

**Buddhist Understanding and Skilful Means:
Adding Depth and Meaning to
K-12 Teachers' Practice of Mindfulness**

by

Michelle Lea Beatch

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Approval

Name: Michelle Lea Beatch
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy
Title: *Buddhist Understanding and Skilful Means: Adding Depth and Meaning to K-12 Teachers' Practice of Mindfulness*

Examining Committee: **Chair:** Margaret MacDonald
Associate Professor

Lucy Le Mare
Senior Supervisor
Professor

Heesoon Bai
Supervisor
Professor

Steven Armstrong
Supervisor

Allan MacKinnon
Internal Examiner
Associate Professor

Kimberly Schonert-Reichl
External Examiner
Professor
Faculty of Education
University of British Columbia

Date Defended/Approved: February 28, 2018

Abstract

With the documented benefits of Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) such as the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program, training in mindfulness has become increasingly popular in North America. Recently, MBIs have been developed to advance K-12 teachers' social and emotional competence, and to support them in dealing with work related issues such as stress and burnout. These interventions are consistent with the relational approach to Social and Emotional Education, where students' social and emotional competence is augmented by teachers' personal advancement, and their increased capacity to cultivate caring relationships. MBIs for teachers typically focus on a few elements of Buddhist theory – primarily mindfulness, as well as kindness and compassion training. These foci are to the exclusion of the broader theoretical framework of the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path, in which the practice of mindfulness originated. When the practice of mindfulness is divorced from the Buddhist teachings of which it is part, what is arguably lost is a deeper understanding of the conditions that lead to human suffering, and a more substantive means to addressing it – leaving mindfulness at risk for being misunderstood and misused. Within the current thesis, I argue that there are other elements of Buddhist theory (i.e., wisdom and ethics), that are secular in nature, and important to ensuring K-12 teachers receive, and sustain, maximal benefit from mindfulness-based practices. These include teachers having access to (1) trainings included in the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path, and (2) ongoing support. Such knowledge and support can enrich educators' understanding and embodiment of mindfulness-based practices, which will be of benefit not only to their personal wellbeing, but will also help them in their efforts to create caring classroom environments, enhance teacher-student relationships, and support student wellbeing.

Keywords: Mindfulness-Based Interventions; Buddhism; Four Noble Truths; Eightfold Path; Suffering; Ethics.

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List of Acronyms

CARE	Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education
CASEL	Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
EI	Emotional Intelligence
FG-MBI	First Generation Mindfulness-Based Intervention
MBI	Mindfulness-Based Intervention
MBSR	Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
SG-MBI	Second Generation Mindfulness-Based Intervention
SEE	Social and Emotional Education
SMART	Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques

Prologue

I will begin by situating myself in relation to this thesis, and discussing how it came to be. Prior to my doctoral studies, which began in 2012, I worked as a Registered Clinical Counsellor and had been studying the Theravada Buddhist practice of Insight meditation since 2007. Over time, I began incorporating what I had learned about Buddhism into my work in private practice, and came to realize both personally and professionally that it was not just mindfulness that was of benefit, but that many Buddhist teachings found within the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path contributed to my clients' (and my own) quality of life. These experiences inspired me to return to graduate school to examine how mindfulness-based practices were being implemented in mainstream settings, and in particular, within K-12 Social and Emotional Education (SEE) programs in schools.

At the beginning of my doctoral studies, I could see there was a growing number of mindfulness-based resources and programs being developed for school-aged children. On familiarizing myself with some of them, I became concerned that (1) mindfulness was being portrayed as a skill for promoting only individual wellbeing, whereas from a Buddhist perspective, in addition to being of personal benefit, mindfulness is an ethical-relational practice; (2) Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) tended to isolate mindfulness from the Buddhist teachings from which it is drawn; and (3) K-12 teachers who would either be participating in MBIs for educators and/or implementing MBIs for students typically received limited training and were not provided access to ongoing support and education. These concerns led me to focus my thesis on articulating the need for and benefit of K-12 teachers being provided the opportunity to build on their understanding of mindfulness beyond what is currently offered in school-based MBIs. In particular, I saw a need for them to have access to the Buddhist teachings found in the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings. Mindfulness is traditionally part of these trainings, but typically is not presented as such in MBIs. In identifying this need for further education and ongoing support, I also started to offer in my own community a mindfulness meditation class for

parents, teachers, and caregivers that included an introduction to the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings.

In incorporating mindfulness meditation into my work, I also became aware that much of the language used in describing Buddhist teachings can limit who is able to access and take advantage of them. There are many scholars and teachers who have made the Buddha's guidance clear, but these descriptions are typically referenced as religious or spiritual practices and presented in traditional terms. Many of my clients were resistant to the idea of mindfulness meditation, on the basis of a link they made between mindfulness and religion and/or spirituality. With secular resources (i.e., books, introductory classes, and online courses) often being limited to an introduction to mindfulness, it was also challenging to provide my clientele access to other Buddhist teachings in secular form. Clients also found it difficult to follow and understand Buddhist teachings when what they heard or read included traditional terminology derived from the languages of Pali or Sanskrit. Through my studies and experience, I came to believe that there are many Buddhist teachings that are of substantive benefit, secular in nature, and that do not need to be presented with reference to spiritual and/or traditional terminology in order to hold their significance and meaning. In working with others, I tried to make these teachings more accessible in terms of (1) removing language that would denote mindfulness as a religious or spiritual practice, and (2) avoiding use of the languages of Pali or Sanskrit. Therefore, in order to make Buddhist teachings more accessible in terms of language, I used only English terms, and would describe them without reference to religious or spiritual concepts. Within the current thesis, one of my aims is to make Buddhist trainings more accessible to K-12 teachers, as they have the potential to play a significant role in both teachers and students' social, emotional, and moral wellbeing. Given the old adage, that in influencing children what we do is more important than what we say, it follows that children and youth will be more likely to adopt mindfulness-based practices if their teachers embody mindfulness themselves, and these educators must have sufficient access to information and support to do so.

Within this thesis, I draw heavily upon the writing of Theravada Buddhist scholars and teachers, as I have primarily focused my studies and practice on Vipassana or Insight meditation. My training and the writing of this thesis have been particularly influenced by the generous guidance and support I have received from Insight meditation teacher Steve Armstrong. The three Buddhist traditions that are most popular in North America are Zen, Theravada, and Tibetan. Therefore, I also refer to Zen and Tibetan Buddhist scholars, such as Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh who has been an important figure in making Buddhist teachings accessible in the West, as well as American Tibetan Buddhist scholar B. Alan Wallace, who has been outspoken about the importance of the Buddhist understanding of mindfulness. The Buddhist teachings that have been selected for inclusion in my thesis are those that I see as being both relevant and appropriate to those engaging in mindfulness-based practices in K-12 settings. I will argue that the Buddhist understanding of mindfulness and the teachings that surround it are not just important, but are essential to deepening and sustaining teachers' practice of mindfulness. The particular Buddhist teachings that I have chosen to include and the order in which they appear were influenced by (1) English translations of the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings (i.e., Bodhi, 2011a; Gunaratana, 2001; Hanh, 1998; Rahula, 1974), (2) my consultations with Steve Armstrong, (3) the Buddhist teachings clients and students have shared with me as being beneficial to both their understanding and practice of mindfulness, and (4) my perception that of the three key areas of development addressed by the Buddha (mental development, wisdom, and ethics), trainings in mental development have greater representation in current MBIs while trainings in wisdom and ethics do not.

I want to be clear that my understanding of Buddhist teachings is based on my experiences, over a decade, of attending numerous non-residential Insight meditation retreats, a handful of residential retreats, many helpful conversations with teachers and students of Buddhism, a wealth of reading, and what I have learned through my own meditation practice and efforts to embody the Buddha's teachings on a daily basis. Thus, I am able to draw on 10 years of attempting to understand and integrate Buddhist teachings and practices into my own life, and into my work, where I am able to share what

I have learned with those who have come to see me through my private practice and/or through my offering of mindfulness meditation classes within my community. Having grown up in a household largely free of religion and spirituality, it has been fairly easy for me to relate to those who wish to access mindfulness-based practices in secular form. To be clear, when I refer to “mindfulness-based practices in secular form” or “Buddhist teachings in secular form,” what I mean are practices and teachings that (1) do not refer to, require, or entail the veneration, reverence, or worship of any person or deity, and (2) are not referred to as spiritual or religious in nature.

In writing this thesis, it is not my intention to provide extensive detail on the Buddhist teachings described herein. Rather, the aim of my work is to offer an introduction, and for it to be of practical use. Within the development of MBIs, I want to support the return of the practice of mindfulness to its rightful home – to the heart of Buddhist teachings. Specifically, my objective is to support those who are interested in mindfulness-based practices and MBIs (but are not familiar with Buddhism) to learn about the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings. These teachings provide a deeper understanding of the conditions that lead to suffering and wellbeing, as well as expose some of the more subtle, yet pervasive ways in which psychological suffering can occur, and provide explicit guidance on what can be done to alleviate human suffering. In speaking with clients and students who have had some prior exposure to mindfulness through MBIs, I found what often was lacking in their experience was information about Buddhist understandings of the conditions that lead to suffering, and additional teachings that further support one to examine how they are affected by such things as their own perceptions, emotions, states of mind, moral or ethical reasoning, intentions, speech, actions, surrounding environment, and whether these are of benefit or harmful to oneself and others. Indeed, having a closer look at “suffering” is not what most people sign up for when embarking on therapy or a mindfulness program, but one quickly learns just how important it is to recognize, to be with, and to proactively care for the constant ebb and flow of both the pain and the joys that run through one’s life.

Finally, I also want to make explicit my bias that I am in support of the development of MBIs for K-12 teachers and school-aged children and youth. I therefore discuss the issues raised herein not in an effort to discourage the advancement of mindfulness training in schools. On the contrary, I hope to contribute to the conversation about concerns, to support efforts in addressing them, and to make mindfulness-based practices a more meaningful, sustainable, and valued part of psychology and education.

In Chapter 1, I introduce mindfulness, define related terms, provide a brief survey of the history of mindfulness in North America, and discuss how it has become popularized in mainstream settings. In particular, I highlight the interest in mindfulness within the field of SEE. I also discuss influences on the development of SEE and the burgeoning of mindfulness-based practices within this field. I then introduce a few MBIs that are currently available for students and teachers in North America in order to reveal teachers' typical exposure to mindfulness-based practices, and the need for (1) access to the additional Buddhist teachings of the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings, and (2) ongoing support, in order for teachers to achieve, and sustain, maximal benefit from their participation in MBIs.

In chapter 2, I provide a survey of critiques about the presentation of mindfulness in MBIs and how MBIs in education are at risk of rendering an overly simplistic, superficial view, and approach to mindfulness. I also examine the concern about mindfulness being divorced from additional Buddhist teachings (i.e., the Four Noble Truths and Noble Eightfold Path), and further contend that there is a need for greater access to additional Buddhist trainings that support and are part of the practice of mindfulness. Finally, I briefly discuss how additional Buddhist teachings are being integrated into MBIs, and how MBIs are now being distinguished as either first generation or second generation.

In chapters 3 and 4, I present the additional Buddhist teachings that I argue will enhance the benefit of K-12 teachers' understanding and embodiment of mindfulness. The

Buddhist teachings of the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path are described as being of benefit, as they (1) offer a view of human pain and suffering that reveals some of the subtle ways in which psychological suffering can occur, and (2) provide a substantive means to addressing suffering, which is currently not reflected in MBIs for K-12 teachers. More specifically, in chapter 3, I discuss how suffering is often minimized, and therefore argue that the Buddhist understanding of suffering, and training in Buddhist wisdom, is vital to the practice of mindfulness. I then introduce the life of the Buddha, in order to acknowledge him as an integral figure in the history of the study and care of human suffering. Next, I present the Four Noble Truths and related Buddhist teachings, and discuss the benefits of including them in MBIs for educators. In chapter 4, I emphasize those Buddhist teachings on ethics (i.e., the Five Precepts and the Four Immeasurables) that are not currently addressed in MBIs for teachers, as they acknowledge the importance of having an explicit ethical framework as part of caring for both oneself and others. I then discuss the benefit of these trainings for K-12 teachers.

In Chapter 5, I conclude by returning to my argument that including Buddhist teachings on the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path within MBIs can provide depth and meaning to K-12 teachers' practice of mindfulness, which in turn, will be of benefit to educators' personal wellbeing, and help them in their efforts to create caring classroom environments, enhance teacher-student relationships, and support student wellbeing. I discuss the need for educators to continue to have access to (1) Buddhist understandings that support a life of flourishing, (2) wise teachers, and (3) ongoing community support.

Chapter 1.

Mindfulness and Social and Emotional Education

Over the past decade, mindfulness-based practices have gained increasing popularity in the field of Social and Emotional Education (SEE), resulting in the development of Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) for both students and teachers. In this chapter, I first introduce Western understandings of the concept of mindfulness, and discuss the possible effect of mindfulness being separated from its origins in Buddhist teachings. I briefly present related terms, and describe one of the first MBIs -- the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program. I examine how mindfulness-based practices have become popularized in mainstream settings, including SEE programming within K-12 schools. I then discuss influences on the development of SEE, compare the differing approaches to SEE, and the interest in mindfulness training for both students and teachers. I introduce several MBIs that are currently available for students and teachers in North America, and in the process, I argue for the need for K-12 teachers to have (1) access to the additional Buddhist teachings of the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings, and (2) ongoing support, in order for them to achieve, and sustain, the maximal benefit of mindfulness-based practices.

1.1. Mindfulness

The most influential and commonly referred to definition of mindfulness in North America was derived from Buddhist understandings of the term (Wilson, 2014), and was articulated by Kabat-Zinn (1994) who described mindfulness as, "...paying attention in a

particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally” (p. 4). While Kabat-Zinn identifies some of the core elements of the practice of mindfulness, I argue herein that when mindfulness is separated from the additional Buddhist teachings (i.e., The Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings) that traditionally informed the understanding and practice of mindfulness, mindfulness is at risk for being either misunderstood (and therefore potentially misused), or limited in its potential benefit to those who engage in the practice.

More recently, Western definitions of mindfulness have been compared to traditional Buddhist understandings of the concept (e.g., Gethin, 2011; Grossman, 2015; Monteiro, Musten, & Compson, 2015). For example, Nilsson and Kazemi (2016) examined over thirty contemporary definitions of mindfulness, and compared them to Buddhist presentations of the term. In their review, these authors identified the following four core elements found in Western definitions of mindfulness: (1) awareness and attention, (2) present-centeredness, (3) external events, and (4) cultivation. According to Nilsson and Kazemi (2016), the first element, awareness, is about the capacity to monitor one’s thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations in response to external stimuli, and captures the ability to be, “deeply self-aware” (p. 188). Attention is the precondition for awareness, in that in order to be aware one must be able to focus on the object of one’s awareness. In the practice of mindfulness, one pays attention to, but is not overtaken by, what one experiences and nor is one distracted from it. The second element, present-centeredness, simply means being able to be in the moment, and is the experiential component of mindfulness. The third element, external events, refers to all that occurs and exists in one’s surroundings. This aspect of mindfulness is said to be critical, as one is mindful not just of what occurs within oneself, but also of the surrounding environment. The fourth element, cultivation, denotes the development of one’s character through the practice of mindfulness (Nilsson & Kazemi, 2016).

Nilsson and Kazemi (2016) also identified a fifth element of mindfulness, ethical-mindedness, which they drew from Buddhist understandings of the term, but did not find in the Western definitions they examined. Ethical-mindedness refers to the social element

of mindfulness. According to these authors, “The term social is meant to indicate a more engaged and all-encompassing type of mindfulness, rather than one that is primarily focused on individual self-improvement and personal enlightenment” (p. 191). In other words, ethical-mindedness is not limited to individual wellbeing, but rather has far-reaching relational implications and even supports one to be involved in working towards socio-political peace and justice. In an effort to bridge the gap between Western and Buddhist definitions of mindfulness, Nilsson and Kazemi (2016) “...define mindfulness as a particular type of social practice that leads the practitioner to an ethically minded awareness, intentionally situated in the here and now” (p. 190). This definition reflects the Buddhist perspective that ethics and mindfulness are inextricably linked, a connection that is missing in MBIs that typically do not explicitly address the social/ethical components of the practice.

As is exemplified by Nilsson and Kazemi’s (2016) analysis, efforts have been, and continue to be, made to clarify the meaning of mindfulness and what might be gained in examining the Buddhist understanding of this concept. Such endeavours are important to the ongoing development and implementation of MBIs, so that MBI participants, such as K-12 teachers, can take full advantage of the potential benefits of the practice of mindfulness. Similarly, clarity is needed on a number of related terms and practices.

1.1.1. Defining Related Terms

Here I examine the distinctions between and relationships among mindfulness and other terms including meditation, mindfulness meditation, Insight meditation, and Tranquility meditation. To begin, *meditation* from a Buddhist perspective is the formal practice of developing the mind (Nyanaponika, 2000). Specifically, meditation is undertaken to cultivate the perceptual, cognitive, and affective capacities of the mind (S. Armstrong, personal communication, June 11, 2017). This training of the mind can occur through a multitude of formal meditative practices or techniques such as paying attention to a single object like the breath or using repeated phrases (e.g., “May I be safe in body

and mind”), and can be done while sitting, walking, and during such daily activities as eating (Goleman, 1988). As is suggested by Bays (2011), one can cultivate one’s awareness while engaging in any aspect of one’s life, from speaking, listening, smelling, to doing such tasks as cleaning and driving – there are countless opportunities for one to practice meditation.

Mindfulness meditation refers to the use of mindfulness (i.e., paying attention to the present moment’s experience) in one’s formal meditation practice. Insight and Tranquility meditation, which derive from the Theravada Buddhist tradition, are both forms of mindfulness meditation since they each require one to recognize the present moment (Nyanatiloka, 2011; S. Armstrong, personal communication, June 11, 2017).

Traditionally, Insight meditation is undertaken to gain understanding and liberation from harmful states of mind through meditative observations of the nature of existence (Full, Walach, & Trautwein, 2013; Nyanatiloka, 2011; Sampaio, Lima, & Ladeia, 2017). Initially, one focuses on a primary object like the breath. In time, one discovers the unique qualities of each breath and that the breath is ever-changing (S. Armstrong, personal communication, June 11, 2017). With continuous practice one becomes familiar with a variety of objects (e.g., breath, emotions, and physical sensations) and their common characteristics are revealed; that is, that they are (1) impermanent, (2) unable to provide lasting satisfaction, and (3) are the result of a number of causes and conditions, or what is sometimes referred to as “conditionality.” Thus, Insight meditation is the advancement of one’s insight into or understanding of these three features of existence (S. Armstrong, personal communication, June 11, 2017).

Tranquility meditation involves continuously (as much as possible) directing one’s attention to a reoccurring object or experience such as the breath, repeated phrases (e.g., loving-kindness meditation), visualizations, or counting (S. Armstrong, personal communication, June 11, 2017). With repetition and growing frequency of success in focusing on the object or experience, harmful thoughts are prevented from further arising in the mind. According to S. Armstrong (personal communication, June 11, 2017), this

practice leads to, "...a subjective experience of calmness, collectedness (concentration/stability), pleasant physical and mental feeling, and possibly joy on a spectrum from delight to ecstasy."

As interest in contemplative practices such as Insight and Tranquility meditation grows, it is important that we continue to examine the Buddhist understanding of terms such as mindfulness, meditation, mindfulness meditation, and Insight and tranquility meditation in order to fully appreciate the intent and potential benefit of such practices within MBIs and the field of SEE.

1.2. The Adaptation of Mindfulness in Mindfulness-Based Interventions

Nearly 40 years ago, Kabat-Zinn (2013; Wylie, 2015) developed the first MBI in North America: the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program. MBSR was intended to address the lack of effective medical treatments available in the United States for those suffering from health issues such as chronic pain. MBSR is an 8-week MBI that consists of mindfulness meditation, walking meditation, yoga, and guided relaxation (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Those participating in MBSR are taught to be mindful of such things as their breath, physical sensations, thoughts, feelings, sounds, and experiences in everyday life. MBSR is based on Kabat-Zinn's study of yoga, Zen, and the Buddhist practice of Insight meditation (Cullen, 2011).

According to Kabat-Zinn (2013), mindfulness nurtures the capacity to better cope with the deleterious effects of pain, illness, and stress. Practicing mindfulness supports one to experience greater self-acceptance, self-compassion, and kindness relative to all of life's joys and challenges. MBSR has been used to support individuals dealing with a range of psychological and physiological issues such as, but not limited to, anxiety (Vøllestad, Sivertsen, & Nielsen, 2011), depression (Felleman, Stewart, Simpson, Heppner, & Kearney, 2016), chronic pain (la Cour & Petersen, 2015), HIV/AIDS (Riley &

Kalichman, 2015), attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (Mitchell, Zylowska, & Kollins, 2015), cancer (Lengacher et al., 2009), and vascular disease (Abbott et al., 2014). In reviews of the effects of MBSR, researchers have concluded that MBSR improves mental health, strengthens wellbeing, and relieves the stress and anxiety related to life's challenges, such as the suffering experienced relative to chronic illness (e.g., Fjorback, Arendt, Ørnbøl, Fink, & Walach, 2011; Praissman, 2008).

Since its inception, MBSR has gone on to inspire the development of MBIs in a number of fields including medicine, neuroscience, and psychology (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Siegel, 2007; Teasdale, Segal, & Williams, 1995). With growing evidence of the benefits of mindfulness training, there has been a surge of interest within the field of Social Emotional Education (SEE), where a number of MBIs have been developed and implemented in K-12 schools for both students and teachers (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Mindfulness training has been integrated into SEE programming as a means to support both students and teachers' wellbeing, including their development of social and emotional competencies (see Jennings, Frank, Snowberg, Coccia, & Greenberg, 2013; Lawlor, 2016).

1.3. Social and Emotional Education

In the past few decades, students' social and emotional growth has become an explicit part of educational policy in North America, largely as a result of increasing concern over issues such as bullying and students' mental health (Schonert-Reichl & Hymel, 2007). In addition to concerns about student's social and psychological wellbeing, Hoffman (2009) describes how the systematic implementation of SEE instruction was also prompted by a perceived pervasiveness of "problematic behaviours" (p. 536) in schools. These behavioural issues include, but are not limited to, problems with self-regulation, such as impulsivity and restlessness, and social problems such as aggression and antisocial behaviour (Owens, 2016). In an effort to address these concerns, the field of SEE has been influenced by a number of areas of study and practice, including but not

limited to, developmental psychology, character education, affective education, the progressive education movement, humanistic psychology, and social-learning theory. If there is one theory though that figures most prominently, it is emotional intelligence (EI), which is often credited with forming the theoretical foundation of SEE (e.g., Elias, Parker, Kash, Weissberg, & O'Brien, 2008; Hoffman, 2009; Humphrey, 2013; Mayer & Cobb, 2000).

Salovey and Mayer (1990) proposed the first formal definition of EI, as the cognitive capacity to manage emotions. Daniel Goleman (1995) later elaborated on and popularized EI, defining it as the ability, "...to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and hope" (p. 34). Goleman broadened the view of EI to encompass specific characteristics or competencies, which he claimed could be taught directly to students in schools. The release of Goleman's (1995) book, *Emotional Intelligence*, launched EI into mainstream culture and education.

The overwhelming interest in EI and concerns over student wellbeing led Goleman and colleagues to found the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, www.casel.org/). CASEL formed with the goal of supporting evidence-based, high quality programs for teaching social and emotional competence as an integral part of preschool through high school education, and offers recommendations for school SEE programming. For example, in 2012, CASEL released the 2013 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs—Preschool and Elementary School Edition, a SEE program implementation guide for educators. This guide is intended to support educators in identifying well-designed and evidence-based SEE programs. Such efforts have put CASEL at the forefront of SEE in Canada and the United States. Through CASEL's leadership, as well as the influence and popularization of Goleman's presentation of EI, the majority of programs recommended by CASEL support students to develop what CASEL presents as core social and emotional competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationships skills, and responsible decision-making.

1.3.1. Competence Promotion versus Relational Approaches to Social and Emotional Education

As noted by Le Mare (2011), discourse and practice in SEE can be seen as falling into two broad approaches: competence promotion and relational. The majority of programs recommended by CASEL (2012) fall within the competence promotion approach (see Durlak, Weissberg, Dymniki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011), which aims to directly teach students discrete social and emotional skills, often with a scripted curriculum. One challenge with this approach is that it tends to result in an overemphasis on how students behave or cope, placing the onus for change on the child. What the competence promotion approach typically fails to emphasize are the contextual factors that likely relate to student functioning, such as the wellbeing of parents and teachers, the quality of the classroom environment and teacher-student relationships, the school climate, characteristics of the surrounding community, as well as broader socio-economic and political issues.

In contrast to the competence promotion approach, the relational approach to SEE holds that the positive social, emotional, and academic development of children and youth depends, to a considerable degree, on whether the contexts in which they develop, including schools, are reliable sources of supportive relationships (Noddings, 2005; Pianta, 1999). The creation of such relationships is, in large part, dependent on the ability of adults to accurately read and appropriately respond to the social and emotional cues of children and youth. Hence, rather than focusing on children's knowledge and behavioural skills, the relational approach emphasizes the interpersonal skills of adults in relation to the children in their care (Reeves & Le Mare, 2017).

In examining teacher-student relationships, numerous studies (e.g., see Birch & Ladd, 1997, 1998; Driscoll & Pianta, 2010; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Pianta & Steinberg, 1992; Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995; Sabol & Pianta, 2012) have shown teachers' warmth and caring are associated with a number of positive outcomes for children in the academic, social, and behavioural domains. These findings lend support to the relational approach to SEE, and suggest competence promotion SEE programs are likely to be more

effective in the context of caring teacher-student relationships and less effective when such caring is absent. While there are programs intended to support educators' development of social and emotional competence, efforts in the field of SEE continue to primarily focus on students' social and emotional development.

In the past decade there has been a surge of interest in mindfulness-based practices as a means to addressing the wellbeing of students, teachers, and student-teacher relationships. Specifically, there are MBIs that have been developed for K-12 students (e.g., MindUP™), as well as for teachers (e.g., Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education). MBIs for K-12 educators are described as not only directly supporting teacher welfare, but also indirectly being of benefit to the teacher-student relationship, and student functioning (see Roeser, Skinner, Beers, & Jennings, 2012).

1.4. The Integration of Mindfulness-Based Practices into Social and Emotional Education

Below, I introduce some examples of MBIs for students and teachers that are currently offered in North American schools. Illustrating what students and teachers learn in these programs sets the stage for my subsequent discussion of the need for (1) access to the additional Buddhist teachings of the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings, and (2) ongoing support, in order for teachers to achieve, and sustain, maximal benefit from their participation in MBIs.

1.4.1. Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Students

With mindfulness training being increasingly recognized as a means to addressing an array of psychological and physiological concerns in adult populations, educators have been advocating MBIs for school-aged children (Hooker & Fodor, 2008; Rempel, 2012). Since MBIs have been implemented in K-12 schools, a number of benefits have been

proclaimed. For example, Lawlor (2016) has described how mindfulness-based and additional contemplative practices within SEE support students' acquisition of the five social and emotional competencies outlined by CASEL: self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationships skills, and, responsible decision-making. Meiklejohn and colleagues (2012) also describe mindfulness training as a way to improve students' ability to regulate attention and emotions, which are said to safeguard students against the harmful effects of stress.

One of the most popular mindfulness-based SEE programs offered in Canada and the United States, which is recommended by CASEL (2012), is MindUP™. Designed for students from pre-kindergarten to 8th grade, MindUP™ claims to teach, "...social and emotional learning skills that link cognitive neuroscience, positive psychology and mindful awareness training utilizing a brain centric approach" (www.thehawnfoundation.org/mindup/). The MindUP™ curriculum comprises 15 structured lessons that centre on the core functions of the human brain, mindful attention, focused awareness, attending mindfully to daily experiences, perspective taking, optimism, appreciating joyful experiences, acts of kindness, and mindful acts within the community (The Hawn Foundation, 2011). Within MindUP™, mindful awareness is said to be developed through "The Core Practice," which involves the teacher using an instrument, such as a chime. At the sound of the chime, the students are taught to pause, listen to the sound and are guided to tune into their breathing. Use of the Core Practice is described as follows:

Designed to be used several times a day – especially during transitions when students need help settling down to work or shifting their attention between subjects or tasks – the MindUP Core Practice is the signature daily routine of the MindUP program. The Core Practice puts students in control of their mental and physical energy. By concentrating on the sensations of a resonant sound and then of their breathing, students calm their minds and get ready to focus on the next part of their day. For the individual student, the Core Practice supports self-regulation and mindful action. For the class community, the Core Practice

becomes a time for setting the tone and getting everyone – teacher and students – to achieve a state of mind in which they can all participate purposefully and thoughtfully. (The Hawn Foundation, 2011, p. 42)

A quasi-experiment examining the impact of students' participation in MindUP™ revealed modest increases from pre- to post-test in students' positive emotions (i.e., optimism) and social and emotional competence, and those students who were preadolescent showed greater increases in general self-concept than those in early adolescence (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). More recently, Schonert-Reichl and colleagues (2015) conducted a randomized controlled trial that included 99 students from grades four and five in which the effects of MindUP™ were compared to those of a regular social responsibility program. Results indicated that relative to the comparison group, students who participated in the MindUP™ program for four months developed greater cognitive control and improved stress physiology; described themselves as having more empathy, perspective-taking ability, emotional control, optimism, school self-concept and mindfulness; disclosed decreases in symptoms of depression and peer-rated aggression; were evaluated by their classmates as more prosocial, and were more likely to be accepted by their peers. On the basis of these findings, the authors concluded that the MindUP™ program provides effective strategies to address students' problems, as well as promotes their wellbeing and supports them to flourish (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015).

While these initial findings support the continued implementation of MBIs for K-12 students, future research must also examine whether students (1) are able to sustain the benefits they have acquired overtime after the MBI has concluded, (2) must continue to actively engage in mindfulness-based practices in order to sustain the benefits they have gained, (3) require ongoing support to uphold mindfulness-based practices overtime, and (4) would further benefit from additional Buddhist teachings that are traditionally recognized as a part of the practice of mindfulness (i.e., wisdom and ethics), but are not currently available in MBIs. This continued examination is also relevant to the development of MBIs for K-12 teachers.

1.4.2. Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Educators

MBIs have also been established specifically for K-12 teachers to address occupational stress and burnout, improve educators' performance and classroom environments, increase teachers' social and emotional competence, and enable them to better support students' social and emotional development (e.g., Jennings, et al., 2013; Lantieri, Kyse, Harnett, & Malkmus, 2011; Poulin, 2009; Roeser et al., 2013). In this vein, Roeser et al. (2012) have suggested that mindfulness training for K-12 teachers will lead to a reciprocal process, whereby the teachers' development of mindfulness (and capacities such as greater tolerance for uncertainty and emotion regulation) will lead to improvements in their work related wellbeing, which in turn will result in them being less likely to leave teaching due to stress, and more likely to be engaged in their work within the classroom. Improved teacher wellbeing in the form of greater emotional and attentional capacity, and ability to self-regulate would also better enable teachers to provide students with emotionally supportive learning environments and support the development of positive teacher-student relationships. Roeser and colleagues (2012) further suggest,

Supportive teacher–student relationships and classroom climates for learning, in turn, should promote students' feelings of belonging in the classroom and thereby enhance their levels of participation and engagement in learning. When students have supportive relationships with teachers, feel they are valued members of a learning community, and are positively involved in classroom activities, we hypothesize that they will be less likely to be disruptive, oppositional, or silently alienated and therefore will require fewer disciplinary referrals. At the same time, students in such environments should learn more because of their greater engagement and on-task behavior. (p. 170)

Shapiro, Rechtschaffen, and de Sousa (2016) also hypothesize benefits of teachers' training in mindfulness, suggesting that,

...mindfulness training engenders three pathways of integration in teachers' lives: (1) mindfulness as a source of self-care, (2) mindfulness as a means of becoming a reflective teacher, and (3) mindfulness as a means of transforming student learning in the classroom. (p. 83)

Shapiro et al. (2016) further describe mindfulness training leading to an increased capacity within teachers for compassion, empathy, and attunement towards themselves and others, which are vital skills for the development of caring teacher-student relationships that, in turn, support students' social and emotional development. Providing teachers the opportunity to advance in their social and emotional competence and to participate in MBIs is important given current concerns regarding the effects of teachers' stress on the welfare of students and their capacity to physiologically regulate stress within themselves (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016). Two mindfulness programs that are currently available to teachers in North America are the Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques (SMART) in Education and the Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) programs.

Teachers participating in the SMART program attend 11 sessions that occur over an 8-week period for a total of 36 hours (Roeser et al., 2013). The SMART program includes such activities as guided mindfulness practices (i.e., body scan and loving-kindness meditation), yoga, mindfulness practice discussion groups, opportunities to practice applying mindfulness to real life situations, lectures, as well as guided home practices and homework (Roeser, Horn-Keller, Stadick, & Urdan, 2012; as cited in Roeser et al., 2013). Together, all of the activities in the SMART program are said to, "...provide teachers with ample opportunities to learn mindfulness and compassion for self and others and to learn how to use these resources in the service of coping better with the stressful aspects of their jobs" (Roeser et al., 2013, p. 790).

In two randomized, waitlist-control field trials, indicators of teachers' psychological and physiological experience of stress and burnout were examined. Teachers who participated in the SMART program were found to have greater mindfulness, working

memory capacity, focused attention, and work related self-compassion than the wait-listed group. Although there were no significant physiological differences between those in the MBI and the control group, teachers who received mindfulness training reported a decrease in work related stress and burnout at the end of the program, as well as at follow-up. Roeser and colleagues (2013) concluded that the program, "...was acceptable, feasible, and efficacious with respect to helping teachers to reduce stress and symptoms of occupational burnout" (p. 16).

The CARE program is founded on mindfulness-based practices and the Prosocial Classroom model developed by Jennings and Greenberg (2009). CARE is predicated on the belief that teachers' themselves must possess social and emotional competence and attend to their own wellbeing in order to develop and maintain teacher-student relationships, positive classroom management, and effective SEE implementation. Specifically, the CARE program is comprised of three components: (1) instruction in emotion skills, (2) stress-reduction and mindfulness-based practices, and (3) caring and listening practices (Jennings, 2016a). In a randomized control trial examining the efficacy of CARE, Jennings and colleagues (2013) reported that teachers found the CARE program helped improve their relationships with students, how they managed their classrooms, and the environment within the classroom. In comparison with the control group, teachers participating in the CARE program showed significant improvements in their mindfulness, wellbeing, burnout, and time-related stress.

In short, the available evidence suggests positive impacts of MBIs for teachers; however, in considering these programs and their effects, we must be cautious that they do not lead to educators becoming an "identified problem," and the belief that if we could merely address issues within the teacher, we would have resolution to social and emotional issues within the classroom. We must consider the complexity of contextual factors or conditions that affect educators, such as the sufficiency of their training and understanding of social and emotional development and education; the challenges of serving students in increasingly large classroom sizes; the pressure for testing and assessment; the quality of the school environment; the extent of support from

administration, as well as the socio-economic and political factors faced within their communities, to name a few. We need to consider all of the issues that either support or impede educators' social and emotional wellbeing, and the effect this has on their relationships with students, and student functioning. As will later be revealed in my presentation of Buddhist teachings, consideration of the conditions that affect individual and societal wellbeing are an important part of what informs mindfulness-based practices, and what is necessary to sustain such practices over time.

Overall, the available evidence suggests that MBIs for teachers have positive effects on teachers' wellbeing, the classroom environment, the health of the student-teacher relationship, and students' development. However, similar to the concerns expressed relative to MBIs for students, future research on MBIs for teachers must also evaluate whether teachers (1) are able to sustain the benefits they have acquired overtime after the MBI has concluded, (2) must continue to actively engage in mindfulness-based practices in order to sustain the benefits they have gained, (3) require ongoing support to uphold mindfulness-based practices overtime, (4) have sufficient understanding of mindfulness in order to achieve maximal benefit, and (5) would further profit from additional Buddhist teachings that are traditionally recognized as a part of the practice of mindfulness (i.e., wisdom and ethics), but are not currently available in MBIs for K-12 teachers.

Within the current thesis, I argue that in order for K-12 teachers to achieve, and sustain, maximal benefit from mindfulness-based practices they should be provided (1) the additional Buddhist teachings of the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path, that are traditionally recognized as integral to the practice of mindfulness, and (2) ongoing support. The Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings are seen as vital as they provide both a deeper understanding of the nature and extent of human suffering, and a more substantive means for addressing it, than currently is acknowledged and available in MBIs for K-12 teachers. This knowledge, and the provision of ongoing support, would enhance educators' practice of mindfulness, and further help them in developing caring,

compassionately attuned relationships with themselves and others, including their students.

Chapter 2.

Critiques of MBIs and Why Teachers Should be Provided Further Knowledge and Ongoing Support

Whether teachers receive training in order to implement a MBI for students, or participate in a MBI for educators, for greatest benefit we hope that teachers fully understand and embody what they have been taught. In this chapter, I examine critiques that MBIs tend to take a superficial and reductionist approach to mindfulness that may impede teachers from fully realizing the potential benefits of mindfulness practice and/or result in mindfulness being misused. I also address the related concern that in MBIs, mindfulness has tended to be divorced from the context of Buddhist teachings contained in the Four Noble Truths and Noble Eightfold Path trainings, and that this context supports, and is an integral part of, the practice of mindfulness. As such, I argue that there is a need for greater access to these additional trainings in secular, non-spiritual form. I discuss why ongoing support and further understanding of the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path on the part of teachers is desirable. Finally, I briefly discuss how additional Buddhist teachings are being integrated into MBIs, and how MBIs are now being distinguished as either first generation or second generation interventions.

2.1. The Potential Misunderstanding and Misuse of Mindfulness

As mindfulness continues to take hold in mainstream Western institutions, a variety of concerns have been raised about how mindfulness is being potentially misunderstood and misused. These concerns point to the need for continued efforts to deepen the understanding of mindfulness, and the factors that support one to be socially, emotionally, and morally skilful in caring for oneself and others.

2.1.1. Non-judgement as a Component of Mindfulness

How mindfulness is defined has important implications for how it is practiced, and there have been a variety of concerns expressed relative to Western definitions and uses of mindfulness (e.g., Bodhi, 2011b; Gethin, 2011; Grossman, 2008; Grossman, & Van Dam, 2011; Marx, 2015; Wallace, 2008). For example, Kabat-Zinn's (2013) commonly referred to definition of mindfulness (...paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally) has been criticized relative to the use of the term "non-judgmental" in that it is not aligned with the Buddhist understanding of mindfulness (Dreyfus, 2011; Gethin, 2011; Titmuss, 2013). Within the Buddhist tradition, mindfulness includes an evaluative component; a judgement is made about whether one's experience is wholesome or unwholesome, pleasant, neutral, or unpleasant. Kabat-Zinn (2011) has responded to such criticism by asserting that reference to mindfulness as being "non-judgmental" does not exclude the evaluation of experiences as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, but rather conveys that mindfulness does not entail an elaborate cognitive analysis of what arises in the mind. Nevertheless, concern about the use of the term "non-judgmental" is warranted when there are those who practice and/or teach mindfulness with very little training. In not understanding the evaluative component of mindfulness, one fails to appreciate that mindfulness, from a Buddhist perspective, is an ethical and social practice. One evaluates what is occurring in one's mind and distinguishes what is wholesome, skilful, or of benefit from what is unwholesome, unskilful, and harmful to oneself and others. This examination has significant implications for how individuals perceive what is happening within and around them, and affects their relationships with others. In other words, it is essential to judge what occurs in one's mind in order for mindfulness to support skilful relations. This notion of "skilfulness" is an important aspect of the Buddhist practice of mindfulness, as it denotes that which supports one to address suffering (S. Armstrong, personal communication, May 27, 2017).

As noted, ignoring the evaluative component of mindfulness both stems from and encourages a failure to recognize mindfulness as an ethical and social practice (Nilsson, & Kazemi, 2016; Wallace, 2008). Wallace (2008) cautions that in the absence of the ethical

component of mindfulness, the term is oversimplified and misrepresented as merely referring to being aware or bare attention, and advises those who want to undertake meditation, to seek as clear an understanding as possible of what it is, “Otherwise, Buddhist meditation quickly devolves into a vague kind of ‘be here now’ mentality...” (Wallace, 2008, p. 62). Arguably, what is missing from typical presentations and applications of mindfulness within MBIs are the additional Buddhist teachings, found in the Eightfold Path, that support its development. These teachings are part of and guide the practice of mindfulness, and the capacity to skilfully attend to and care for one’s thoughts/intentions, speech, and actions, where consideration of others is paramount. In short, in the development of MBIs there is still much to be learned from the Buddhist understanding of mindfulness. Of particular importance is the recognition that mindfulness is an evaluative, ethical, and social endeavour, which is best understood when presented as part of the Eightfold Path trainings, where it is intended to support both intrapersonal and interpersonal processes.

2.1.2. Limiting Mindfulness to Addressing Specific Concerns

Another concern about contemporary MBIs is that they tend to compartmentalize mindfulness as a therapeutic tool to address specific conditions (Monteiro, Musten, & Compson, 2015). In contrast, within Buddhism, mindfulness is viewed as supporting a way of life that enables freedom from unwholesome states of mind; a way to care for life’s joys and challenges; a way to peace and happiness, with the explicit intent for this to be of benefit to others (Lindahl, 2015). Researchers and Buddhist scholars have made great efforts to illuminate this broader meaning of mindfulness (e.g., Bodhi, 2011b; Grossman & Van Dam, 2011; Wallace, 2008), which is reflected in Thich Nhat Hanh’s expression, “Peace in oneself, peace in the world.” It is important to recognize that from the Buddhist perspective, mindfulness is not intended merely to address specific issues; rather, it is a means to flourish within all aspects of one’s life and for the greater good of society. This is exemplified in the work of Young (2016), who has grouped the effects of mindfulness into five categories, outlining how it has the capacity to (1) decrease physical or emotional suffering, (2) promote physical or emotional fulfillment, (3) support the attainment of deep

self-knowledge, (4) create positive changes in objective actions, and (5) advance a sense of love and desire to be of service to others. These effects are reflective of the Buddhist understanding of mindfulness (as part of the Eightfold Path trainings) as having wide-ranging potential to support both individual and societal wellbeing.

As efforts to expand the understanding of mindfulness continue, and for there to be greater appreciation of its broader potential benefits, it is important for there to be continued examination of the additional Buddhist teachings that are part of and that support the practice of mindfulness. Deepening the understanding of mindfulness is necessary, as challenges still remain in terms of the interpretation and implementation of mindfulness-based practices in MBIs for K-12 teachers and students.

2.1.3. Mindfulness as Behaviour Modification

Concerns have been raised about teachers' understanding and implementation of MBIs in K-12 schools (e.g., Forbes, 2015; Shapiro, Rechtschaffen, & de Sousa, 2016). For example, Shapiro and colleagues (2016) discuss the risk of teachers adopting readily available mindfulness curricula (i.e., MindUP™) without fully understanding or embodying mindfulness-based practices themselves. These authors caution how resources such as MindUP™ can be used as a means for behavioural modification, and to enforce peace and quiet on students who are perceived as being challenging or difficult. Shapiro et al. (2016) illustrate this concern with the following example: "In one school, for instance, students were made to sit in the corner on the 'mindfulness chair' if they had misbehaved so they could be 'mindful' of what they had done" (p. 91). Rather than viewing mindfulness as a means of caring for oneself and others, this enforcement of mindfulness could result in students viewing it as a form of punishment. Although this type of practice may not be intended by those developing MBIs, it is important to consider such misuses and how to safeguard against them. In particular, this example points to the need for (1) continued examination of the information and curriculum provided to teachers and whether these materials are sufficient to ensure mindfulness is not misrepresented or misused, (2)

adequate teacher training so that educators understand the meaning and purpose of mindfulness, and (3) ongoing support to uphold and deepen teachers' understanding and embodiment of mindfulness. In consideration of further supporting those K-12 teachers who wish to integrate mindfulness-based practices and/or MBIs into their lives and classrooms, and from a broader perspective, what also needs to be addressed is that, historically, mindfulness has been recognized as a religious practice.

2.1.4. Limiting our View: Mindfulness as a Religious Practice

In the context of public education, concern has been raised about the religious origins of contemplative practices like yoga and mindfulness meditation, and the appropriateness of integrating such practices within this secular setting. For example, there have been a number of cases in the United States where parents have expressed concern about yoga being a “religious ritual” that infringes on families’ religious freedom, particularly when traditional spiritual terms like “Namaste” are used (Ebrahimji, 2013; Wang, 2016). There are also many people who believe that practices such as yoga make a valuable contribution to physical education, and argue that it can be taught and practiced without any spiritual connotations (Ebrahimji, 2013). Reflective of such concerns, Jennings (2016b) has argued that if we are to be successful in integrating mindfulness into education, it is vital that mindfulness-based practices are not associated with religious and/or spiritual language, objects, or beliefs. As a consequence, in MBIs found in educational settings, mindfulness has been removed from its origins in Buddhism.

In introducing mindfulness into mainstream education, rather than stripping it from its Buddhist origins, I argue the public would be better served by knowing the historical context of mindfulness. Specifically, although many people recognize the Buddha as a religious figure, he can also be understood as a practitioner, psychologist, and/or philosopher – as one who dedicated his life to understanding human suffering and how to care for it. It is also important to acknowledge that the term “Buddhism” was coined by Western scholars, and that it was hundreds of years after the death of the Buddha before

he became revered as a sort of divine figure, and that Buddhism became recognized as an institutionalized religion (Batchelor, 1997). Although Kornfield (2008) acknowledges that Buddhism has become a religion he notes that,

...this is not the origin of Buddhism or its core. The Buddha was a human being, not a god, and what he offered his followers were experiential teachings and practices, a revolutionary way to understand and release suffering. From his own inner experiments, he discovered a systematic and remarkable set of trainings to bring about happiness and fulfill the highest levels of human development. (p. 7)

As Kornfield (2008) further describes, the Dalai Lama has repeatedly stated that, “Buddhist teachings are not a religion, they are a science of the mind” (p. 7). As such, over the past few decades there has been a surge of scientific inquiry into the effects of the practice of mindfulness meditation on the human brain and its related functions (e.g., Davidson et al., 2003; Verhaeghen, 2017; Wheeler, Arnkoff, & Glass, 2017).

Rather than having to believe in a set of teachings, within Buddhism one is encouraged to investigate the nature of one’s mind for oneself (Batchelor, 1997). In doing so, one can see the nature of pain and suffering, and realize that it is possible to attend to both inevitable and unnecessary suffering that can occur in one’s life. Batchelor (1997) further contends that Buddhist practices such as meditation are not misaligned or in conflict with science, as they do not aim to prove or disprove esoteric ideology. In Buddhist meditation practices, one confronts one’s humanity – both the joys and the struggles of being human. Moreover, the Buddha’s teachings do not ask or require one to have faith in something that has not or never can be proven; one is simply invited to observe, investigate, and understand human experience.

In calling for the inclusion of additional Buddhist teachings in MBIs, it is important to acknowledge that that this likely would not be possible were it not for all the efforts made over the past forty years toward making mindfulness more accessible in secular settings. No doubt it was necessary for mindfulness to initially be removed from its Buddhist origins

in order for it to be accepted within mainstream institutions. Overtime, the development of MBIs (particularly MBSR) landed mindfulness on the cover of Time magazine (February 3, 2014), making it a household name. The popularization of mindfulness has led to increased interest in Buddhist teachings, such that we are now able to consider what other teachings have to offer in a variety of secular settings. Indeed, as interest in mindfulness continues to grow, there appears to be increasing exploration of how more Buddhist teachings can be integrated into the mainstream understanding of human life and flourishing (e.g., Young, 2016). In fact, this may be essential to supporting K-12 teachers in deepening and sustaining their understanding and practice of mindfulness.

2.1.5. Expanding and Sustaining Teachers' Understanding of Mindfulness

One of the challenges in implementing MBIs for K-12 teachers relates to the support available for them in establishing, and then maintaining mindfulness-based practices over time (Cullen, 2011). While MBIs for teachers, such as the SMART and CARE programs, offer a fairly substantive amount of time in initial training, follow-up or ongoing support is either not available or limited (e.g., Benn, Akiva, Arel, & Roeser, 2012; Jennings et al., 2013). Raising the issue of ongoing support is not to be critical of MBIs for K-12 teachers, but, rather, to point to the need for participants to have ongoing support in establishing and maintaining mindfulness-based practices over time.

In describing the potential benefits of contemplative practices, such as mindfulness meditation, in education, Davidson et al. (2012) note: "At the heart of such practices is repetition and practice to cultivate more positive habits of mind" (p. 150). It may be useful to think of the practice of mindfulness as not unlike the development of a muscle. One can train to build muscle in the short-term, but in order to sustain what has been developed, continuous effort is required. Similarly, mindfulness is not something one experiences once or merely over the course of a six to eight-week program. Rather, the traditional practice of mindfulness is recognized as being gradually developed, and requiring continuous study, practice, and support. In order for K-12 teachers to sustain their practice

of mindfulness, they too must have ongoing support, including access to meditation teachers, information, and opportunities to engage in mindfulness-based practices with others.

In addition to the matter of sustainability and support within schools, there is also the issue of those students and teachers who may want to explore mindfulness-based practices further than what the school or intervention is able to provide. In examining continued support for those who have participated in mindfulness-based practices within and beyond the classroom, Burnett (2011) reflects,

Even after relatively brief exposure in a classroom context there are usually a few pupils who taste something important and want to know more. Where, if anywhere, would they go? Do you respond to this with extra provision 'off timetable'? If so, should this require further teacher training, as smaller groups for longer periods are more likely to throw up 'openings and experiences' that require more careful handling? Is this a point at which parents should be 'in the loop' in some way? To summarize, you would always hope to foster a certain sense of community during the lessons themselves, but the question is whether or not there is an extension of this in another form outside of the classroom. (p. 113)

These questions raised by Burnett are relevant to a variety of settings where MBIs are being implemented. In examining the road ahead for MBIs, Cullen (2011) describes how, "One of many challenges facing all MBIs as programs mature and graduates proliferate is the offering of ongoing support for the deepening and continuation of practices begun in the secular setting of a mindfulness class" (p. 191). As K-12 teachers undertake mindfulness-based practices, perhaps as a means to addressing very specific issues such as work related stress and classroom management, some may come to appreciate their experience of mindfulness as "a way of being," and it is natural for some of these educators to want to learn more about mindfulness and its origins. However, as Cullen (2011) points out, those who have participated in MBIs (and wish to continue on in their studies), may not be comfortable with seeking support through more traditional

means (e.g., attending a Buddhist Temple), where Buddhist teachings are presented in spiritual and/or religious language.

2.2. Returning Mindfulness Home to the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path: Adding Depth and Meaning to Teachers' Practice of Mindfulness

In the context of Buddhism, mindfulness is one aspect of a larger theory of human suffering referred to as the Four Noble Truths. Included within the Four Noble Truths is a set of trainings (the Eightfold Path) for addressing suffering. The four truths contained in this theory are as follows: (1) the truth of the nature of human suffering – that it includes both inevitable suffering due to life events such as aging, illness, and death, as well as unnecessary suffering, which is based on how one responds to both pleasant and unpleasant experiences, (2) the truth of the causes of unnecessary suffering – that it originates from craving or clinging to experience to either stay the same or be different, (3) the truth that it is possible to alleviate all forms of suffering through the letting go of craving, and (4) the truth found in the Eightfold Path trainings that support one in addressing human suffering (Bodhi, 2015). The Eightfold Path is comprised of eight teachings that are grouped into three trainings, concerning (1) wisdom (skillful understanding and intention), (2) ethics (skillful speech, actions, and livelihood), and (3) mental development (skillful effort, mindfulness, and concentration). The link between the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path is somewhat circular in that while the Eightfold Path is part of the Fourth Noble Truth, the Four Noble Truths are also housed in the Buddhist training concerning wisdom.

Inclusion of the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings within MBIs for educators would deepen teachers' insight into human suffering that, as I argue in Chapter 3, is often downplayed in our society. For example, the Four Noble Truths support a view of suffering as a universal phenomenon that at times can be subtle, but is nevertheless

pervasive and harmful to both personal and societal wellbeing. As Adarkar and Keiser (2007) describe, there are benefits of being aware of this for both teachers and students,

...as we acknowledge, and pay appropriate respect to, the suffering of our students, we bring them into a space where all of us are human—and that is a step toward a sense of an authentically compassionate classroom community. Such a step is crucial in the path from compassion to the alleviation of suffering... (p. 254)

It is important to note that within Buddhism, as is described by Fronsdal (2008), the Eightfold Path is recognized as a gradual training wherein there is both a progression in the development of skilful understanding, intentions, speech, actions, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration – and they are also inextricably linked to and support one another (see Figure 2.1). Therefore, consideration must be given to what is lost when mindfulness is divorced from these additional Buddhist principles. With all eight of these teachings being traditionally recognized as integral to psychological wellbeing, all eight should be made available to those who wish to learn about mindfulness in secular or non-spiritual form. Although aspects of the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path may be implicitly embedded in some MBIs, more often than not there is little to no explicit reference to them. The reasons for this are likely manifold, but I suspect it has occurred as a result of two central concerns. The first, and most apparent, concern is that Buddhist teachings are often couched in spirituality and presented in language foreign to the Western reader, making them controversial within secular contexts, such as clinical and educational settings. The second, and perhaps less obvious concern, is that the broader Buddhist teachings within which mindfulness is embedded encourage relationality rather than individualism, and provide a moral vision that may conflict with individualistic ideology and the value of individual freedom.

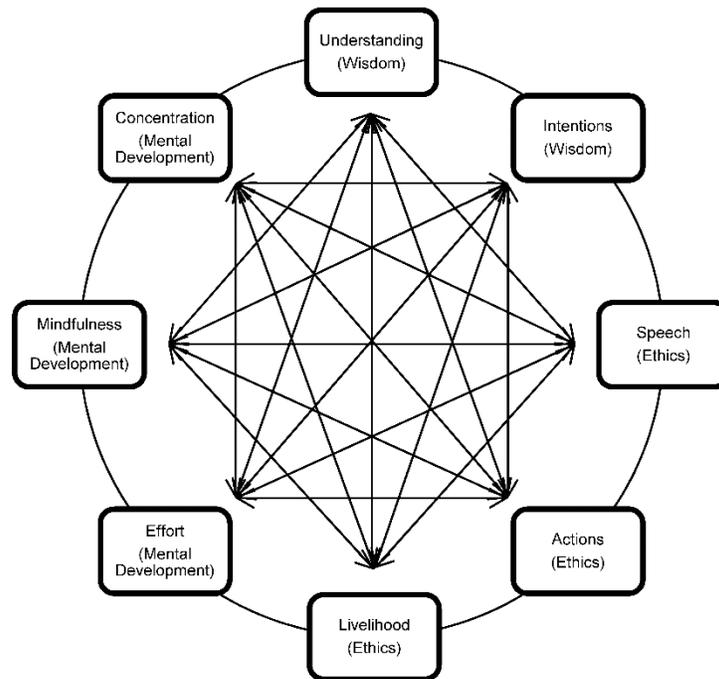


Figure 2.1: Illustration of the relationship between each of the Eightfold Path trainings.

Adapted from “The Interbeing of the Eight Elements of the Path,” by Thich Nhat Hanh, 1998, *The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching: Transforming Suffering into Peace, Joy, and Liberation*, p. 57. Copyright 1998 by Thich Nhat Hanh.

These concerns need not limit further development of MBI curricula, but should inform thoughtful consideration of the challenges ahead in terms of program implementation. Overtime, as efforts are continued to bring more Buddhist teachings into MBIs and mainstream settings (e.g., Hayes, 2016; Hyland, 2013; Neff, 2012), it stands to reason that the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings could be integrated into existing or additional programming. Furthermore, as MBIs for educators and students increase in popularity, there will be increasing numbers of individuals who, after participating in an introductory MBI, will want to continue on in their practice, and endeavour to learn more. With having established their mindfulness-based practices in secular form, some may be open to then turning to traditional Buddhist teachings and practices, but others will want to carry on in the secular fashion they began. In short, there will be a need for continued (1) ongoing support for these individuals, and (2) efforts to

develop and make available additional Buddhist teachings in secular form and in a language that is accessible to the Western reader.

2.3. A Return to the Eightfold Path: The Second Generation of MBIs

Since the development of MBSR, a number of “overtly spiritual” (Shonin & Van Gordon, 2014, p. 899) MBIs have been established that integrate additional Buddhist teachings and meditation practices, such as the Meditation Awareness Training (Shonin & Van Gordon, 2014), and Spiritual Self-Schema Therapy (Avants & Margolin, 2004) programs. According to Van Gordon, Shonin, and Griffiths (2015), the development of these second-generation mindfulness-based interventions (SG-MBIs) has largely been in response to the earlier (or first generation) MBIs, “...taking a reductionist approach to teaching mindfulness” (p. 592), where mindfulness is seen as an isolated, passive, and non-judgemental skill for specific therapeutic purposes. SG-MBIs are distinguished from the first-generation mindfulness-based interventions (FG-MBIs) on the basis that they are aligned more closely with the Buddhist teachings of the Eightfold Path trainings wherein mindfulness is understood as a form of awareness that is both active and evaluative (Van Gordon et al., 2015; Van Gordon, Shonin, Griffiths, & Singh, 2015), and permeates one’s way of being. Another distinguishing factor is that within SG-MBIs the teachings are presented in spiritual form (Shonin & Van Gordon, 2014).

Van Gordon et al. (2015) describe how the term “spiritual,” is included in SG-MBIs “...to help prevent participants becoming confused (or being inadvertently misled) as to the nature of the intervention they are receiving” (p. 592). What the authors appear to be implying is that because Buddhist teachings have historically been recognized as spiritual – they should be presented as such. As previously noted, while the Eightfold Path can be regarded as a spiritual path (just as mindfulness can be referred to as a spiritual practice), I argue that the Eightfold Path trainings are, in fact, secular in nature, and therefore can be disseminated in non-spiritual form. Indeed, there are secular MBIs for K-12 teachers

(e.g., CARE; Jennings, 2016a; SMART; Roeser et al., 2013) that offer additional Buddhist teachings such as compassion training and loving-kindness meditation (see Hwang, Bartlett, Greben, & Hand, 2017 for review).

In the following two chapters, I present additional Buddhist teachings on wisdom and ethics from the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings, as they are not currently offered in MBIs for K-12 teachers. While the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings are addressed in some SG-MBIs, as these programs are not aimed at K-12 teachers they are beyond the scope of the current thesis. The teachings I address in the following two chapters are recognized in Buddhism as supporting one to achieve, and sustain, maximal benefit from mindfulness-based practices. As such, they should be of benefit to K-12 teachers who are pursuing mindfulness training.

Chapter 3.

The Issue of Suffering, the Buddha, and the Four Noble Truths

In this chapter, I aim to present the Four Noble Truths, which make up Buddhist teachings on wisdom. In Chapter 4, I present some of the trainings in ethics that are not currently available in MBIs for K-12 teachers. I offer these teachings as outlined by Buddhist scholars and meditation teachers, in order to emphasize the importance of mindfulness being studied and practiced in the context of the Eightfold Path.

In my description of Buddhist teachings, I do not include spiritual or religious terms in order to make clear the secular nature of these teachings. I also do not use the traditional languages of Pali or Sanskrit in order to make these teachings more accessible in terms of language and readability. Rather, I present English translations offered by Buddhist scholars and meditation teachers. I do not stray too far from existing English translations, so that the reader is able to move with greater ease between this secular presentation of Buddhist teachings and presentations where both spiritual terms and the languages of Pali and Sanskrit are used.

In the following paragraphs, I discuss the downplaying of human suffering in North America, and how the Buddhist understanding of suffering – and the extent to which it can occur – is vital to the practice of mindfulness. I then provide a brief introduction to the life of the historical Buddha in an effort to acknowledge him as an integral figure in the history of the study and care of human suffering, and to offer a glimpse at what inspired his life's work. I then outline the Four Noble Truths, and related teachings that are not yet available in MBIs for K-12 teachers, but are recognized in Buddhism as important to the understanding and practice of mindfulness. Finally, I discuss the benefits of these teachings for educators.

3.1. The Downplaying of Human Suffering

In North America, the term “suffering” is typically associated with the stress, pain, and sorrow one may feel relative to dealing with such experiences as major illness and death. Other forms of suffering are, of course, acknowledged, but the range and extent to which people suffer is often minimized. This downplaying of suffering is reflected in the emphasis that is placed on the pursuit of happiness. As Hanh (2014) suggests, “If we focus exclusively on pursuing happiness, we may regard suffering as something to be ignored or resisted” (p. 10), and if one does suffer, it is expected to be short in duration. Cutler, in conversation with the Dalai Lama, describes how this situation may have occurred:

As Western society gained the ability to limit the suffering caused by harsh living conditions, it seems to have lost the ability to cope with the suffering that remains... as suffering becomes less visible, it is no longer seen as part of the fundamental nature of human beings, but rather as an anomaly... [a] failure... (Dalai Lama, & Cutler, p. 147)

Advancements in fields such as clinical psychology and psychiatry have also contributed to the minimization of suffering, where rather than focusing on the subjective experiences of clients/patients, there is an emphasis on diagnostic labels (Miller, 2004). As Miller (2004) notes, addressing the suffering of clients has been reduced to remediating what are understood as the, “...manifestations of mental disorders, disabilities, diseases, and dysfunctions. The client’s agony, misery, or sorrow is viewed as a mere epiphenomenon to be replaced by a description of a clinical syndrome...” (p. 39). In other words, the emphasis on diagnostic labels, and their associated treatments, has rendered the suffering of clients as secondary, resulting in it being minimized in patient/client care.

The highly individualistic nature of North American society, where people live with the burden of seeing themselves as separate, distinct, and isolated from others (Fowers,

Richardson, & Slife, 2017; Miller, 2004; Schumaker, 2001), also influences our understanding of and approaches to suffering. According to Schumaker (2001), cultures that promote a view of self that is deeply embedded within one's social bonds, provide a sense of belongingness and security that, in turn, protects mental health. The author notes how when stress arises for an individual within this context, it is recognized as an issue to be addressed by the group; thus, one's mental health is sustained by one's sense of connection and the direct support one receives from others (Schumaker, 2001). The more people see themselves as distinct and separate from others, the more their suffering is experienced as individualized and unique. Feelings of isolation and shame can arise as one identifies difficult life experiences as experiences that belong only to them. Withholding one's pain from others can result in that pain being further exacerbated and can preclude one from recognizing that suffering is a basic part of our common humanity.

As exemplified in Buddhism, suffering is a natural and universal phenomenon (Hanh, 1998; Trungpa, 1976). The Buddha recognized the extent to which it is possible to experience inevitable suffering, and the unnecessary suffering that can occur as a result of how one perceives and responds psychologically to both pleasant and unpleasant experiences. Rather than denying or hiding one's suffering, Buddhist teachings support one to face and accept its subtle, yet pervasive nature. While the prominence placed on suffering in Buddhist teachings may appear "gloomy" (Trungpa, 1976), the Buddha recognized that it is necessary to acknowledge the nature of human experience in order to discern how to take care of and alleviate the inevitable suffering life brings, and to prevent further unnecessary suffering. The Buddhist emphasis on suffering is not generally found in MBIs, which is consistent with the downplaying and avoidance of suffering that is typical of North American society. Here I argue that it is important for K-12 teachers who are undertaking mindfulness-based practices to be provided the Buddhist understanding of the nature of suffering, and how all of the Eightfold Path trainings, including mindfulness, can be used to address it.

As the life of the Buddha will reveal, it was through his observations and insights into the nature of human experience that he was able to identify and see to fruition himself

the possibility of being with the natural ebb and flow of both pleasant and unpleasant life experiences, and that it is possible to care for and address the whole range of human suffering.

3.2. The Buddha: The Search for Freedom from Suffering

A brief survey of the Buddha's life is discussed herein as a means to acknowledge him as an important historical figure in the history of the study and care of human suffering. Recognizing the Buddha in this way will arguably support more of his teachings (not just mindfulness) being accepted and made available in MBIs.

Buddhist scholars largely agree that the Buddha lived approximately 2,500 years ago between 563 and 483 BC (Bodhi, 1999). The account of the Buddha's life and his teachings were first preserved orally, and then written/recorded in several Asian languages (Armstrong, 2004). According to Hanh (1998), the Buddha was born a prince named Siddhartha Gautama who lived his younger years largely sheltered from the harsh realities of life. Later, in young adulthood, while away from the wealth, protection, and privilege afforded by his family, Siddhartha witnessed four events that changed the course of his life (Bodhi, 1998). The first three events that he observed were related to illness, aging, and death, where he saw the pain, distress, and sorrow associated with these realities. The fourth experience Siddhartha had was an encounter with an ascetic; one who lived a life of self-discipline and austerity. He saw that the ascetic was able to bear witness to illness, aging, and death, without being overtaken by the suffering that is typically associated with these events (Bodhi, 1998). At the age of 29, Siddhartha made the decision to forgo his title, family, worldly goods, and sense pleasures, and moved into homelessness so that he could find a way to address the trauma endured relative to such distressing, but normal life events (Feldman, 2005; Wallace, 2010).

Siddhartha sought out the most eminent teachers with whom to study and learn their systems of meditation, which often included severe deprivation practices such as

fasting (Bodhi, 1999). In recognizing that more harm than benefit came from extreme austerity, the Buddha set out on his own to study the nature of human experience. It was during this time, and through his own study and practice of meditation, that he gained the insight, wisdom, and mental discipline that supported him to further understand the nature of suffering, and how to be free of the harmful states of mind that he recognized as causing unnecessary suffering (Bodhi, 1999). Once he reached this state (referred to as his liberation), Siddhartha became identified as a Buddha; one who is liberated or enlightened (Bodhi, 2015). Importantly, the Buddha's liberation did not mean that he no longer experienced suffering, but he realized *the art of suffering* (Hanh, 2014). As Hanh (2014) notes,

The Buddha did suffer, because he had a body, feelings, and perceptions, like all of us... he suffered physically, and he suffered emotionally as well. When one of his beloved students died, he suffered. How can you not suffer when a dear friend has just died? The Buddha wasn't a stone. He was a human being. But because he had a lot of insight, wisdom, and compassion, he knew how to suffer and so he suffered much less. (p. 14)

According to S. Armstrong (personal communication, Sept. 15, 2016), Buddhist teachings encourage one to face and accept the inevitability of life events such as aging, illness, and death, while offering guidance on how to do this "skillfully." This guidance includes trainings in wisdom (skillful understanding and intentions), ethics (skillful speech, actions, and livelihood), and mental development (skillful effort, mindfulness, and concentration). These are not time-limited lessons; rather within Buddhism, it is understood that living skillfully requires ongoing dedication (S. Armstrong, personal communication, Sept. 15, 2016).

Through the Buddha's insights, he came to believe that psychological peace came not from an external power or belief, but rather from understanding the causes of human suffering and how to deal with it (Rahula, 1974). This knowledge of suffering and the methods to address it were outlined by the Buddha in a set of teachings known as the

Four Noble Truths. The Buddha is said to have emphasized that he was not an authority, but a guide, and that everything he proposed should be investigated and verified through each individual's personal efforts and experiences (Rahula, 1974). Regardless of one's standing or credentials, the Buddha provided instruction to anyone who was interested, and his wisdom has since been passed down generation after generation to millions of people around the world (Conze, 1980). Bodhi (1999) points out that it is Buddhism's peaceful and non-dogmatic approach that has allowed for its ease of adaptation into diverse cultures, and explains why it has stood the test of time.

The Buddha drew upon and revised ancient wisdom in an effort to counteract three problems he observed in society (Conze, 1980). The first of these problems was violence, which took several forms, from intellectual coercion of those who carried particular beliefs to the killing of animals and humans. The second problem the Buddha saw was a rise in individualism, and an individualistic conception of "self," which he believed to be the cause of much human suffering. The third and most complex issue to be resolved concerned people's beliefs about death. The Buddha contended with the then commonly held view that efforts made in one's current lifetime would be rewarded in future lives. He saw this idea as obstructing individuals' focus on the present, and their capacity to attune to and care for themselves and others in the here and now. In essence, the Buddha wanted people to be accountable for their lives – to be considerate of the effect of their actions on themselves and others, both in the immediate sense and for generations to come (Conze, 1980).

Each of the three concerns addressed by the Buddha is relevant today. Violence, an emphasis on individualism, and a lack of regard for the impact one has on others (both now and in future), are evident in contemporary concerns including armed conflict, global warming, and access to resources such as fresh food and water. In examining the story of the Buddha, and what was of concern to him, it is clear that his efforts were not merely for peace of mind and contentment within himself, but that he intended for his insights and teachings to support ethical-relational processes, and to encourage critically engaged citizenship. In understanding the Buddha's intentions, it makes clear that Buddhist

teachings, including mindfulness, are not limited to addressing specific individual problems, but rather have far reaching implications for the wellbeing of one's relationships, community, society, and the environment.

3.3. Acknowledging the Truth of Suffering in MBIs for K-12 Teachers

The far reaching implications of Buddhist teachings, and the acknowledgement of the extent to which suffering occurs have arguably not been fully realized in MBIs. MBIs typically address specific issues relative to particular populations. For example, MBIs for K-12 teachers are often described as a means to support educators in dealing with the stress and burn-out related to their work (e.g., Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013; Jennings et al., 2013; Skinner, & Beers, 2016). Whether they are intended to address teacher burn-out, addiction, or chronic pain, when MBIs are designed and promoted relative to the stressors related to specific roles or experiences, it obscures the universal nature of and extent to which suffering occurs. Therefore, the Four Noble Truths are described herein to provide a deeper understanding of human suffering than is currently acknowledged, and that is not yet emphasized in MBIs for K-12 teachers.

Inclusion of the First and Second Noble Truths in MBIs for educators would be of benefit, as these teachings acknowledge the causes and extent of human suffering, which is an important aspect of one's learning to care for oneself and others. The Third and Fourth Noble Truths point to the possibility of attending to life's suffering, and include the Eightfold Path trainings that can provide teachers guidance in wisdom, ethics, and mental development. The Eightfold Path trainings would further support teachers in gaining maximal benefit from the practice of mindfulness, as traditionally in Buddhism; all three of these trainings are recognized as being important aspects of both personal and societal wellbeing. While there may be some elements of these trainings in MBIs (e.g., training in compassion), as noted, the Eightfold Path trainings have not yet been offered as a whole in MBIs for teachers. When mindfulness is divorced from the additional Eightfold Path

trainings, of which it is a part, in addition to the loss of understanding of the extent of human suffering, there is a loss of the ethical and relational components of this practice, which are largely derived from a number of Buddhist teachings (e.g., interconnectedness, the Five Precepts, the Four Immeasurables, etc.) that are housed throughout the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings. I discuss some of those teachings that are not yet being emphasized in MBIs for teachers.

3.4. The Four Noble Truths

In order to realize freedom from unnecessary suffering, as the Buddha is said to have done, one is encouraged to understand and realize for oneself each of the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings (Bodhi, 2011a). According to Hanh (1998), the Buddha proclaimed many times, “My teaching is like a finger pointing to the moon. Do not mistake the finger for the moon” (p. 17). In other words, as Batchelor (1997) describes, the Four Noble Truths, “...are not propositions to believe; they are challenges to act” (p. 7). If the Four Noble Truths are not propositions to believe, one might question why they are referred to as “truths.” As they are based on what the Buddha came to observe and understand, they describe what he saw as the truth about the nature and care of human suffering. As noted above, the Buddha encouraged others to verify through their own experience if each was true for them. In essence, the Four Noble Truths aim to support one to *suffer well* – to address the suffering that occurs as a result of how one relates to the whole range of human experience, both pleasant and unpleasant (Fronsdal, 2008).

3.4.1. First Noble Truth: The Nature of Suffering

The First Noble Truth is the acknowledgment that all people experience stress, pain, distress, suffering, and/or dissatisfaction (Armstrong, 2013; Batchelor, 1997). Encouraging K-12 teachers to consider the extent of human suffering would support them

in cultivating their understanding and compassion for the fragile nature of psychological wellbeing, and refine their capacity to attune to themselves and others.

In Buddhism, there is suffering that is said to be inevitable, and suffering that is optional or unnecessary (Fronsdal, 2008). Inevitable suffering refers to the pain and anguish that all of humanity is vulnerable to when dealing with such issues as illness, injury, and death. Unnecessary suffering arises from how one reacts to the full range of human experience, both pleasant and unpleasant. For example, one may be overtaken by greed or wanting as one clings to an experience of joy and feels distressed when it passes. One may also be overtaken by aversion or anger when facing a painful personal loss, and be unable to let go of the desire for one's life to be different. Whether an experience is deemed pleasant or unpleasant, it can entail suffering unnecessarily.

In explaining unnecessary suffering, Hanh (1998) points out, "Suffering is not objective. It depends largely on the way you perceive. There are many things that cause you to suffer but do not cause others to suffer" (p. 123). This is not to imply that one's suffering is dependent entirely upon free-will, and that regardless of internal and external conditions, one should just be happy. Rather, the Buddha acknowledged that there are a vast number of potential causes and conditions influencing one's experience, and affecting the extent to which both inevitable and unnecessary suffering arises. And even though one has a choice in how to respond to experience, making a conscious decision about how to react and whether or not to suffer or feel dissatisfied is not easily done. To achieve this ability, the Buddha encouraged self-reflection and critical thinking in order to identify the habitual ways in which one responds to one's experience (Bodhi, 1999). Through these activities, Buddhist teachings support one in (1) dealing with the inevitable suffering that naturally occurs, and (2) preventing unnecessary suffering.

Forms of Inevitable Suffering: Pain, Change, and Existing

Three forms of inevitable suffering were identified by the Buddha: (1) suffering from pain, (2) suffering from the vulnerability of things changing, and (3) suffering from existing

(S. Armstrong, personal communication, Jan. 9, 2016). *Suffering from pain* refers to the physical (i.e., injury or illness) and emotional (e.g., loss of a loved one) pain that everyone experiences at some time in their life (Armstrong, 2013). *Suffering from the vulnerability of things changing* refers to the challenge of having to deal with the reality that there are many aspects of life that one cannot exert complete control over, such as health, careers, children, relationships, and finances. While one can exert control over certain aspects of one's life, and such control can even be sustained for extended periods, everything is subject to change. All one comes to own, love, or has done to create a sense of security is vulnerable to change. Everyone lives with this reality, but some may try to avoid it and expect or hope for an enduring sense of security and happiness. It can be challenging to acknowledge that life is fragile, but according to the teachings of the Buddha, it does not serve one well to deny one's vulnerability to the fragility of life conditions. Doing so cuts one off from the opportunity to learn what is necessary to develop the mind in a way that will allow one to not only bear, but thrive when confronting life's challenges. With awareness and a deep understanding and appreciation of the way things are, one also comes to understand what is needed to care for oneself and others. Finally, *suffering from existing* is said to be experienced on both a macro and micro level. On a macro level, there is dissatisfaction, stress, and suffering related to all the things one must do to survive (i.e., attend school, find work, sustain food and shelter, etc.). On a micro level, one has to deal with an overwhelming amount of stimuli through the six senses (the 6th sense being the mind), and thus experience can be oppressive. From the ceaseless activity of the mind, to physical sensations, it can be very difficult to experience peace, and to get the rest and recuperation that is necessary to flourish (Armstrong, 2013).

In Buddhism, it is recognized that all of humanity is vulnerable to experiencing these three forms of suffering (Armstrong, 2013). Despite the universality of human suffering, such pain is often seen as being unique unto oneself, which can lead to feelings of isolation and, hence, further suffering. Moreover, as previously mentioned it can lead to the view that suffering is an anomaly. The Buddha emphasized that suffering is neither unique nor lasting. It is a temporal and universal condition that one can learn how to live with, first by acknowledging the nature of suffering, and then, through the experience of

mindfulness meditation, coming to understand one's own experience, and allowing this wisdom to inform one's daily life (Armstrong, 2013).

The Benefit of Understanding the Nature of Suffering

When one's suffering is perceived as unique, an anomaly, or a failure, one feels inadequate and one's suffering is seen as something to be denied or avoided. We need to consider how views of suffering affect teachers in terms of their awareness of, and comfort and capacity to be with the suffering within themselves and in their students. With the inclusion of Buddhist teachings on suffering, MBIs could support teachers to examine their own views and tolerance of the range of human emotion and experience, and the implications of this for how they relate to both the joys and concerns within themselves and others. Greater exploration into the nature and causes of suffering could also support teachers in identifying what needs to be addressed and what course of action may be necessary in addressing specific issues. For example, imagine a teacher who is dealing with a student who is aggressive. Rather than oversimplifying the issue and identifying the child's aggressive actions as the problem to be solved, the teacher would be better equipped to explore this unskilful behaviour, as a possible expression of the student's suffering. This is not to make an excuse for the child's behaviour nor suggest that it does not require consequences, but the Buddha's teachings encourage one to look deeply and consider what conditions may have led to such harmful actions. Doing so would help teachers to recognize subtle expressions of suffering and to see children who experience such suffering not as different or abnormal compared to other children.

Here we can also begin to appreciate how integral the practice of mindfulness is to understanding the nature of suffering, as teachers' developing awareness can support them to have greater sensitivity to issues they may face in the classroom. As Feldman (2005) notes, "Awareness teaches you to read between the lines. You see the loneliness, need, and fear in others that was previously invisible. You sense beneath the words of anger, blame, or anxiety the fragility of another person's heart" (p. 33). In the case of an aggressive child, armed with insight and awareness, teachers would be better prepared

to question if the student's aggression is a result of some kind of unidentified physical or psychological issue, if the student is facing a loss or change that is difficult for them, or is overwhelmed and/or struggling in some way due to the nature of their experience.

Given the time teachers spend with their students, particularly in the elementary school years, they are going to encounter the suffering of the learners in their care. The First Noble Truth guides educators to understand both the obvious and underlying conditions that may be affecting their own and their students' wellbeing. The greater the acceptance teachers have of the nature of suffering, the more likely they will be to see how the difficulties they or their students face might manifest in speech and actions. Further, this awareness can support them in their consideration of an effective response. Take for example our aggressive student whose hostility, still unbeknownst to the teacher, is a result of stressors at home related to the parents' increased conflict and recent separation. Rather than taking the student's behaviour at face value and seeing "aggression" as the primary concern, if one knew to inquire into the origins of such behaviours – into the child's suffering – they would be more likely to see that stress, loss, and no doubt confusion are of real import to the child's actions and could more accurately point to what the student needs.

While the First Noble Truth points the way for teachers to come to terms with the inevitable suffering life brings and the unnecessary suffering that arises in response to one's experience, importantly the Buddha also provided a means to understand the origins of unnecessary suffering, which is held in the Second Noble Truth.

3.4.2. Second Noble Truth: The Origins of Suffering

It is within the Second Noble Truth that the cause of unnecessary suffering is delineated (Rahula, 1974). The information housed within the Second Noble Truth is of benefit to K-12 teachers' practice of mindfulness, and the development of MBIs, as it further normalizes suffering, stressing our interconnectedness with one another, and the

complexity of causes and conditions that affect individual and societal wellbeing. This understanding would help teachers more deeply appreciate their connection to others and enhance their sense of themselves and others.

The suffering the Buddha sought to further understand was the suffering that is born out of craving, clinging, or grasping (Nyanaponika, 2000; Rahula, 1974). According to Gunaratana (2001), one of the strongest human desires is for the experience of pleasure. As exemplified by Buddhist teachings, desire is innate and can be understood as driving one to fulfill one's needs. The desire for security, safety, and certainty has enabled humans to survive as a species. The desire for knowledge and the desire to create have led to remarkable achievements. While desire can be of benefit, it can also become harmful craving or clinging. As noted by the Buddha, all things are subject to change. When one has difficulty accepting change, one's craving for or clinging to what has passed can lead to unpleasant and even harmful psychological and behavioural responses. Bodhi (2011a) describes how distress can be felt not just in response to unpleasant experiences, but in response to pleasant ones as well. One may either cling to attaining and sustaining sense pleasure or crave being rid of an experience perceived as unpleasant. For example, when one feels happy and this pleasant feeling ends, as all states of mind do, there can be a sense of loss, disappointment, or deprivation. From the Buddhist perspective, the aim is not to avoid the feelings that arise in response to life's circumstances, but to witness them and not be overtaken by them, or to be non-reactive towards them, so that they do not lead to harmful intentions, speech, and actions (Bodhi, 2011a).

In studying Buddhist wisdom, and the origins of suffering, K-12 teachers could also be offered Buddhist teachings on cause and effect. These teachings would support educators to examine the conditions that affect their lives, and deepen their appreciation of the natural rising and passing away of both suffering and wellbeing.

Cause and Effect: Understanding the Complexity of Causes and Conditions

In helping K-12 teachers recognize how suffering arises, we can turn to the Buddhist teachings on the nature of cause and effect. In Buddhism, cause and effect are said to co-arise, and thus everything exists as a result of numerous causes and conditions (Hanh, 1998). Given that cause and effect are interrelated, this teaching is sometimes referred to as Interdependent Co-arising, Dependent Origination or Interbeing. According to Hanh (1998), cause is commonly misunderstood as separate from effect, with cause distinctly preceding the effect. The Buddha emphasized the non-linear interplay of cause and effect, explaining how all that exists is interrelated. Appreciation of Interdependent Co-arising helps one to avoid misperceiving experience (i.e., seeing only one cause and one effect), and strengthens one's capacity to be aware of what leads to skilful, and beneficial, or unskilful and harmful responses (Gunaratana, 2001; Hanh, 1998). If one does not understand, and is unaware of the complexity of causes and conditions that affect one's life, there is a risk of one responding in a way that causes harm to oneself and others in any given circumstance (Hanh, 1998). Such responses have the potential to result in the expression of such feelings as frustration, anger, greed, or hatred. In bringing this understanding of the complexity of cause and effect to the practice of mindfulness meditation, K-12 teachers can potentially develop, what Hanh (1998) describes as the ability to face life with curiosity and a willingness to be with and to respond more appropriately to one's suffering.

As described above, the Buddha's teachings on cause and effect augment an appreciation for the interconnectedness amongst all that exists. Hanh (1992) refers to this as "interbeing;" which is an acknowledgment of one's connection to all that exists, on a personal, interpersonal, and ecological level. As an example of interconnectedness or non-separation, Hanh (1998) points out, "If we look into this sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sunshine in it" (p. 95). In other words, in order to have the sheet of paper, there must have been a tree, and for the tree to grow it required soil, water, sun, and so on. As one contemplates cause and effect, one recognizes what leads to such conditions as the sheet of paper and the many connections that were necessary for it to

come into in existence. Such teachings on cause and effect are said to highlight the interconnectedness among all living beings (Hanh, 1992).

When mindfulness is practiced with the knowledge of these teachings, the practitioner is led to verify, through his/her own developing awareness and experience that everything occurs as a result of multiple causes and conditions, and is therefore interconnected. These insights are seen in part as an antidote to suffering, in that peace and contentment are gained by holding a sense of connection to everything that exists (Smith, 2014). With this sense of connection one is less likely to perceive oneself as separate from others, and to distinguish one's suffering as unique. Retaining this knowledge requires both continued study of these teachings and ongoing engagement in mindfulness-based practices. In observing and learning how to be with the nature of experience, K-12 teachers can be supported to develop a stability of mind that would allow them to understand the causes of suffering, and to endure and skilfully respond to the changing conditions, within themselves, and within their surrounding environment.

38 Conditions that Support a Sense of Wellbeing

As part of understanding the nature of human suffering, it will also be of benefit for K-12 teachers participating in MBIs to be exposed to the 38 conditions the Buddha outlined as supporting one to be well. The Buddhist understanding of the 38 conditions are emphasized herein because, as Hanh (1998) suggests, one's view of cause and effect (i.e., one cause and one effect) can be limited and one may not see all of the conditions or contextual factors that are affecting one's life. Specifically, if one is not able to acknowledge the conditions that lead to suffering and wellbeing, than one may not respond appropriately to arising concerns. Therefore, knowledge of the 38 conditions would be of benefit to teachers in that it would encourage a deeper understanding of the many conditions that are important to human welfare. It would also help teachers recognize and validate why they or others may be facing difficulty in the absence of such favourable conditions.

The 38 conditions do not represent an exhaustive list of all means for supporting wellbeing, and do not necessarily reflect universal values. However, as with all of the Buddha's teachings, one is not asked to blindly accept and adhere to these suggestions; rather one is encouraged to experiment and determine their benefit for oneself. This point is important relative to the implementation of MBIs for K-12 teachers, in that there is no requirement to pursue any of these aspirations in order to participate in mindfulness-based practices, but they can be offered as a way to sensitize teachers to the range of conditions that support wellness.

Traditionally, the 38 conditions are referred to as the "38 Blessings" (see Table 3.1). According to S. Armstrong (personal communication, Sept. 15, 2016), these blessings can also be referred to as "the conditions that support a sense of wellbeing." Some of these conditions are characteristics one can cultivate, such as generosity and humility, and some are things one can do, such as visiting with wise and skilful teachers to receive direct guidance, and finally, some are the result of practice, such as gaining insight (through meditation) into the nature of experience. While meeting these conditions can support wellbeing, importantly one must also recognize the value of them; feel gratitude for them, and take the opportunity to practice them. If one is able to appreciate the value of these conditions, one will have what is considered the "right view" or "skilful understanding." However, if one does not practice recognising the value of such conditions and feeling gratitude for the opportunities that they offer, one can overlook them and will not benefit from them as a result. It takes mindfulness to see them as of value to one's life. For example, supporting one's parents and being generous to extended family members can be perceived as burdensome, but recognizing the benefit of caring for them can also be a source of happiness (S. Armstrong, personal communication, Sept. 15, 2016).

Table 3.1: 38 Conditions that Support a Sense of Wellbeing

1. To not associate with those who are unwise/unskilful/cause harm,
2. To associate with those who are wise/skilful/non-harming,
3. To honour the worthy (i.e., one's teachers and elders),
4. To live in a safe location that is suitable for personal-relational development,
5. To acquire merit (to be of benefit) by having done good deeds,
6. To care for one's mind correctly,
7. To be skilful in one's speech (i.e., loving, gentle, truthful, etc.),
8. To be educated, skilled, and knowledgeable,
9. To develop skills in art, science, or handicraft,
10. To be well trained, highly disciplined,
11. To take good care of one's mother,
12. To take good care of one's father,
13. To take good care of one's spouse and children,
14. To pursue a non-harming occupation,
15. To not engage in harmful actions,
16. To carry out blameless actions,
17. To be generous to one's family,
18. To be selfless in giving,
19. To refrain from malice,
20. To avoid intoxicants,
21. To be hard-working in admirable practices,
22. To be reverential, respectful,
23. To be modest, humble,
24. To be content in one's life,
25. To live with gratitude,
26. To hear teachings that reveals the Truth at the right time,
27. To exercise patience,
28. To be dutiful,
29. To visit with teachers who support the development of healthy qualities,
30. To discuss the nature of things in a timely manner,
31. To live a simple life,
32. To live virtuously,
33. To see and understand the Four Noble Truths,
34. To attain liberation of the mind; to no longer engage in harmful mental states,
35. To develop a non-reactive mind,
36. To no longer experience feelings such as anxiety and sorrow,
37. To be pure in one's heart and mind,
38. To be safe and secure.

Together, the 38 conditions acknowledge the complexity of what supports one to be well, and in the absence of such conditions, one is able to recognize what causes one

to be unwell – to suffer. Knowing these conditions is important in the context of MBIs for K-12 teachers, as it can help educators identify what conditions they can act upon and improve, and accept those conditions that they cannot change, for themselves and their students.

The Importance of Wise Associations

It is not a minor detail that the first three of the 38 conditions that support wellbeing are about relationships, and the benefit of associating with those who hold the wisdom that can help one to be well (Bodhi, 1998). Their placement emphasizes that personal growth is dependent on the quality of one's friendships and associations. Across the lifespan, one comes to identify oneself according to one's relationships, and there is the potential that these relationships can either be supportive or impeding to positive development (Bodhi, 1998).

In Buddhism, supportive relationships include wise associations with skilful meditation teachers (Bodhi, 2015). In North America, it is typical for those who participate in MBIs to only have access to a wise meditation teacher for the duration of the program, making it difficult for them to sustain and further develop their mindfulness practice once the program ends. For example, imagine a K-12 teacher who has participated in a one-day professional development workshop or eight-week program in mindfulness, but lives in a community where there is no additional access to meditation teachers and the wisdom needed to support an ongoing meditation practice. While books and online resources may be helpful, and it is possible to continue meditation training independently, this can be very difficult to do. There is any number of issues and questions that can arise, that without continued direct support, may be hard to resolve. Consider for example the school teacher who has attended an eight-week program, and been told she should practice sitting meditation for 20 minutes a day while focusing on the breath. What if the breath is suddenly too difficult to attend to due to a newly developed respiratory issue? What if the teacher has an experience with meditation that she finds distressing? Having access to a teacher at times like these can be very helpful. I myself can recall once sharing with a

mediation teacher that I was under a great deal of stress and was having difficulty concentrating. Although I had already been practicing a variety of meditation practices for a number of years, I was encouraged by my meditation teacher to engage in a different meditation practice, which was indeed more appropriate at that time. With the wisdom and support of a teacher, I was able to continue in my practice and grow, rather than feel like a failure and give up. Given the constantly changing conditions of life, and the consequent variability in each individual's needs, it is essential that K-12 teachers who are wanting to continue on with their study and practice of mindfulness to have access to wise meditation teachers on an ongoing basis.

A wise associate is one who encourages wholesome or beneficial aspirations (S. Armstrong, personal communication, Sept. 18, 2016). It is someone who can point to the error of one's ways, and support one to learn from one's mistakes. Such relationships provide a context in which it is safe to make errors. The Buddha recognized the fallibility of humanity. Rather than feel demeaned or shameful when one errs, one is encouraged to see the value of one's mistakes and to continue to aspire toward more beneficial, skilful intentions, speech, and actions. The Buddha carefully outlined the qualities of a wise and skilful associate, as one who (1) is grounded in wisdom and experience, (2) upholds wholesome ethical conduct, (3) is knowledgeable about the facts of life, and (4) is actively developing the mind. These wise associates are guides and models of the very qualities to which one aspires (S. Armstrong, personal communication, Sept. 18, 2016). K-12 teachers who are interested in sustaining mindfulness-based practices need to be provided with ongoing wise counsel from skilful meditation teachers in order to deepen their understanding of the causes of both suffering and wellbeing; to nurture their personal development, and to enrich their capacity to be benefactors to others.

K-12 Teachers as Wise Associates

K-12 teachers who participate in MBIs for their own benefit also have the potential to be exemplars of wisdom, ethical conduct, and mental development for their students. Schools are an ideal setting for children and youth to have access to wise associates, as

educators have the potential to support many students in their physical, social, emotional, moral, cognitive, and academic development. It is an important time in North American education when students' and teachers' social, emotional, and moral wellbeing are increasingly recognized as valued aims of education. Given the current interest in MBIs, such initiatives have the potential to play a significant role in the advancement of teachers' and students' social, emotional, and moral wellbeing, which will ultimately be of benefit to all of society, now and for generations to come. It is for this reason that careful consideration must be given to what is being taught to teachers.

In order to further support teachers' understanding of the complexity of the nature of human suffering, and the conditions that support wellbeing, it would also be of benefit to K-12 teachers if they could learn about the Buddha's insights into how unnecessary suffering can occur in response to the various conditions of one's life, and that it is possible to address this form of suffering. The Buddha presented these teachings in the Third Noble Truth.

3.4.3. Third Noble Truth: It is Possible to Address Suffering

The benefit of the Third Noble Truth for K-12 teachers is that it points to the possibility of addressing the unnecessary suffering that arises as a result of harmful states of mind (Gunaratana, 2001; Hanh, 2014). This Buddhist teaching encourages us to actively attend to, or be mindful of, habitual, harmful states of mind that can be damaging to both personal and societal wellbeing. Within this framework, teachers' engagement in mindfulness can be seen as an ethical-relational practice, which can support them in their efforts to be of benefit to themselves and their students, and help them prevent/protect themselves from being reactive in their speech and actions, and from causing harm.

Hanh (1998) describes the end of unnecessary suffering as, "...the cessation of creating suffering by refraining from doing the things that make us suffer" (p. 13). When one observes how suffering arises – how our cravings are influenced by our beliefs and

perceptions, and are affected by both proximal and distal conditions, one begins to understand that it is possible to eliminate suffering by letting go of what are referred to as unwholesome mental states, harmful states of mind, or the defilements, which arise as a result of one's craving (Bodhi, 2011a; Fronsdal, 2008). In developing greater awareness through mindfulness-based practices one can see how harmful states of mind are detrimental both to oneself and others. As is suggested by Hanh (1998), recognizing and attending to the defilements is an ethical approach, where one refrains from being overtaken by harmful states of mind, and as a result is better able to be socially responsible in one's speech, actions, and day-to-day choices. Such efforts are balanced by also cultivating more positive, healthy mental states, such as sympathetic joy and equanimity (e.g., see the Four Immeasurables, Chapter 4).

The Defilements: Identifying and Understanding Harmful States of Mind

The defilements are habitual, harmful states of mind that reflect mistaken or misguided thoughts, assumptions, feelings, and beliefs that cause one to suffer (Armstrong, 2014; Nyanaponika, 2000). The defilements are said to reflect either ignorance (not knowing) or delusion (knowing wrongly) (Nyanaponika, 2000). In Buddhism, there are three main defilements: (1) greed (e.g., clinging to objects, people, places, and ideas), (2) delusion (e.g., wanting to just be happy), and (3) aversion (e.g., anger, irritation, hatred, and rejection). It is the experience of craving, wanting, or expecting things to either stay the same or to be different, that underlies and reinforces one's defilements (Gunaratana, 2001). As Gunaratana (2001) notes, "...to whatever degree we desire, to that degree we suffer" (p. 49).

Tejaniya (2014) suggests, the defilements range from subtle fleeting thoughts such as, "that person is irritating" to gross manifestations, such as acts of violence. No matter where one's thoughts and behaviours lie on this continuum, one's thinking can be insidious and harmful. Sometimes a judgement that seems benevolent, such as, "That person is so smart" can also be unskillful and harmful if one becomes attached to it or uses it as a point of reference to compare oneself or others against. Whether one judges oneself or others

as better, or less than, the potential for harm is present. Take for example the above comment about another person being “smart,” and imagine that the person who made the comment then makes a comparison and belittles themselves (e.g., “They are so smart, I am so dumb”). Making such a comparison can lead one to feel separate from and perhaps even resentful towards the other person. This may seem like a minor occurrence, but when one collects a thousand of such comparisons what is potentially built is the habit of self-criticism and/or self-loathing.

Armstrong (2014) describes how one can become so entangled in the defilements that one is not able to let go of harmful states of mind, and is unable to experience contentment and happiness as a result. The defilements can be held as if they are an inherent or a fixed part of oneself and this can be an impediment to one moving forward in one’s life. For example, when one is overtaken by anxiety, one may claim anxiety as, “my anxiety” (Armstrong, 2014). Harmful states of mind can also be a hindrance to meditation practice (e.g., “I am too anxious to practice meditation.”).

In Buddhism, as one observes from moment to moment (either in formal meditation practice or in daily life), and is able to hold awareness more continually, one begins to realize the nature of the defilements and how this can lead to misperceptions. As Tejaniya (2015) suggests, “Real understanding rejects what you once perceived as good or bad and just sees it as it is” (p. 159). As a result of such efforts, one no longer has to carry a collection of ideas about oneself and others that accumulate into better or less than. When the defilements are not recognized, understood, and challenged, they can continue to be reinforced, strengthened, and persist.

Looking more closely at the three main harmful states of mind, the defilement of greed or wanting is seen as a self-centered form of yearning that can manifest in one’s longing for (1) psychological and material pleasure, (2) survival, and (3) the desire to boost one’s ego through the acquisition of power and status (Bodhi, 2011a). Greed can range from an extreme passion to a more subtle, but harmful attachment, and can show up as a sense of entitlement, overindulgence, or clinging to a person, place, thing, or idea. No

matter what one has, greed is the experience of it never being enough (Loy, 2013). No matter what one is longing for, one can assess if one's intentions are entangled in greed, wanting, or if one has formed an attachment that is harmful to oneself and others. This is not to suggest that one's longing or wanting is always unskillful, but in Buddhism one is learning to recognize whether such yearning is of benefit or is harmful to oneself and/or others.

Delusion is described as being present in all harmful states of mind, where one holds particular ideas, impressions, or beliefs that are not in line with reality (Gunaratana, 2001). For example, one can expect certain things, such as a job, a house, or a partner, to be a stable source of happiness. When one clings to expectations of how life should be, and life unfolds in a way that does not align with these expectations (e.g., one's boss is difficult, the mortgage is a source of stress, or one's partner falls ill), one can experience significant psychological suffering as a result. This is not to say that it is not possible to experience long periods of stability and that one should not have such aspirations. If one can acknowledge and recognize internal and external conditions as unstable, and not be dependent upon them to feel satisfied, then one is less reactive when conditions do change. In part, periods of stability can feed the misconception of permanence. Being aware, compassionate, and accepting of the nature of one's mind and body, and the conditions in which one exist, supports one in dealing with life's inevitable changes and challenges. As one gains the ability to face the ever-changing nature of life, this alignment with reality becomes a source of happiness (Gunaratana, 2001).

The term *aversion* within Buddhism denotes the reaction of negation or dejection, which can be conveyed through anger, violence, fear, and depression, to name a few (Bodhi, 2011a; 2015). Aversion is a reflection of one's struggle to accept the nature of experience. One may want or expect things to be different than they are. When aversion arises in the mind it causes one to see only the unpleasant aspects of what is being witnessed (S. Armstrong, personal communication, Jan. 10, 2014). Conversely, when desire arises in the mind, it causes one to see only the pleasant aspects of what is being observed. Aversion can lead to volatile expressions, such as rage, anger, or hatred, or

manifest as oppressive and internalized states such as despondency, depression, victimization, frustration, and self-pity. Aversion can also result in one pushing away, which can be experienced as fear, irritation, impatience, disdain, and complaining. Together, greed, delusion, and aversion form the foundation for additional defilements (e.g., hopelessness, jealousy, conceit, apathy, etc.) to arise, and again, what sustains the existence of the defilements is not seeing or understanding correctly (S. Armstrong, personal communication, Jan. 10, 2014).

Tejaniya (2014) refers to the defilements as naturally occurring phenomena that arise in everyone. They are not always under one's immediate control and can be experienced repeatedly, as they are conditioned by habit (Armstrong, 2014). S. Armstrong (personal communication, Sept. 15, 2016) describes and differentiates between an unconscious reaction, where there is a lack of awareness, and a conscious response, where one is aware of what is arising in one's mind. A conscious, more skilful response can be cultivated through being mindful of one's reactions and developing a willingness to witness and not be overtaken by the defilements when they do occur. Mindfulness temporarily suppresses the defilements, and with the acquisition of further wisdom, such as that contained in Buddhism, one is supported to remove them (S. Armstrong, personal communication, Sept. 15, 2016).

Importantly, one's initial aim is not to get rid of the defilements, but to witness and understand them; their removal is a consequence of one's skilful efforts and developing awareness. While the core of the defilements, or what are sometimes referred to as the "attitudes of unwholesomeness", are greed, aversion, and delusion, Grossman (2015) notes, "...the root attitudes of wholesomeness are generosity, kindness, and wisdom" (p. 19). Gunaratana (2001) asserts mindfulness defuses the defilements, protecting one from life's ups and downs. As defilements arise and they are observed, one lets go of the expectation of having only positive experiences (Gunaratana, 2001). Through mindfulness meditation, one can learn to be with both pleasant and unpleasant experiences without partiality and no longer cling to things being a particular way, or push aside what is believed to be unwanted (Engler, 1998). With this understanding, one is able to be

equanimous or non-reactive in response to the arising of the defilements, thus supporting harmful states of mind to dissipate. This letting go of the defilements allows for healthier, more wholesome states of mind to be experienced, and further cultivated (Tejaniya, 2015).

The Benefit of Understanding that it is Possible to Address Suffering

The inclusion of Buddhist understandings of harmful states of mind in MBIs for K-12 teachers would help participants develop a greater appreciation of the subtleties of human psychological suffering, and the extent to which it can occur. An important aspect of this Buddhist teaching is that it is not about stopping emotion or mental states from arising, but about recognizing that they exist, are temporary, and are a normal part of life (S. Armstrong, personal communication, May 27, 2017). As teachers come to better understand and are able to attend to the defilements through mindfulness-based practices, the intensity and frequency of harmful states of mind are lessened, and can be replaced through the active cultivation of more wholesome mental states.

Exposure to the teachings held within the Third Noble Truth would also foster teachers' abilities to think critically about how they relate to themselves and others. Self-restraint is an important aspect of caring for oneself and others, however, in order to practice self-restraint, one must first understand one's reactions, and whether they are beneficial or harmful. In Buddhism, the practitioner of mindfulness meditation is encouraged to be aware of, and attend to, the defilements as a means to care for both personal wellbeing and the wellbeing of others.

In understanding the effect of the defilements and the possibility to be free from the unnecessary suffering they create, the Buddha then presented the Fourth Noble Truth where he outlined the skilful means to attend to such suffering: The Noble Eightfold Path.

3.4.4. Fourth Noble Truth: The Skilful Means to Addressing Suffering

The Fourth Noble Truth is that the Eightfold Path is a means to addressing suffering (Bodhi, 1999). Understanding mindfulness in the context of the Eightfold Path trainings would be of benefit to K-12 teachers' practice of mindfulness, inasmuch as these teachings safeguard against further denial of the extent to which people suffer, and help prevent the practice of mindfulness from being used for only self-serving purposes and promoting a view of the self as separate and isolated from others. These Buddhist teachings emphasize ethical guidance and social harmony, where one's moral conduct is recognized as a vital aspect of both personal and societal wellbeing, which are not currently emphasized in MBIs for K-12 teachers.

The Eightfold Path trainings are intended to provide guidance that supports one to transform one's understanding, attitudes, speech, and actions (Bodhi, 1999). These trainings are broken down into three categories: (1) *wisdom*, which includes skilful understanding and intention, (2) *ethics*, which includes skilful speech, actions, and livelihood, and (3) *mental development*, which includes skilful effort, mindfulness, and concentration. The use of "skilful" denotes, "...that which leads to the end of suffering" (S. Armstrong, personal communication, May 27, 2017).

Within Buddhism it is emphasized that each component of the Eightfold Path is integral to reaching freedom from unnecessary suffering (Bodhi, 2015). From dealing with both pleasant and unpleasant experience on a daily basis to enduring more painful life events, each of these eight factors are described as being inextricably linked and are intended to support the acceptance of the nature of human experience (Gunaratana, 2001). In undertaking these trainings, one is also able to deal with the inevitable suffering life brings. As Bodhi (2015) describes,

Optimally, all eight factors should be present simultaneously, each making its own distinctive contribution, like eight interwoven strands of a cable that give the cable

maximum strength. However, until that stage is reached, it is inevitable that the factors of the path exhibit some degree of sequence in their development. (p. 225)

With mindfulness being just one of these eight strands, K-12 teachers should be provided all of the eight in order to fully attain the benefits of mindfulness-based practices.

As previously noted, it is beyond the scope of the current thesis to cover all of the Eightfold Path trainings. While MBIs typically draw upon Buddhist trainings in mental development (i.e., mindfulness), the current chapter has focused on Buddhist wisdom (i.e., the Four Noble Truths), and in the following chapter, I present some of the Buddhist trainings in ethics (i.e., the Five Precepts and the Four Immeasurables) that are not yet available, but are argued herein to be of benefit to educators' study and practice of mindfulness.

Chapter 4.

The Eightfold Path Trainings in Ethics

With the growing interest in mindfulness-based practices and the potential benefit of additional Buddhist teachings, a number of MBIs have recently been developed that have integrated Buddhist ethics (e.g., Avants & Margolin, 2004; Shonin et al., 2014; Singh et al., 2014). In this chapter, I describe some of the debate surrounding the inclusion of Buddhist ethics in MBIs, and I argue for the explicit inclusion of ethics in MBIs for K-12 teachers, explaining how this would help cultivate their capacity to care for both themselves and others. As has been argued herein, returning mindfulness home to the Eightfold Path trainings within MBIs for educators would help K-12 teachers better appreciate the extent to which psychological suffering occurs and provide a more substantive, practical, and skilful means to addressing suffering than is currently provided in MBIs for teachers.

In contrast to how mindfulness is often presented in MBIs, the Eightfold Path trainings clarify that mindfulness is not only for individual benefit, but is an ethical-relational practice that supports one to recognize how perceptions, intentions, speech, and actions can potentially cause harm, or be of benefit, to both oneself and others. Rather than promote a view of the self that is separate and isolated from others – a view that is dominant in contemporary North American society – Buddhist teachings as a whole highlight humanity's interconnectedness, and the importance of caring for both oneself, and the greater good.

4.1. The Inclusion of Ethics in MBIs

In 2015, Monteiro, Musten, and Compson, expressed concern about MBIs restricting the use of mindfulness to addressing specific symptom relief, and thus limiting

the more substantive effects that are associated with the Buddhist understanding of mindfulness, and the additional Eightfold Path trainings. In particular, these authors questioned whether Buddhist ethics should be explicitly offered in MBIs. Following the publication of their article, a number of commentaries were written in response (e.g., Amaro, 2015; Compson, & Monteiro, 2016; Davis, 2015; Purser, 2015; Shonin, Van Gordon, & Griffiths, 2015). As part of this discussion, Mikulas (2015) made recommendations for how Buddhist ethics can be integrated into MBIs, while others voiced concern about the explicit presentation of Buddhist ethics, given that historically it has been recognized as a religious framework (e.g., Baer, 2015; Lindahl, 2015).

In reflecting upon potential concerns, Amaro (2015) discusses the possibility of explicitly offering the Five Precepts, which are five basic principles in Buddhist teachings that are offered in order to support individual and societal wellbeing. The author suggests, "If the approach toward ethics is more pragmatic than dogmatic, it shifts the perspective from telling people what they should do to that of helping us to do ourselves and others a favor" (Amaro, 2015, p. 68). Therefore, it is up to MBI developers and teachers to present the Five Precepts in a way that support MBI participants to understand and to see the practical value of these ethics as a way to live more skilfully. Alternatively, Davis (2015) proposed that rather than present Buddhist ethics to those who are not Buddhist; MBI participants could be supported to clarify their own values. Reflective of this latter approach, Greenberg and Mitra (2015) discuss how the CARE for Teachers program addresses ethics by supporting teachers to establish their own intentions and values, and for this to guide their behaviours with others. While this suggests a more flexible approach to the inclusion of ethics in MBIs, Greenberg and Mitra (2015) also acknowledge the importance of Buddhist ethics relative to the practice of mindfulness, and the benefit of providing MBI participants with an explicit ethical framework. Specifically, the authors note the way in which Buddhist ethics underscore how the practice of mindfulness is not limited to individual wellbeing, and that the examination of how one may be harming or non-harming is of benefit to others as well.

Kabat-Zinn (2015) describes how historically, in order to avoid coming across as sermonizing, training in ethics has not been explicitly offered in the MBSR program. The author suggests that those who teach MBSR should embody such ethical qualities as trustworthiness, kindness, and generosity, and that explicit discussions about ethics should occur only when they arise naturally when participants share their experiences of practicing meditation. Given the relative lack of familiarity with Buddhist ideas (and Eastern philosophies in general) in North America in the 1970s, Kabat-Zinn's initial cautiousness about the explicit inclusion of Buddhist ethics in MBSR is understandable. However, since the development of MBSR, there has been greater interest in Buddhist teachings, as well as concerns about how they have been taken up (e.g., reductionist view of mindfulness) as a result of its popularization. Therefore, now more than ever, it seems both possible and important to include ethics as part of MBIs. Ethics within MBIs could be presented as consistent with the Buddhist framework, where one's suffering and mistakes are both expected and normalized, and one is welcome to return to the teachings again and again. This humble approach could support both the MBI instructor and the MBI participants to more fully understand that which causes harm and that which is of benefit. While MBSR instructors' embodiment of ethics is an important part of exemplifying and imparting ethics, it seems insufficient to rely upon conversations having to naturally arise and that participants are not provided explicit support in some way. Importantly, ethics can also be presented so as not to be sermonized or dogmatic, but supportive and forgiving, as is suggested in Buddhist teachings (see Amaro, 2015).

4.2. The Need for an Explicit Ethical Framework

Buddhist ethics, such as the Five Precepts and the Four Immeasurables, would provide K-12 teachers with guidance in conscientious principles of restraint and ethical conduct (Bodhi, 2015; Fronsdal, 2008). This would be particularly important for individuals who have not previously been provided an explicit moral framework that they can draw upon to support their wellbeing. As noted by Schumaker (2001),

The modern person is largely free from tradition, community, and shared macrounderstandings of the world. This freedom impacts upon our moral relationships, and in turn upon some important determinants of psychological well-being. As modernity continues to liberate the self from time-honored sources of definition, individual members find themselves unable to discern moral reference points beyond themselves. (p. 19)

Given that morality is an important aspect of human welfare, ethics should be recognized as an important aspect of MBIs. Again, when mindfulness is practiced in the context of the Eightfold Path trainings, including ethics, these teachings protect the practice of mindfulness from being misused and limited to self-serving purposes. Moreover, the inclusion of ethics would provide K-12 teachers the opportunity to reflect upon whether one is harmful or of benefit to oneself and/or others, and they could be provided further guidance on the development of qualities that foster both individual and societal wellbeing (e.g., the Four Immeasurables: loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity).

Importantly, the Five Precepts and the Four Immeasurables are just a small part of the extensive Buddhist teachings on ethics. There are also several social and emotional qualities that are taught in Buddhism (e.g., generosity, patience, trustworthiness, to name a few), but it is beyond the scope of the current thesis to outline them all in detail. The Buddhist teachings on the Five Precepts and the Four Immeasurables are presented herein, as they can be seen as providing a foundation or starting place to guide one in examining what is harmful and what is beneficial to oneself and others.

4.3. Ethics: The Five Precepts

In Buddhism, one's ethical conduct is seen as integral to one's practice of mindfulness, as not causing harm to oneself and others reduces the risk of suffering (S. Armstrong, personal communication, Sept. 15, 2016), and thus protects both individual

and societal wellbeing. As concerns Buddhist ethics, instruction is not provided merely to teach one to “be good.” Rather, one is guided in understanding what erodes healthy qualities such as compassion and joy (Wallace, 2010). The Buddha identified Five Precepts or principles that are said to be secular and the basis of all good human societies (S. Armstrong, personal communication, Sept. 15, 2016). These Five Precepts include: abstention from (1) taking life, (2) stealing, (3) sexual misconduct, (4) false speech, and (5) the use of intoxicants (Bodhi, 2015). According to Wallace (2010), when one’s moral discipline is consistent, one’s mind is described as being purified of harmful mental states, and is imbued with a sense of ethical virtue – of being of benefit – which can result in feelings of joy.

Buddhist precepts are likely the most controversial component of the Eightfold Path trainings, as issues pertaining to ethics have long been debated in North American education, and are typically seen as being reserved for private or religious exploration (Wallace, 2010). Traditionally, Buddhist ethics are a set of guiding values and attitudes that inform a way of being in the world (Grossman, 2015). They are recognized as being essential to the development of skilful mindfulness, the ability to attune to one’s thoughts, speech, actions, how one’s roles are fulfilled (e.g., as a teacher), and whether one is skilful and of benefit, or unskilful and harmful. With mindfulness practices being guided by ethics, one is called upon to understand one’s connection to and effect on others (Grossman, 2015). When mindful, one is engaging in a practice that is both ethical and relational, where one is able to discern whether one is creating greater or lesser suffering for oneself and others.

In undertaking the abstentions, one commits to the sympathetic care and consideration of the safety and wellbeing of others (Bodhi, 2011a). Not unlike many of the Buddha’s teachings, one is asked to aspire towards an ideal, in this case the ideal of non-harming. One is encouraged to reflect upon the effect of one’s actions and how one can be of benefit to others. For example, one may wish to abstain from taking life, but may still choose to eat meat. While choosing to take the life of an animal, one can still be guided by the abstentions, and commit to being more thoughtful about the amount of meat one

eats and to giving greater consideration to how such animals are treated and killed. This is also true of those who choose to consume intoxicants – what can be encouraged is the consideration of whether the consumption of such products is harmful or of benefit to oneself and others.

Ultimately, the Five Precepts encourage one to refrain from that which causes harm (S. Armstrong, personal communication, Sept. 15, 2016). Armstrong describes how Buddhism acknowledges that it can be challenging to be consistent in one's ethical conduct. While one aims to not cause harm, one is aware that mistakes are going to be made (Amaro, 2015). Despite one's errors, one is encouraged to return to the practice of abstention, again and again, and to try and abstain from causing harm to oneself and others. These teachings support one to have humility, to accept one's fallibility, and to persevere in efforts to be non-harming. Fronsdal (2008) notes how Buddhist ethics can be seen as principles of restraint, and suggests, "Rather than focusing on whether the actions are immoral, we use these restraints as mirrors to study ourselves, to understand our reactions and motivations, and to reflect on the consequences of our actions" (p. 38).

4.3.1. The Benefit of Understanding and Adopting the Five Precepts

In Buddhism, it is said that the stronger one's capacity to be mindful, the more likely one is to embody such ethical qualities as kindness and compassion, and to be aware of those actions that lead to wellbeing (Amaro, 2015). However, Amaro (2015) suggests that one of the reasons Buddhist ethics should be explicitly taught is that it helps one consciously develop what he refers to as a "moral sensitivity" (p. 69). Thus, the precepts help inform one's practice of mindfulness and subsequent reflections, such as when one feels the pain of having caused harm. With the guidance provided in the study of the precepts, one is better able to understand the effects of one's actions, how to then respond and, in turn, how to be of benefit to oneself and others.

I propose that, in providing training in mindfulness, it is both possible and desirable to offer K-12 teachers an ethical framework informed by Buddhist teachings, such as the Eightfold Path trainings, as well as to support them to explore their own beliefs. Specifically, K-12 teachers can be presented the Five Precepts and encouraged to reflect upon and possibly (1) affirm their own moral framework, (2) adopt some or all of the precepts into their own existing moral framework, or (3) adopt the precepts as a moral framework when they have not previously been provided one. Again, whether K-12 teachers are able to identify an existing framework or draw upon the Five Precepts, providing them with the opportunity to study these precepts emphasizes the importance of being non-harming, and that this is central to the practice of mindfulness. Furthermore, these teachings can refine educators' ability to discern between harmful and beneficial states of mind, which would help them in forming skilful intentions, speech, and actions.

In addition to abstaining from that which causes harm, K-12 teachers' practice of mindfulness can be balanced and enhanced by the development of the positive social and emotional qualities addressed in the Buddhist teachings of the Four Immeasurables (e.g., loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity). In Buddhism, people are encouraged to actively cultivate these positive social emotions, in order to support both personal wellbeing and one's engagement in ethical-relational processes.

4.4. Ethics: The Four Immeasurables

The Four Immeasurables are the social and emotional qualities of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity (Wallace, 2010). The Immeasurables are described as antidotes, where loving-kindness overcomes ill will, compassion overcomes harmfulness, sympathetic joy overcomes discontent, and equanimity overcomes partiality (Bodhi, 2015). This collection of positive social emotions is referred to as "immeasurable" because it is asserted if they are practiced, there is no limit to their benefit (Hanh, 1998). The development of these qualities is said to help one to (1) respond to life's challenges with greater warmth and caring, (2) be non-reactive to the arising of the defilements, (3)

feel happier within oneself and, (4) have positive intentions, speech, and actions, and thus relate positively to others (Wallace, 2010).

The development of the Immeasurables can be supported by the tranquility meditation practice referred to as “loving-kindness meditation” (Salzberg, 1995). The aim of loving-kindness meditation is to augment the growth of all four of the Immeasurables. Loving-kindness meditation has largely been brought to, and popularized in, North America by meditation teacher Sharon Salzberg. In Salzberg’s (1995) offering of loving-kindness meditation, one is encouraged to repeat such phrases as, “May I be free from danger. May I have mental happiness. May I have physical happiness. May I have ease of wellbeing.” These phrases are repeated three times per stage, and there are five stages. The stages include repeating the phrases and extending them to (1) oneself, (2) a friend or mentor, (3) a neutral person or one with whom there is difficulty, (4) to a group (e.g., all children), and finally (5) to all sentient beings. These aspirations represent an ideal, and importantly, the practitioner does not cling to these ideals, but aims to connect to the wholesome desire to be well and to cultivate positive social emotional states. In addition, it is not assumed that one’s contemplation of the Immeasurables is directly received by those one has directed them towards, but indirectly by supporting one’s development of skilful intentions, speech, and actions (Gunaratana, 2001). In other words, it is what results from one’s practice of loving-kindness meditation that matters, and that it supports one to develop the qualities of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.

While the Four Immeasurables are said to be supported by the practice of loving-kindness meditation, which is currently available in MBIs, it is unclear whether MBI participants are provided explicit information or instruction on each of these qualities. Although current MBIs already promote teachings on kindness and compassion, what is less well known in education are Buddhist teachings on sympathetic joy and equanimity.

4.4.1. Sympathetic joy

The Immeasurable sympathetic joy is described as the capacity to rejoice in the happiness of others (Salzberg, 1995; Wallace, 2010). As Hanh (1998) notes, a deeper understanding of this Immeasurable reveals an acknowledgment of the joys both within oneself and others. In cultivating sympathetic joy, one does not take on the joy experienced by the other, but one is gladdened by another's joy. According to Salzberg (1995), sympathetic joy prevents one from succumbing to the weight of the suffering of others, and developing what is sometimes referred to as "compassion fatigue." Compassion is about the wholesome desire for there to be freedom from suffering, but if this is all that one attends to, and one slips into feeling sorry for oneself and/or others, one can lose sight of the fact that humanity is more than its suffering (Macy, 2007). Therefore, the fostering of sympathetic joy can invigorate and bring vitality to one's compassion (Salzberg, 1995). Rather than being taken down by the suffering seen, one feels inspired to take action and is energized to be of service to others. In connecting to joy within oneself and others, one also brings greater equanimity to one's view, so as not to see oneself as better than others or that the other is to be pitied in some way (Pittinsky, 2012).

4.4.2. Equanimity

The fourth and final Immeasurable is equanimity, which is sometimes described as even-mindedness, balance, letting go, non-attachment, and non-discrimination (Aronson, 2008; Hanh, 1998; Salzberg, 1995). It is the capacity to see something without being taken by what one sees – to hold a balanced view (Fronsdal, 2008). When equanimous, one is neither clinging nor averse towards the object of one's attention. One does not get overtaken by pleasure or pain, and is able to be with the natural ebb and flow of both pleasant and unpleasant experiences. Hanh (1998) articulates that equanimity is marked by impartiality and equality, and is reflected in the ability to see and understand both sides of a conflict, where one does not see oneself as better or less than others, but equal. This requires one to look deeply and see more than the words or behaviours one

is witnessing in oneself and/or others, and to see the suffering, the joys, and the universal wish for peace and happiness (Hanh, 1998). In practicing equanimity, Salzberg (1995) explains,

Rather than trying to control what can never be controlled, we can find a sense of security in being able to meet what is actually happening... cultivating a balance of mind that can receive what is happening, whatever it is. This acceptance is the source of our safety and confidence. (p. 142)

4.4.3. The Benefit of Understanding and Actively Cultivating the Four Immeasurables

It is together that the Immeasurables of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity can enhance the quality of K-12 teachers' awareness, and their subsequent thinking, intentions, speech, and actions. While supporting the development of kindness and compassion is increasingly popular in North American education (e.g., Eldor & Shoshani, 2016; Kaplan, 2016; Lavelle Heineberg, 2016), the social and emotional qualities of sympathetic joy and equanimity are much less well known.

In looking specifically at sympathetic joy, it has only been in the past decade that this term has formally been studied in the context of contemporary psychology (e.g., Pittinsky, 2012; Royzman & Rozin, 2006). While teachers and students may be taught such terms as sympathy, Royzman and Rozin (2006) assert, "...in spite of an occasional and curtly polite acknowledgment that sympathy is a concept capable of dual affective tone, its dominant meaning remains that of a negative emotional state anchored in and tending toward the alleviation of another's misfortune" (p. 82). Pittinsky (2012) also describes how educational programs for students tend to place prominence on recognizing the sorrows of others. The author further contends that while both teachers and students need to develop understanding and sensitivity to the challenges of others, this must also be balanced with sympathetic joy, so that others are not merely pitied or seen in a negative light, but are experienced positively as well.

Pittinsky (2012) argues that schools could provide instruction on both sympathetic joy and sorrow, and suggests that it would result in a decrease in prejudice and an increase in such things as friendliness, connection, engagement, and interest towards others. However, in order for students to make such a shift in their understanding, the adults in their lives must first have awareness of, see the value of, and embody a balance between sympathetic joy and sorrow. To begin, one of the ways sympathetic joy (and other Buddhist teachings) could be brought to education is through MBIs for K-12 teachers, parents, and administrators.

Buddhism clearly points to the need for joy to be explicitly attended to and cultivated, and that it can be fostered both through learning about these teachings and engaging in meditation practices that support its development. As Hanh (2014) describes, just as suffering is impermanent, so too is happiness, and therefore it takes effort to both abstain from that which causes harm, and to actively cultivate the positive social and emotional qualities that support one to be well. In examining the pleasant experiences of others, teachers would be better able to recognize and appreciate healthy moments of joy, which can support them to feel more connected to both themselves and others.

The Buddha's teaching on equanimity is also important for K-12 teachers, as it would support educators to care for and not be overtaken by harmful states of mind that arise in response to both the joys and sorrows of their lives. When one is not overtaken by, and immersed in the defilements, one is better able to think critically and see more clearly the complexity of causes and conditions that have led to particular concerns, which in turn, support one to respond to issues with greater impartiality and even-mindedness. For example, I recall hearing a story of a mother whose child had died accidentally after having been pushed by another student while at school. Rather than place blame or seek retribution for her child's death, this mother returned to the school to support both the student who had caused her child's death, and the other students at the school, so that the so-called "perpetrator" would not be harmed by others. It would be easy for us to understand how the mother could be holding onto anger towards the child who caused her child's death. However, overtime, ruminating on the defilement of anger would be

detrimental to the grieving mother, and potentially to others as well. In being equanimous, this mother did not have to deny her own suffering, but she was able to look deeply at the complexity of the circumstances surrounding her child's death, and she was able to also see, and care for, the suffering of others.

Stories reflecting this quality of equanimity or even-mindedness are scarce in North American schools and popular culture. From classic children's tales to political justifications of war, the hero and the villain are often clearly distinguished. While in some instances this might serve the purpose of providing clear moral lessons, it can also lead to the oversimplification of complex situations and the ignoring of conditions that lead to suffering and subsequent transgressions. In Buddhism, when one witnesses or experiences the harm caused by another, one is encouraged to thoroughly understand what has happened and to be equanimous in one's view. In being equanimous, there is equality in one's response, where one aims to be non-harming and of benefit both to oneself and others. Therefore, the teaching of equanimity would further support educators to develop within themselves, and to be exemplars to others of, impartiality, self-restraint, and even-mindedness, which would be of benefit to how they perceive their own experience, and the experience of others.

In offering K-12 teachers' explicit training in ethics, a balance can be struck between learning about the Five Precepts (recognizing what causes harm) with the development of the positive social and emotional qualities of the Four Immeasurables (recognizing what is of benefit). These teachings can both help facilitate and safeguard teachers' development of skilful mindfulness, and importantly, all of the Eightfold Path factors that support the addressment of human suffering, not just within oneself, but on a social, political, and environmental level.

Chapter 5.

Conclusion

Together, the Buddha's teachings of the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path normalize the extent of human suffering and provide a skilful means to care for such suffering. Although mindfulness is inextricably linked to these broader teachings, these teachings are not yet fully reflected in MBIs for K-12 teachers. By discussing mindfulness in the context of the Four Noble Truths and some of the additional Eightfold Path trainings, the aim herein has been to add greater depth and meaning to mindfulness that can potentially inform the ongoing development of MBIs for K-12 teachers. I have argued herein that what is lost when mindfulness is divorced from these teachings is the explicit recognition of some of the more subtle ways in which human suffering can occur, and an acknowledgment of the importance of ethics for individual and societal wellbeing.

Offering the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings as part of MBIs for K-12 teachers is consistent with the relational approach to Social and Emotional Education (SEE). Specifically, MBIs intended for educators that incorporate the Eightfold Path trainings would provide an ethical-relational understanding of mindfulness, emphasizing and supporting the interpersonal skills of educators and providing a more substantive means for K-12 teachers to care for the wellbeing of themselves, their students, and society at large.

5.1. Recommendations

In terms of the sustainability of mindfulness-based practices for those K-12 teachers who have attended a 1-day workshop or 8-week MBI, it would be useful to consider the Buddhist teaching of the "three jewels." The three jewels are that one should have ongoing access to (1) opportunities to meet with wise teachers, (2) Buddhist

teachings, and (3) community support (see Thanissaro, 1996). These conditions are seen as jewels, as they are recognized as being invaluable (Thanissaro, 1996). Each of these conditions is also traditionally referred to as a refuge, as each offers protection, and is said to support one's skilful efforts. Having access to meditation teachers, Buddhist wisdom, and a supportive community may not yet be fully realized in the context of North American MBIs, but as interest in mindfulness and the skilful desire to sustain such practices grows, it is important that we continue to examine how to make each of these conditions available to K-12 teachers who wish to undertake and continue on with mindfulness-based practices.

5.1.1. Ongoing Access to Wise Associates

In the development and implementation of MBIs for K-12 teachers, it is essential to consider how those who want to continue with mindfulness-based practices are going to have access to wise meditation teachers over time. As has been described herein, an important part of undertaking meditation is the ability to consult with someone about how one is doing and whether there is the need for more information or skilful understanding, and/or the need for one to adjust one's mindfulness-based practice in some way.

To assist the provision of wise associations, bridges must continue to be built between traditional and secularized practitioners, from Buddhist monks, nuns, meditation teachers, and Buddhist scholars, to such professionals as doctors, psychologists, and educators who are attempting to develop and implement MBIs. Those in mainstream settings have firsthand experience and knowledge of the context and needs within their respective communities, but this must be balanced with the expertise and wisdom held by the Buddhist monks, nuns, meditation teachers, and scholars who skilfully understand and exemplify Buddhist trainings, and can support the practical application of these trainings.

In imagining how K-12 teachers could gain access to wise associates, perhaps opportunities could be developed that are similar to how North American Insight meditation

societies make traditional Buddhist teachings available to the general public. For example, within my own community there is an Insight Meditation Society that attempts to follow the Buddhist tradition as closely as possible, and offer Buddhist teachings freely. This non-profit organization provides opportunities for those who are interested in the traditional teachings of the Buddha, to attend both residential and non-residential retreats, various training sessions based on Buddhist teachings, social events, as well as a number of community-based sitting meditation groups. Sitting groups typically occur weekly, where one is able to participate in a formal sitting meditation with fellow practitioners, which typically includes hearing and possibly discussing Buddhist teachings. Many of these opportunities are offered throughout the year, and are organized by volunteers and facilitated by senior meditation teachers and students. In honouring that Buddhist teachings are traditionally offered freely, many of these events are either free or offered by donation. While some events require a small fee to cover expenses, there are also scholarships available to ensure that lack of financial resources is not a barrier to one's attendance. Perhaps a similar non-profit organization could be established that could act as a hub for MBIs, where there are opportunities for further training with meditation teachers, access to additional resources, and ongoing community support, in secular form.

As efforts continue to make Buddhist teachings available in secular form, we must also continue to examine how it is possible for K-12 teachers to have ongoing access to meditation teachers, where such wise associates are exemplars of Buddhist wisdom in secular form – who aim to safeguard the benefit of the traditional teachings and practices.

5.1.2. Ongoing Access to Buddhist Teachings

In order to maintain the integrity and benefit of the Buddhist understanding of mindfulness, efforts must also continue to be made in terms of how K-12 teachers can gain access to Buddhist teachings, both within and beyond their participation in a MBI. While in the current thesis, I wanted to provide an ease of transition from my writing to more traditional presentations of Buddhist teachings – as these teachings are better

understood and efforts are made to further integrate them into MBIs – some of the traditional terminology offered in English translations will need to be further distilled in order to make these teachings even more accessible in terms of language and readability.

Given the lack of available resources for those wishing to undertake the practice of mindfulness, within my own community, I offer an introductory meditation class where I present the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings. Rather than these teachings being added on to an existing MBI, I offer them as a foundation of understanding to the practice of mindfulness. Therefore, I believe it is possible to integrate the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings either into existing MBIs or MBIs that have yet to be developed. It is also possible that these teachings could be offered in additional training sessions, and/or to be used as supplementary reading materials. I think it is also important that the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings be made available in secular form for the general public, in order to support those who have attended a brief MBI where such teachings are not available, but the participant is interested in further understanding Buddhist wisdom in non-spiritual form. Just as there are many traditional presentations of Buddhism that are freely available to the public (e.g., online publications, podcasts, and books that are freely distributed), secular materials should also be developed and made available to accommodate those who wish to access Buddhist teachings in this form.

As such efforts are made, and as part of having ongoing support, K-12 teachers should also be provided the opportunity to study and practice with others.

5.1.3. Ongoing Access to Community Support

As part of K-12 teachers' ongoing support, they should also have opportunities to learn and practice mindfulness meditation with others within their community. While some MBI participants will be open to reaching out for ongoing support in a more traditional Buddhist community, there will also be those who wish to continue to access support in a similar vein to which they began. Therefore, as efforts to make mindfulness and other

Buddhist understandings more available in MBIs continue, more opportunities to engage in such trainings need to be developed and made available to MBI participants within their respective communities. Furthermore, given the demands K-12 teachers already face in terms of their time, we must make ongoing training and support as convenient as possible, so that it does not feel onerous for teachers. For example, opportunities could be made available within schools where a regular sitting group could be championed by an educator who has a well-established meditation practice. Sittings could be offered prior to the school day, at lunch, or at days end.

Within my own community, there are a few opportunities for further community support that are currently being offered through a local church, community centres, yoga studios, and mental health facilities. Some of these opportunities are secular and others are more traditional, and even still, it can be challenging for people to find the community support that they need in a substantive, sustainable, and meaningful way. With the growing popularity of contemplative practices (e.g., yoga and mindfulness meditation), perhaps we could even envision a local contemplative community centre where both secular and traditional practices could be offered, which could be open to all those who are interested, from all walks of life, as the Buddha had intended. What must be considered within such opportunities is whether they contain all three jewels, and that one has access to wise associates, Buddhist wisdom, and the opportunity to share these teachings and practices with others.

Over the years, I have come to appreciate both the need for, and challenges to people having ongoing access to wise associates, Buddhist teachings, and community support. When I first began offering my meditation classes, I quickly saw how challenging it was for parents, teachers, and caregivers to attend all of the sessions, let alone sustain their study and practice of mindfulness meditation at home. As I offered this course three times per year, I would often have participants return, as they felt it was very difficult to sustain their practice without support. Many of these participants were trying to balance working and caring for their families, leaving them little time to care for themselves. It was often the stress related to participants' responsibilities that would inspire them to come to

my classes in the first place. I knew from my own experience as a working parent just how challenging this could be, and despite having great interest, how difficult it is to sustain mindfulness-based practices over time. In an effort to further provide ongoing community support beyond my eight-week program, and to make Buddhist teachings accessible, I also began offering a weekly sitting group. While this is of benefit to some, it has still been very challenging for participants, as many cannot attend the one time I am able to commit to facilitate. I have often wondered what participants experience would be like if Buddhist teachings and opportunities to practice within the community were more readily available to them. For example, imagine if there were several sitting groups available each day, how much easier it would be to accommodate one's busy schedule. Having access to a number of opportunities for ongoing support, both within and outside of the schools in which they teach, will increase the likelihood educators are able to sustain their practice over time.

In my own experience, personally and professionally, in order to achieve, and sustain, maximal benefit from mindfulness-based practices, K-12 teachers should have access to the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings. It is together that they reveal the ethical and relational nature of mindfulness, and offer a comprehensive, skilful means for addressing human suffering and nurturing human flourishing. In order to uphold what these teachers' gain in MBIs, and to continue to support these teachers in deepening their understanding and practice of mindfulness, I have come to appreciate the necessity of ongoing support, as one of the conditions that would further augment the social, emotional, and moral wellbeing of K-12 teachers. In supporting K-12 teachers' efforts to care for themselves, this would in turn enrich their efforts to (1) create safe and caring learning environments, (2) nurture teacher-student relationships, and (3) support the welfare of students in their care.

Epilogue

As my time on this thesis draws to a close, I feel much gratitude for this opportunity to both examine and discuss Buddhist teachings. While in the past decade, I feel I have only skimmed the surface of Buddhism, what has remained constant throughout is my belief in the benefit of the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path trainings for those seeking understanding and ways to care for human suffering. The more I have learned, the more I have come to appreciate the importance of acknowledging, and caring for, the extent of human suffering, and the need for explicit guidance in living skilfully. Having spent the past few decades in the field of mental health, it seems there are so few places in North America where we are encouraged to recognize, let alone express, our vulnerability. In Buddhism, right out the gate, the Four Noble Truths validate the fragility of humanity's wellbeing, by acknowledging that *all people suffer*. In my own experience of sharing these teachings with others, this naming of suffering creates a sense of safety for one to admit, both to oneself, and possibly to others, the truth of suffering. In time, my hope is that more people have access to the understanding of suffering exemplified in Buddhist teachings, and have the opportunity if need be, to be supported in caring for all the stress, pain, and sorrow life can bring. Within my own work, I aim to help individuals to see their suffering as normal, rather than abnormal, and to consider the Eightfold Path trainings as a way to support them in addressing their suffering.

With the research examining mindfulness and additional Buddhist teachings growing literally exponentially, it has been impossible for me to keep up with all of the issues and concerns that still need to be addressed within this field of study. In addition, there are many Buddhist teachings that I was not able to discuss, but have the potential to be of significant benefit to the development of MBIs and the practice of mindfulness, such as the Seven Factors of Awakening, the Five Faculties of Awareness, and the Ten Perfections, to name a few. Therefore, I can envision the long, but rewarding, road ahead in making Buddhist teachings accessible, and providing the evidence that is necessary for

these to be recognized as a whole – a skilful means for caring for both our individual and collective wellbeing.

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