



The Mindfulness Meditation Institute

Mindfulness Meditation Group Starter Kit Guidelines

Dear Spiritual Seeker,

Thank you for downloading the mindfulness meditation group starter kit. In this kit, you will find the tools you need to get your group off to a good start, and keep it growing. Here are some guidelines to help you make the best use of the files provided. They are designed to help you keep your group focused on its primary purpose, so that it remains effective at helping members get the most from their meditation practice.

This group format uses the Mindfulness Meditation Institute's unique 12-step approach to the practice. Our basic text is the book "[Mindfulness Meditation Made Simple: Your Guide to Finding True Inner Peace](#)." It explains the basics of the practice through the 12 Steps of the Mindfulness Meditation Practice, then gives you exercises for developing a solid understanding of the concepts and techniques.

These guidelines are also meant to keep you connected with the Mindfulness Meditation Institute, so that we can provide you with ongoing support. Our goal is to help you succeed in your mindfulness meditation practice.

Starting Your Meeting

You probably already have a few people in mind to start the group with you. If not, you can begin by telling friends and family how you're practicing mindfulness meditation, and how you're looking to start a group. If they seem interested, invite them to join you when the meeting starts, or maybe even help you start it.

Once you have a couple of people, you can begin meeting in one of the member's home. When your group grows a bit, you'll need to find another place large enough. There are several options:

- **Spiritual bookstores:** They often have rooms to rent, though their prices may not be the lowest.
- **Churches:** They often have space to rent at reasonable prices. The Unitarian Universalist church is probably the most receptive, and they'll likely have many members interested in attending your meeting.
- **12-Step rooms:** Alcoholics Anonymous groups sometimes have their own facilities. They may be open to having a meditation meeting, especially since most of their members are interested in meditation.
- **Local addiction treatment facility:** As with the 12-Step rooms, they will likely be receptive because meditation is part of their recovery process. This is where we have one of our meetings.

Leading Your Meeting

To make things easy for you, the format I've provided in this starter kit will guide you through a typical meeting. It is designed to help members learn mindfulness meditation through discussions and practice. There are 3 important elements of an effective mindfulness meditation session:

- 1) **Relaxation meditation:** This will help members relax and settle down, so they're better able to focus their attention on their breathing.
- 2) **Concentration meditation:** This will help members develop mental discipline.
- 3) **Mindfulness meditation:** This will train members to observe with greater clarity.

You can either guide your members through the meditation, using the scripts provided, or you can use the [Quick Start to Mindfulness Meditation](#) CD.

Staying Focused

Keeping your group focused on its primary purpose is one of the greatest challenges for every meditation group. It is tempting to try all different forms of meditation, and to get involved in various outside charitable causes. There is nothing inherently wrong with this. However, once you lose focus of your primary purpose, it will become unclear to new members what you stand for, and therefore, they'll have no reason to return to your meeting. But most importantly, your group will become ineffective, and your members will stop growing spiritually.

I've included 4 readings that will help your group stay focused: "What is Mindfulness Meditation," "Who We Are," "12 Steps of the Mindfulness Meditation Practice," and "The 5 Suggestions of the Mindfulness Meditation Practice." The first 3 should be read at the beginning of every meeting. This will remind everyone of your primary purpose; to learn and transmit the practice of mindfulness meditation, and to serve as a spiritual refuge for your members. The last one is read at the end of the meeting.

You can also use these readings, along with the articles, as literature to distribute freely. Please remember that they are copyright protected, so don't use the contents for other writings, unless you give proper credit. You can modify the flyers to suit the specific needs for your meeting.

Again, I strongly suggest you resist the temptation to get the group involved in outside causes. The meditation group should be a spiritual refuge where members can find guidance and support in their meditation practice. Having said this, I would encourage individual members to get involved in any noble cause they like, just so long as they don't involve the meditation group.

Recruiting New Members

Once a group has been in existence for a while, it is tempting to want to keep the group small and cozy. This is a mistake. If we are truly becoming enlightened, then we'll see our interconnectedness with the rest of humanity, and want to share the practice with others. To get the most benefit from your meditation group, it needs to be strong and healthy. This means that you'll need to keep recruiting new members. Otherwise, the group becomes exclusive, and then everyone stops growing.

I've included a couple of flyers. One is for handing out, and the other is for posting on bulleting boards. The information is the same, but the formatting is different for each purpose. I've left them in MS Word format, so you can enter your specific time and place.

There are many ways to recruit new members. Here are some ideas:

- **Word of mouth:** This is probably the most effective. People are more likely to attend functions recommended by people they know.
- **Social media:** Many people are on Facebook these days, and pay attention to what their friends are recommending. Facebook even has a feature called "Create Event," which enables you to personally invite all your friends. There are also many other social media sites where you can announce your group.

- **Craigslist:** For groups just starting out, your local Craigslist may be a good source of new members. Posting your announcement is free, and there are a handful of categories where you can announce your new group, such as *activities*, *events*, and *groups*. It may also fit well into a long-term strategy.
- **Meetup:** If you're not familiar with Meetup, it is a service that helps group organizers and members find each other in their local areas. It is quite effective in bringing you a steady stream of new members. There is a cost involved, but the donations from the new members usually more than make up for the cost. You can find them at <http://www.meetup.com/>.
- **Submit an event:** Most local TV stations have a calendar of events for all their viewers, and encourage event organizers to submit their events. There is usually no charge for this. Just go to their web site, and look for their calendar of events. There are also many other local sites that list events in your area. Simply do a search for "submit an event + your city" on Google, and you'll find many of them.
- **Flyers:** You can either post flyers on a bulletin board, or hand them out. Our local spiritual bookstore has a bulleting board, where they allow us to post all our announcements. This is great because it reaches our target audience. Your local library is another great place. I sometimes hand out flyers to people I know at local groups I attend.
- **Business cards:** I've printed all the meeting information on a business card and carry them in my wallet, and I hand them out regularly. What's great about this is that it's easier than carrying around flyers, and the recipient will put it in his wallet where he'll see it and be reminded of your meeting. The cost is minimal because I print them from my computer. You can even get 250 of them printed at FedEx Office for about \$20.

There are a number of other ways you can reach people, such as through your doctor's office, your coworkers, and any civic organization you may belong to. Your options are limited only by your imagination. There are many people out there interested in attending your meditation group, but they need you to help them find it.

Paying for Your Expenses

Every meditation group is going to have expenses, such as rent, supplies, refreshments, etc. These expenses won't be very much, and you can easily cover them through small member donations. I would suggest passing around a basket toward the end of the meeting to collect

optional donations. You may suggest members contribute \$2-3 to help you meet your expenses. We have incorporated this into the meeting format.

Optional

There are a few things you can do to make your meeting more inviting and comfortable for your members. You can provide them with refreshments and light snacks. We usually serve tea at our meeting—iced tea in the summer, and hot tea in the winter.

You may also use some props to help set the mood. They may include a bell, candle, incense, or flowers. Just be mindful that they do not become a distraction. Some people are allergic to incense and strong scents.

I want to leave you with one final thought. Always remember why you're starting your mindfulness meditation group. In the beginning, it may simply be to have a few other people to meditate with. As you advance more in your spiritual development, your motives will evolve to your compassion for other people's suffering, and you want them to find the same inner peace and serenity you've found through mindfulness meditation.

I wish you great success with your meditation group!

Charles A. Francis

Author of "Mindfulness Meditation Made Simple"

<http://www.MindfulnessMeditationInstitute.org/>

Inventory of files

Starter kit guidelines

Meeting format: To help you facilitate the meeting.

Meditation scripts: to lead the meditation session.

- Relaxation meditation
- Concentration meditation
- Mindfulness meditation

Readings: To be read at the beginning of each meeting. Can also be used as literature.

- Who We Are
- What is Mindfulness Meditation?
- The 12 Steps of the Mindfulness Meditation Practice
- The 5 Suggestion of the Mindfulness Meditation Practice: to be read at the end of the meeting

Literature

- Welcome sheet
- Loving-kindness writing meditation
- Articles
 - 12 Qualities of an Enlightened Person
 - Healing Childhood Emotional Abuse with Mindfulness Meditation
 - 4 Tips for Jump-Starting Your Mindfulness Meditation Practice

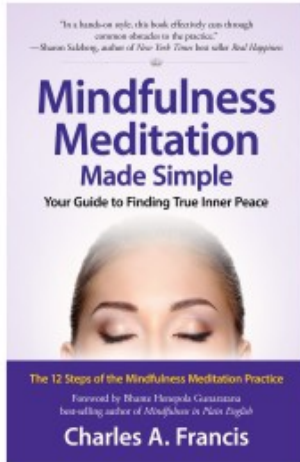
Miscellaneous

- Flyers: For handing out and posting on billboards.
- Cover sheet for meeting facilitator binder

Meeting in progress sign

- Member sign-up sheet

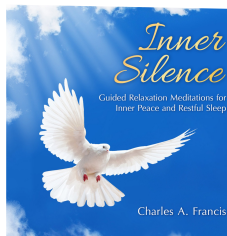
Resources to Help You in Your Practice



Mindfulness Meditation Made Simple: Your Guide to Finding True Inner Peace. This new book shows you how to transform your life and relationships through the 12 Steps of the Mindfulness Meditation Practice. Through the clear instructions and simple exercises, you will gain a solid foundation of this time-tested ancient practice, and get the results you want. It explains the exact meditation techniques in an easy-to-follow process. It then gives you tips for enhancing your practice. Foreword by **Bhante Henepola Gunaratana**, best-selling author of *Mindfulness in Plain English*. Available now at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).



“Quick Start to Mindfulness Meditation.” This CD is ideal for beginning and experienced meditators who want to get more from their meditation practice. It gives you clear instructions of the mindfulness meditation practice; then shows you how to implement them through the guided meditations. Available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).



Inner Silence: Guided Relaxation Meditations for Inner Peace and Restful Sleep. Having trouble with stress, or sleeping at night? Then you'll love the peaceful meditations of *Inner Silence*. They will gently guide you into a state of deep relaxation, so you can overcome stress and anxiety. They will help you; gain greater insight into your life, sleep better at night, take charge of your life. You will overcome the fears that are holding you back, so you can live a happier and more fulfilling life. They will even improve your health and well-being. Available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).