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Course Syllabus: Mindfulness-Based Substance Abuse Treatment (MBSAT) 12-Session Curriculum Certification (fully digital and asynchronous!)

Open Enrollment:

- 11/28/2025 (Black Friday)

Course Access Begins:

- 01/05/2026

Course Description:

The *Mindfulness-Based Substance Abuse Treatment (MBSAT) 12-Session Curriculum Certification* is a comprehensive, fully digital, self-paced training designed to equip counselors, therapists, and youth-serving professionals with the skills to effectively integrate mindfulness into substance use treatment with adolescents and young adults. Grounded in trauma-informed care, building authentic relationships, motivational interviewing, and mindfulness-based interventions, this certification guides participants through the complete MBSAT curriculum—including meditation instruction, informal mindfulness techniques, motivational insight-building exercises, group facilitation skills, cultural humility, and practical tools for working with resistance and dysregulation. Through video lessons, guided practices, downloadable worksheets, real-world demonstrations, and hands-on assignments, participants develop both the personal mindfulness foundation and the clinical competencies necessary to deliver the 12-session MBSAT curriculum with confidence and authenticity.

Course Instructor:

Sam Himelstein, PhD, is a licensed psychologist (PSY25229), author, and internationally recognized expert in adolescent substance use treatment and mindfulness-based interventions. He is the Founder of the Center for Adolescent Studies and Co-Founder/CEO of Family Spring Psychology, where he has led the growth of a 30-clinician mental health practice serving youth and families across California. Dr. Himelstein has over 15 years of experience providing psychotherapy, conducting trauma-informed mindfulness groups, and training interdisciplinary professionals who work with high-risk and incarcerated adolescents. He is the author of



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Trauma-Informed Mindfulness with Teens (Norton, 2019) and co-author of Mindfulness-Based Substance Abuse Treatment for Adolescents: A 12-Session Curriculum (Routledge, 2015), along with numerous peer-reviewed articles on mindfulness, self-regulation, and youth substance use. Dr. Himmelstein is widely regarded for translating evidence-based practices into practical, relational, and culturally responsive approaches for clinicians, educators, and youth-serving professionals.

Course Syllabus*:

*This is a rough draft outline and sections and modules of the syllabus may look slightly different when we launch.

Section 0: Introduction
Module 1: Introduction to the MBSAT Certification
What is the MBSAT Curriculum & Certification?
How does MBSAT fit within the scope of teen / adult substance use treatment overall?
Certification iterations: Three days → two days → live online → fully digital
Certification outline, training components, assignments, & quizzes
Live optional add-on for those wanting to be “fully certified” in our directory (no extra cost)
Getting the most out of this training – Coming back to it after fully certified and before you use it on an ongoing basis
The role of repetition: I will repeat myself a lot for integration purposes
Section 1 – About you, the curriculum glue
Module 2: Mindfulness and You
Why you need to develop your own practice
Mindfulness defined: Lion / dog mind metaphor
Mindful breathing introduction



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<u>Assignment:</u> Meditation journal
Meditation: You as the facilitator / counselor need to be all in or it won't get transmuted
Making mindfulness stick (how to develop a practice)
Where does mindfulness practice most help you?
<u>Assignment:</u> Your mindfulness elevator pitch
Module 3 :Building Authentic Relationships (BARs)
Three pillars of the work: relationship, insight, skills
Why BARs are so important in this work
What are BARs?
Specific BARs skills
Authenticity + Attunement + Witnessing / Being
Deep Listening
Basic Counseling Skills: OARS
INCRAs
<u>Assignment:</u> INCRAs you have access to
Skillful Self-Disclosure
<u>Assignment:</u> Know Thyself: What to disclose, what not to, and when
Module 4: Working with Resistance
What is resistance and how it manifests
Resistance as protection
The pyramid of skillfully dealing with resistance
The base: resistance as protection
The middle: self-management



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The top: interventions
Assignment: Know yourself as a facilitator: Which type of resistance / protection triggers you the most?
Next up: trauma
Module 5: Trauma-Informed Care
What is trauma?
PTSD and traditional trauma symptoms
Basic neurophysiology of trauma
How trauma manifests: a renewed look at trauma symptoms
The tree of traumatic adaptations
What to do when trauma-impacted youth get triggered? – back into the window of tolerance – back to the INCRA (somatic INCRA)
Teaching trauma-informed mindfulness (part 1)
Quiz: on trauma section
Module 6: Promoting Insight + Motivational Interviewing
What is Motivational Interviewing (MI)
Core principles of MI
MI core skills: OARS (again)
What is change talk and how can you use it?
Intervention: DARN CATS
Bonus curriculum: Core values exercise and how it promotes change talk
Module 6 quiz
Module 7: Facilitating Groups + Facilitator Roles
Groups – Their power for healing and growth
Facilitator Roles



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The “presenter”
The “supporter”
The “coach”
The “facilitator”
The “confronter / explorer”
Assignment: What facilitator role is your strength? Which is your area for growth?
Module 8: Cultural Humility & Responsiveness
ADDRESSING framework
“Living identities” from Dr. Gabrielle Jones
Humility is “beyond ego” work
Other culturally humble/responsive frameworks
Assignment: What are your “living identities?” How do they impact your work as a substance use counselor/therapist/facilitator?
Section 2: Birds Eye View of Curriculum Development
Module 9: General Curriculum Main Concepts
Developing a curriculum for youth and young adults – you can’t just meditate, you can’t do too much of one thing
How to break up a curriculum into types of learning – didactic, experiential, process
Didactic
Experiential
Process + topical discussion
Use of worksheets and visuals
Mindfulness-based curriculum development – meditation, informal mindfulness, the teaching and discussion of mindfulness based concepts
The goal of effective curriculum – engagement and the combating of boredom



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Module 10: MBSAT Curriculum Main Concept Structure
MBSAT Logic Model: How does it theoretically help?
General progression of developing discussions that lead to insight
General discussion/theme progression: from general to nuanced, nuance leads to insight
The paradox of teaching meditation: We can't force it, but it must be practiced to see results
<u>Module 10 Quiz</u>
Module 11: MBSAT Meditations
Meditation is sometimes contraindicated and that's okay
Not all meditation is mindfulness, we primarily practice mindfulness
Arc # 1: mindful breathing
Deep breathing
Mindful breathing
Arc # 2: body/sensation-based
Bodyscan
Non-moving body scan
Still breathing* (added in from MBAM)
Noting meditation
Arc # 3: compassion
Compassion for family
Compassion for peers
Compassion for community
<u>Assignment:</u> Meditation journal– Which practice do you gravitate the most toward and why. Provide examples.
Teaching trauma-informed mindfulness meditation



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Assignment: Create your own mindful breathing “script”
Module 12: MBSAT Informal Mindfulness Techniques
Mindful Check-in
STIC – and other acronyms
Mindful Eating
Teaching trauma-informed mindfulness part 2: A case example of when meditation is contraindicated because of trauma and what to do instead
Assignment: What’s your informal mindfulness practice? What can you commit to? (possibly a public post)
Section 3: The MBSAT Curriculum Modules
Module 13: MBSAT basics
The structure of each session agenda
Reminder: come prepared, be ready to pivot
Birds eye view of the 12 sessions
Language threads to thread through the curriculum
Rolling admission vs. closed cohort vs individual sessions (part 1)
Module 14: Session 1: Introduction to the program
Session 1 outline
Informal greeting – relational skills
Intro to the program (make it yours)
Group agreements – the need / intention / purpose
Agreements vs rules
Selecting general group agreements for the context you’re working in (i.e., JJC, school, private practice, etc.)
Getting input from youth on group agreements (dos and don'ts)



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Don't review, actually discuss group agreements
Troubling shooting: dealing with definitions of respect
Agreements: not a one shot deal but spiral learning
Defining mindfulness – lion mind vs dog mind
Your one-liner for what mindfulness is
What mindfulness is not (relax, focus)
Why it's so important to clarify clarify clarify what mindfulness is not
Deep breathing practice
Assignment: Meditation journal (on deep breathing practice)
Meditation arc # 1 Why deep breathing first?
Teaching deep breathing for the first time (in the cohort, to an individual)
The physiology of deep breathing (for your knowledge and to share with your clients/students)
Group poll: What it is and what's its purpose?
Group poll / survey (new handout to hand out)
Using information from the group poll in session 6 and for your overall work with youth
Leadership underpinning: who can teach deep breathing in the future?
Homework and closeout: what it is and how to use it
Implementing session 1 individually – what it looks like
Assignment: Session 1 Quiz
Module 15: Session 2: Drug education
Session 2 outline
Centering meditation – its purpose
Mindful check-in: what it is and its purpose
Teaching the mindful check-in in groups



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Using the “coach” facilitator role to help youth get proficient in the mindful check-in (in group + individual sessions)
Reminder: mindful check-in when meditation might be contraindicated
Assignment: Meditation journal: Mindful check-in uses
Drug classifications activity – general overview + reminder (not trying to scare straight)
General steps: brainstorm, categorize, more nuance
In groups: split into teams, make competitive
Step 1: Brainstorm
Step 2: Major drug category education
Assignment: Drug matching quiz
Step 3: Matching specific drugs to categories
Step 4: Risking and fatal combinations (+ reminder not trying to scare straight)
Possible FAQ for drug classifications activity
Deep breathing (try to add a minute or so more, challenge the group + I challenge you)
Suggested homework
Implementing session 2 individually – what it looks like
Module 16: Session 3: Reaction vs. response
Session 3 outline
Role plays – their purpose in this curriculum
Primary role play
Discussion on mental vs physical power + reminder: not about agreeing, just more nuance
Defining reaction vs. response
Process: experiences of reacting vs responding (use the “Facilitator” role)
Challenging the status quo for nuance: Is reacting ever good, responding ever bad?



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Reaction vs response: Our second language thread
Second informal mindfulness technique: STIC
STIC contemplation
Assignment: Meditation journal (for STIC)
Developing STIC role plays
Assignment: Think of the specific people you work with, what situations are they in where they could practice STIC? Think about non-immediate situations
Practicing STIC role plays
The role and power of STIC
Discussing the limitations of STIC
STIC and triggered trauma
STIC alternatives
Creating and passing out STIC cards
Mindful breathing meditation (why not deep breathing)
Practice mindful breathing
Reminder/emphasis: the breath is just an anchor, but don't get too wrapped up in this while teaching youth (possibly adults)
Mindful check-in (why is it here?) + having agency with where to use the Mindful check-in
Suggested homework for session 3
Implementing session 3 for individual sessions
Module 17: Session 4: Insight + Decision Making
Session 4 outline
Centering meditation: mindful breathing
The perfect high by shel silverstein
Audio/visual: the perfect high performed and on YouTube for your use



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Leading the discussion about the perfect high (start general then get nuanced)
False beliefs and the lies we tell ourselves (pointing toward self-medication + planting seeds for purpose of drug use in your life, etc.)
Mindful check-in
What is the decisional T?
General progression of pros / cons
How we presence pros/cons and the decisional t, the debate (for groups)
Setting up the debate, splitting up groups and brainstorming
The debate itself
Worksheet: personal pros and cons
Processing personal pros and cons, what to look out for
Other worksheets / conversations, that are offshoots of personal pros/cons: how much do you spend on drugs self assessment? Drugs vs. core values
<u>Assignment:</u> Decisional T on a client you work with
Meditation arc # 2: Bodyscan, why Body scan is useful and conceptual map for body scan
Body scan practice
<u>Assignment:</u> Meditation journal on body scan
Teaching the body scan
Dos and don'ts when first teaching body scan
Trauma-informed considerations
Suggested homework for session 4
Implementing session 4 individually – what it looks like
Module 18: Session 5: Emotional Intelligence
Session 5 outline + a birds eye comment about this session
Why no formal meditation in this session? But, can you add one?



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Centering meditation: brief body scan
General point: how to make the body scan shorter, how to make it longer
Teaching about emotions – birds eye view (this is didactic and again, start general/brainstorm, get specific, don't need to agree, want more nuance)
Brainstorming emotions
Categorizing emotions, use of specific language
Box of emotional expression, where does it come from (watch, Tony Porter a call to men)
Adapting the box to fit the specific needs of your group (could be man, woman, race-based, etc.)
Nuts and bolts of facilitating the box of emotional expression activities
Emotionally charging activities: assess first (are we ready?)
Stand, cross the line, raise hand, if... activity. What is its purpose: empathy and compassion
Facilitating the stand it activity, general guidelines
Choosing stand if “statements” that most can relate to
The pause between stand if and deep disclosure – brief compassion meditation / vibes
Deep disclosure: if you really knew me: Where it came from and its purpose
Pros and cons of deep disclosure
Dos and Don'ts of “if you really knew me”
Making sure you have enough time to actually facilitate: guidelines one when and when not to do if you really knew me
What to do if you feel like your group isn't serious enough (light version)
Assignment: Skillful self-disclosure; high, medium, low, “silly”
What happens if someone gets triggered / emotional? → That's what concentration is for
Concentration: what it is and how it helps with trigger
Concentration: the nuts and bolts of facilitating this activity



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Concentration: They'll ask for it again!
Suggested homework for session 5
Implementing session 5 individually – what it looks like
Module 19: Session 6: Brain and drugs
Session 6 outline + a note about why it's "light" or more didactic
Youth lead centering meditation – have you even thought of this since first mentioned?
Mindful check-in
General brain presentation slides part 1
Meditation break – your choice, just keep it short
General brain presentation slides part 2
Body scan meditation (last one before non-moving, try and challenge them a bit more)
Assignment: Create your own bodyscan "script"
The brain and alcohol – slides
The brain and marijuana – slides
The brain and opiates – slides
The brain and stimulants – slides
The brain and anger – slides
The brain and trauma – slides
Remember: this part should be tailored to what your group wants and / or needs
Implementing session 6 individually – what it looks like
Assignment: Session 6 Quiz
Module 20: Session 7: Coping with craving
Session 7 outline
A mindfulness-based approach to dealing with craving – difference between this approach vs



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others
Youth led centering meditation
Mindful eating: the 3rd informal activity
Mindful eating: step 1
Processing mindful eating
Assignment: Meditation journal on mindful eating
Mindful eating step 2: the enactment (what's an enactment?)
Urge surfing
Discussion: what's the role of craving in drug use? Possible discussion questions to get you going
Visual: TUDU chart: triggers, urges, drug use – what can we most control? What can we focus on?
Craving: 2 sides of the same coin, wanting and not wanting
Worksheet: root of cravings
Advanced meditation: non-moving body scan or stillness meditation + its conceptual map
Non-moving body scan
Stillness meditation
Assignment: Meditation journal on non-moving meditations
Suggested homework session 7
Implementing session 7 individually – what it looks like
Module 21: Session 8: Trigger regulation
Session 8 outline
The intimate relationship between cravings and triggers
Youth led centering meditation
Triggers visualization



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Alternative to triggers visualization: brainstorm
What are triggers?
Internal vs external
Personal, social, environmental
Nuts and bolts of facilitating this activity with sticky notes; again, going from general to nuanced and not looking for agreement, just deeper nuance and insight (i.e. nuance can promote insight)
Worksheet: Personal triggers awareness
Assignment: My triggers or my client's triggers
Meditation: noting awareness, a new and advanced meditation. Conceptual map, etc.
Practice noting awareness
Assignment: Meditation journal on noting awareness
Suggested homework for session 8
Implementing session 8 individually – what it looks like
Module 22: Session 9: Family system
Session 9 outline + a note about its possible heaviness and our sensitivity to diff family situations, etc. foster youth, etc.
Youth led centering meditation
My children contemplation: gaining perspective, not guilt tripping
Discussion: impact of drug use on family? A few discussion questions to get process going
Visual aid: impact of drug use on family
Impact of family on drug use? It could be bi-directional
What is intergenerational trauma?
Using the genogram to think about intergenerational trauma
Teaching intergenerational trauma to a group: use the fictional family
It's not all negative: what is intergenerational resilience? What positive teachings, etc. has your



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family passed down to you? What would you want to pass down to the next generation?
New type of meditation: compassion. A note on it.
Teaching compassion-based meditation for the first time
Practice compassion meditation
<u>Assignment:</u> Meditation journal on compassion
Mindful check - in (check in before leaving group)
Suggested homework for session 9
Implementing session 9 individually – what it looks like
<u>Assignment:</u> Session 9 Quiz
Module 22: Session 10: Peer system / Health Peer Relationships
Session 10 outline
Overall stance on friends with youth – don't just try and tell them to stop hanging out with friends you think are problematic
Peer pressure role play: How to facilitate effectively – make sure the role play is relevant
Discussion on peer pressure: what is it, has it happened to you, have you done it?
Discussion + sticky notes: What are healthy vs unhealthy relationships
So what next? How do we communicate and set boundaries? Mindful communication
Mindful communication tips – but make it your own
Develop peer pressure skits and practice
Teaching compassion for peers meditation
Practice compassion for peers / colleagues
<u>Assignment:</u> Meditation journal
Session 10 suggested homework
Other peer-related interventions: i.e., “sociogram”



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Implementing session 10 individually – what it looks like
Module 23: Session 11: Environmental system
Session 11 outline
Reviewing - referencing the environmental level of influence (from session 8)
Background: What is Ecological Systems Theory?
A simplified version of ecological systems theory to present to youth / people
How do personal, environmental, and social influences influence drug use and other related behaviors?
Putting it together: Getting youth to come up with examples of how the influences interact and influence their behavior – worksheet / discussion
Transforming systems of influence discussion / worksheet: basic questions that can be added onto
Meditation: Compassion for environment / community + meditation journal
Implementing session 11 individually – what it looks like
Assignment: Session 11 Quiz
Module 24: Session 12: Graduation
Session 12 outline
Contexts: Closed cohorts vs rolling groups vs individual: the differences named
All contexts: final meditation
Final meditation practice + meditation journal
Closed cohort: focused groups
Rolling group: graduator(s) reflection
Individual: self-reflection on the experience (i.e. what will I take with me?)
Closed cohort: Group appreciations
Rolling group: Appreciating those who are graduating



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Individual: Counselor to client appreciation / what would client appreciate about themselves?
Closed cohort and rolling group: food celebration
Food celebrations with individuals: pros / cons and things to think about
Closed group: certificate ceremony
Rolling group: certificate ceremony
Individual: certificate ceremony
Next steps: treatment plan review, action steps, etc.
Section 4: Putting it all together: Common FAQs
Module 25: Program evaluation, formal research, clinical assessment, what's the difference?
Program evaluation
Formal research
Clinical assessment
Pre-post survey packets that could be used with MBSAT
Data collection and analysis
MBSAT assessments for clinical assessments
Understanding levels of care in SUD treatment
When should I get more professional help / refer out?
The power of community: Know your resources
The power of marketing yourself as a leader, certificated MBSAT facilitator, coach, or counselor
OPTIONAL: Final "live" assignment
OPTIONAL: Registering for your assignment (no extra cost)
OPTIONAL: Get a directory listing as a fully MBSAT Certified Facilitator