greet yourself
arriving at your own door,
in your own mirror
and each will smile at the other’s welcome,
and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger
who was yourself.
Give wine. Give bread.
Give back your heart to itself,
to the stranger
who has loved you all your life,
whom you ignored for another,
who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,
the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.

~ Derek Walcott

Group Sharing

Sessions Summaries
Session One through Seven Summaries Including the Specific Mindful Elements
Heart-Centered Dialogue: Resonations
• As part of Common Humanity – Ask mothers to share what exercises or practices they found the most useful and why?
• Why was it meaningful?
• What mindful practice do they sense they will go back to?
• What 2-3 things have you noticed that you reflect on differently as a result of the program?
• What did they learn about themselves?

Transition to this Week’s Focus -
Pause for Practice: Gift and Gratitude
• Write a few sentences of gratitude to their babies.
• Describe in specific terms why you are grateful for them and how they have positively impacted their lives.
• If they could give their child a gift, what would it be?
Circle of Security

Heart-Centered Dialogue: Circle of Security

- What emotions arise when thinking about your infant becoming a toddler and beginning to learn to embrace their independence?
- What sorts of things do they think they will need to embrace if they are to support a successful circle of security?
- Many transitions in a long-line of transitions and change are inevitable. What sorts of things do the mothers think they can do to help them manage the change?

Revisit Photo

Closing Circle
- Choose Closing Option

Group Reading: Poem - Here. Now. You. This is it.

End of Session Summary

At Home
Session Eight Course Material

Session Eight Framework

Goals:

- Summarize the sessions and bring all the parts of the curriculum together clearly identifying those elements related to our natural transition to Motherhood and those elements that are mindfully focused.
- Discuss the session journey and identify which pieces resonated with mothers.
- Take a moment to write a letter of gratitude to baby.
- Discuss the Circle of Security
- Close the circle and inspire continued mindful practice and connection going forward.

Theoretical Background:
Books used:

- ONENESS AND SEPARATENESS, Louis Kaplan
- FIRST FEELINGS, Greenspan

Session Prep

Consider the following items when preparing for your group session:

- **String and scissors** – for ‘Weaving the Circle’ closing ritual, if needed to replace a broken string.
- Plan to bring pens and additional paper for this week’s written REFLECTION in group.
- Set your space with beauty.
- Plan to bring the original group photo taken in session one and plan to take a final photo to be emailed to the group with final words.

Arrival & Welcome

- Plan to arrive a few minutes early to set your space.
- Welcome mothers and babies as they arrive.

Transition: Once everyone is settled in, begin with a Centering Practice.
Pause for Practice - Centering with 4-5-6
Breathing

Allow participants to get settled.

Invite them to bring their hand to their heart.

Breathe in and out several times slowly.
Focus on your breath.

Take a deep breath in, breathing in nurturance and kindness and hold for four and say to yourself “I have arrived.”
Hold your breath for a count of five.
Exhale tension and stress for a count of six and say to yourself “I am here.”

Repeat two to three times.

Check-In

Check-ins are an opportunity to bring mothers’ voices in and be witnessed in the mothering journey.

Questions:

- What is a ‘pearl’ for you from last week?
- Sometimes a highlight can be difficult. If a mother doesn’t have a highlight, ask them to share something that feels comfortable.

Facilitator Note: As a facilitator you may choose to briefly share a highlight from your week as a parent, demonstrating Common Humanity.

Track the sharing during check-ins as the ‘pearls’ shared can inform the course material and what you may emphasize.

Review and Reflect

To start the transition to this week’s lesson material, take an opportunity to discuss the week’s REFLECTIONS. Ask participants if there was something that stood out for them in the reading material that they would like to share. Mothers may not have had a chance to read the articles so be prepared to share one or two salient thoughts.

Session Seven Reflections:

- What are some of the additional things they were able to identify that they were grateful for surrounding their baby and partner?
- What specific things did they identify that their partner brings to the relationship?
- Based on the discussion of John Gottman’s elements of successful partnerships, how are they contributing to the success of their partnership?
- How did the nightly gratitude journaling go? Did they notice a difference in making attempts to focus on the good?
Readings for Session Eight:

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The Health Benefits of Journaling. Psych Central

Group Reading: Poem - Begin with Love After Love

The time will come when,
with elation you will greet yourself
arriving at your own door,
in your own mirror
and each will smile at the other's welcome,
and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger
who was yourself.
Give wine. Give bread.
Give back your heart to itself,
to the stranger
who has loved you all your life,
whom you ignored for another,
who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,
the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.

~ Derek Walcott

Group Sharing:

- Take some time to allow each of the mothers to share the item they brought in that is meaningful to them.
- Why is it meaningful?
Sessions Summaries:

Session One Focus:
Introduction to the four pillars of the Listening Mothers™ curriculum; Mindful Self-Compassion, Self-Regulation and Attachment, Child Emotional Development and Relationships and Gratitude. Begin to understand the first pillar of the Listening Mothers™ curriculum and how the mindful concepts of Self-Compassion, Mindfulness and Common Humanity are intertwined as part of the natural and biological transition to Motherhood. Mothers will also discuss their initial need to have their babies as their primary focus at the expense of other things and the creation of a positive holding environment.

Mindful Elements:
Introduction to the concepts of Self-Compassion in Self-Kindness, Mindfulness and Common Humanity with connecting our mind and body using our detailed guided Centering Exercise of “I have arrived, I am here” and then further understand the benefits of deep breathing using 4-5-6 – Inviting Calm.

Session Two Focus:
Explored baby’s emotional development furthering the importance of the positive holding environment and begin to understand the second pillar of the Listening Mothers™ curriculum which is Self-Regulation, Co-Regulation and Attachment. Practiced observing baby’s mannerisms to begin to identify their child’s unique character. Discuss the ‘goodness of fit’ and we explored personal temperament and how that may impact parenting styles. Further our understanding of Self-Compassion with a focus on Self-Kindness.

Mindful Elements:
Deepened the capacity to identify being out of balance. Introduced the concept of Self-Kindness as part of the Motherhood journey by focusing on the breathing techniques of 4-5-6 as a Self-Compassion Pause and the phrase ‘I have done my best, now let go of the rest’. Create an environment through the Fist Clench exercise that triggered our ‘fight or flight’ system. Understand that through the use of mindful practices, mothers can learn to engage their parasympathetic nervous system at will supporting a return to one’s center, sense of calm and clarity. This calm gives mothers more control over their inner landscape and their ability to engage their babies in the loving and safe container they are beginning to understand. Emphasized that Self-Compassion is not indulgence, self-pity or self-esteem.

Session Three Focus:
Sessions three and four introduce the third pillar of the Listening Mothers™ curriculum focusing on the first few stages of Child Development. We discussed the process of ‘falling in love with baby’ and how the feeling of love increases our oxytocin levels. There is not a ‘magical time’ for bonding, it happens naturally as the mind is constantly evolving. Understood that relationships are an important part of a child’s cognitive development. We also recognized the importance of being ‘attuned as well as being ‘securely attached’ and discussed methods that support attachment and that fostering attunement build regulatory circuits in the brain.

Mindful Elements:
Rediscovered our ‘beginner mind’ by using all of our senses to savor a sweet treasure. Introduced the concept of Mindfulness as the ability to pause and notice one’s thoughts, feelings and sensations in the present moment without judgment. Used the practice of C.O.A.L. and Sensing with Pleasure to use all of
our senses when engaging with baby. **Emphasized that the practice of being present without judgement and enjoying a mindful moment IS the journey, it is the goal.**

**Session Four Focus:**
We explored ‘falling out of love with baby’ and how elements and demands of Motherhood can lead us to take the ‘low road’ of situational processing. We identified triggers that lead us to ‘flip our lids’ (through the visual of Dan Siegel’s hand brain) in an attempt to maintain the higher road, but that it isn’t that we ‘flip our lids’ but rather how we repair that is important. We discuss the necessary role of a ‘good enough mother’ vs. a ‘perfect mother’ and how being ‘good enough’ contributes to building resilience, independence and a mother’s ability to begin to connect with their own needs.

**Mindful Element:**
We discussed the last component of Self-Compassion which is the element of **Common Humanity**; that we are all part of something larger and that the beauty of Motherhood enables us to share a powerful bond that transcends cultures and generations. We discussed that having Self-Compassion activated enables us to keep our self-criticism at bay. We identified a **Safe Place** and understood when we **S.T.O.P** **Stop, Take a Breath, Observe** our feelings, thoughts and sensations and **Proceed with awareness and Self-Kindness** we activate our parasympathetic nervous system helping us choose the high road of processing rather than descend to the ‘low road’. We coupled this with the **4-5-6 Compassion Pause Introducing Touch** which aides in our ability to soothe, self-regulate and bring us back to center.

**Session Five Focus;**
Session five transitioned our focus from primarily baby, to the fourth pillar of the Listening Mothers™ curriculum which focuses on the importance of **Relationships and Gratitude**. Through exploration of the mother’s own family dynamic, we reflected on feelings of security, patterns of communication, explored how mother’s own role models contribute to their internal working model which influences patterns of behavior in their own family. We completed our discussion of the first three phases of Winnicott’s **Child Emotional Development** through understanding the importance of two-way communication with baby and how communication with their primary care givers encourages development of their cognitive skills. We discussed continued ways to engage baby’s favorite playmate (parents/mother) as this attention nurtures curiosity and interest and development.

**Mindful Element:**
We practiced the centering of **4-5-6 Compassion Pause** and connected with our own **Compassionate/Loving Figures** following up with heart-centered dialogue regarding how internal models are shaped by our attachment histories. We also discussed our natural negatively bias and began the process of ‘taking in the good’.
Session Six Focus:
Session six again focused on our fourth pillar of Relationships and Gratitude as we transitioned to parenthood for both parents. We discussed the significance of anger and how anger cloaks the underlying fabric of feelings and vulnerabilities which are essentially basic unmet needs. We discussed the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, criticism, defensiveness, stonewalling and contempt and strategies to keep them at bay. We also discussed the power and importance of being vulnerable and how it aids in our connectedness.

Mindful Element:
We furthered our practice of 4-5-6 Compassion Pause breathing with the thoughtful focus of Soothing Touch. Intentional relaxation techniques including focused breathing and touch activate the parasympathetic nervous system increasing positive emotion, balancing heart rate, lowering sense of stress and providing more control over the body’s inner landscape. We practiced attentive Listening and the appreciated the impacts to our spirit when we feel supported and heard.

Session Seven Focus:
Session seven again focused on our fourth pillar of Relationships and Gratitude where we discussed elements of positive partnerships such as creating love maps, nurturing fondness and admiration, turning toward each other, honoring our partner’s perspective, approaching conflict with kindness, embracing influence and creating shared meaning. We talked about the importance of finding time to stay connected, through touch and talk, maintaining friendships, the importance of having fun and how humor not only defuses many sensitive topics but it binds us through Common Humanity.

Mindful Element:
We took an opportunity to again practice the 4-5-6 Compassion Pause breathing of ‘I have arrived, I am here’. We discussed and practiced our attentive empathetic listening and also approach our partners with a C.O.A.L mindset. We repeating the following phrases to remind ourselves to be thoughtful when we respond when faced with conflict;
- is my response truthful,
- helpful,
- from the heart
- and appropriate?

We then transitioned to the power of gratitude and how maintaining a grateful outlook can change our brains’ chemistry. We took the opportunity for mothers to take a moment to list what they are grateful for and what they appreciate about themselves. We also shared the mindful practice of Love and Gratitude to Baby, Oneself and Partner.

Heart-Centered Dialogue: Session Reflection
As part of Common Humanity – Ask mothers to share what exercises or practices they found the most useful and why?
- Which of the sessions were most impactful for mothers and why?
- What mindful practice do they sense they will go back to?
- What 2-3 things have you noticed that you reflect on differently as a result of the program?
- What did you learn about yourself?

Please encourage participants to fill out the class survey when it is sent to we can continue to offer a quality and relevant program.
Transition to this Week’s Focus

Pause for Practice: Gift and Gratitude
As we have established the powerful nature of a grateful state of mind, as part of bridging the practice of gratitude from session seven, take a moment to have mother’s write a letter of gratitude to their babies. Have mother’s spend 3 minutes answering the following questions:

- Write a few sentences of gratitude to their babies.
- Describe in specific terms why you are grateful for them and how they have positively impacted their lives.
- If they could give their child a gift, what would it be?

Heart-Centered Dialogue: Gift and Gratitude
- Take a few moments to discuss mothers’ letters to their babies.
- How did their bodies feel after writing the letter?

Circle of Security:
The Circle of Security is a structure cultivated where focus is placed on increasing parent awareness and observation in order to recognize and respond more appropriately, more consistently, and more sensitively to a child’s needs.

Being curious, adventurous, and natural explorers, we often need to go out of our ‘comfort zone’ in order to grow and learn. Having a secure base from which to launch exploration and the associated support system enables us to be ourselves, believe in our abilities and allows us to delight in our achievements when we live up to our abilities.

To complete our circle, we also need a safe haven, a refuge or a place to go to, when we feel hurt, discouraged, or disappointed.

Whether it is a little baby that hops and skips through the Circle of Security, or young adults exploring the different intersections with curiosity or trepidation, our needs are similar. We can only do it if we trust that we are, seen, loved, protected – safe.

Child needs their parent to:
- challenge their own/old ways,
- take ownership of their part in the conflict/problem,
- be protective of their child but providing them space to grow,
- pursue help if they need to change,
- take steps to stabilize their life,
- parents need to recognize their child’s needs,
- accept & respond to their own feelings as well as their child’s,
- hold the balance between oneness/connection and separateness and autonomy,
• are willing to stand back and observe their child and how they themselves parent,
• be willing to be bigger, stronger, wiser, and kind.

**Visual – Circle of Security**

**Heart-Centered Dialogue: Circle of Security**

• What emotions arise when thinking about your infant becoming a toddler and beginning to learn to embrace their independence?
• What sorts of things do they think they will need to embrace if they are to support a successful circle of security?
• Many transitions in a long-line of transitions and change are inevitable. What sorts of things do the mothers think they can do to help them manage the change?

**Revisit Photo:**

• Bring out mom and baby photo from session one and ask mothers to pose for a final session photo.
• Plan to email the group in a closing email.

**Closing Circle:**

There are several options by which you can choose to close the session.

**Option 1 Weaving the Circle:**

With participants have them touch their string and recite a word that has resonated most consistently for them throughout the week about their journey through the program.

**An additional option:**

If you have collected the words throughout the sessions you could read them in order of occurrence as a living poem or do something like create a word cloud via any of the listed sites to create a collage to be distributed to the group:

- [http://worditout.com/word-cloud/make-a-new-one](http://worditout.com/word-cloud/make-a-new-one)
- [http://www.wordle.net/](http://www.wordle.net/)

**Option 2: Wishing Well**

Have participants sit in a circle legs crossed if they can with knees touching.

Have babies in the center of the circle if possible out of carriers.

**Loving Kindness to oneself**

Have participants close their eyes, take a deep breath and breathe kindness onto oneself.

May I be happy,
May I be safe,
May I be healthy,
May I live with peace.

**Loving Kindness to the person on your right**
As you touch the person next to you and visualize the following phrases and feelings of hope, happiness, joy and the deepest well-being to the person on either side of you.
May you be happy,
May you be safe,
May you be healthy,
May you leave with peace.

**Loving Kindness to all the babies in the room**
Now turn your focus towards all the babies in the room and guide your mind to feelings of wisdom, openness, kindness, health and happiness.
And say the following phases to yourself:
May you be happy,
May you be safe,
May you be healthy,
May you leave with peace.

_Slowly bring yourself back to center and open your eyes._
*Now repeat after me, May everyone around us be healthy, happy, safe and live with peace._

**Option 3: Goodbye Ritual:**
*If choose to do the discussion above, would opt for a different closing ritual._

Goodbye ritual adapted from MBCP by Nancy Bardacke

**Materials:**
- mirror
- stones
- candles
- lighter

**Set Up:**
Set up mirror in center of circle with stones on it.
Give one candle to each mother; facilitators participate, too.

- The mirror represents mindful awareness--the non-judging reflective capacity of the human mind. The mirror doesn't judge, it just reflects what is.
- The candles represent illumination, clarity and insight.
- The stones represent the feeling of being grounded and fully present in the moment and how mindfulness practice soothes our rough edges.

Take a moment to reflect on what we’ve learned over these eight weeks, about ourselves, about our babies, about our partners and our relationships.
Invite mothers to take their candle and to place them on the mirror and if they’d like, to share one thing with the group about what they learned and will carry with them or an intention they would like to set for yourself going forward. Then ask them to choose a stone to keep. The stone is their diploma and something they can use as a reminder of practicing mindfulness, compassion, and self-compassion in parenting.

After everyone has shared, few breaths, moment of mindfulness.

**Group Reading: Poem - Here. Now. You. This is it.**

Always we hope someone else has the answer, some other place will be better, some other time, it will turn out.

This is it.

No one else has the answer, no other place will be better, and it has already turned out.

At the center of your being, you have the answer: you know who you are and you know what you want.

There is no need to run outside for better seeing, nor to peer from a window. Rather abide at the center of your being: for the more you leave it, the less you learn.

Search your heart and see the way to do is to be.

-Lao Tzu
End of Session Summary:

As a final email to participating mothers, plan to send the group photo, and parting words. Please include the link to the survey which can be found on the website or obtained by emailing info@communityofmindfulparenting.com.

Thank you for your time, energy and passion around this great work. It is through your thoughtful deliver of our Listening Mothers™ program we can expose and encourage mothers towards mindfulness one mother at a time.