

UNIT 4. Welcome and introductions

In this unit, you will explore how culture shapes the way people understand, practise, and talk about mindfulness and self-care.

Culture influences what feels safe, meaningful and respectful. For migrants and refugees, cultural background can strongly affect how self-care strategies are received and used.

Through recognising and respecting these differences, you can make mindfulness and self-care practices more inclusive and relevant.



UNIT 4. Interoception (body awareness) and cultural variations

Interoception (often referred as 8th sense) is the ability to sense and interpret internal bodily signals, such as heartbeat, breathing or hunger. For some people, tuning into the body is natural, for others, it may be unfamiliar or even uncomfortable due to cultural norms. Understanding these differences can help you to adapt practices so they feel comfortable and natural.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Some people may feel uneasy focusing on internal sensations, especially if they have experienced trauma or cultural norms discourage attention to the body.
- You can use external focus (sounds, sights, touch) to make mindfulness more accessible.
- Explain that noticing body sensations is optional and that there are many ways to practise mindfulness.

THINGS TO AVOID

- Avoid assuming everyone is comfortable with body-focused exercises.
- Do not insist that participants must notice their heartbeat, breath or other sensations - this can cause distress.

UNIT 4. The role of religion, spirituality, and cultural traditions in self-care

Faith, spirituality and traditional practices can be powerful sources of comfort, strength and healing. They often provide familiar structures for mindfulness, reflection and self-care. Recognising and respecting these traditions helps people connect with practices in a meaningful way.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Prayer, meditation or rituals may already serve as forms of mindfulness for many participants.
- Linking new techniques to familiar traditions can increase acceptance and comfort.
- Be curious and open to learning about participants' cultural and spiritual backgrounds.

THINGS TO AVOID

- Avoid replacing or dismissing existing spiritual or cultural practices with “your” mindfulness techniques.
- Avoid making assumptions about someone's beliefs based on their nationality or appearance.

UNIT 4. Language accessibility

Language plays a big role in making mindfulness and self-care inclusive. If people cannot understand the instructions or the terms you use, they may feel excluded or anxious.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Use clear, simple language and avoid technical or abstract terms.
- Provide translations or visuals if possible.
- Remember that some mindfulness-related words may not exist in every language; find culturally equivalent expressions.

THINGS TO AVOID

- Avoid speaking quickly or using idioms that may not translate well.
- Avoid relying only on verbal instructions - pair them with gestures or demonstrations.

UNIT 4. Different learning styles

People learn and connect in different ways. Some prefer listening, others learn better through movement, touch or visual aids. Recognising these preferences helps make mindfulness and self-care more inclusive.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Offer a variety of practices such as stillness, movement, visualisation, storytelling or creative activities.
- Allow people to choose the approach that works best for them.
- Remember that cultural upbringing can influence learning style preferences.

THINGS TO AVOID

- Avoid judging one learning style as “better” or “more correct” than others.
- Avoid forcing participants to stick to one format (e.g., only seated meditation).

UNIT 4. No one-size-fits-all approach

Mindfulness and self-care are personal. What works for one person may not work for another. Cultural background, personal history and individual comfort levels all matter.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Encourage participants to adapt practices so they feel relevant and safe.
- Emphasise that there are many ways to be mindful - movement, nature walks, art, music, breathing and many more.
- Acknowledge and validate differences in preferences.

THINGS TO AVOID

- Avoid presenting your way as “the only” or “best” way.
- Avoid making participants feel like they are doing something wrong if they adapt a technique to fit their needs and preferences.

UNIT 4. Why it matters?

Mindfulness and self-care are not universal “one-size-fits-all” concepts. How people experience and understand them is shaped by culture, language, religion, upbringing and personal history. A breathing exercise that feels calming to one person may feel uncomfortable or even unsafe to another. For migrants and refugees, these differences are even more important to recognise - because of their wide range of experiences, traditions and expectations from their home countries and journeys.

Being aware of cultural perspectives allows you to:

- Create a safe and respectful space where participants feel understood
- Avoid unintentional harm by introducing techniques in a way that fits cultural comfort levels
- Make mindfulness and self-care more meaningful by connecting them to familiar practices and values

Through adapting your approach to cultural differences, you are not only teaching techniques - you are helping people feel respected, included and empowered to care for themselves in their own way.



UNIT 4. EXERCISE: Mapping your cultural compass

This short reflection exercise is designed to help you understand how your culture and background influence the way you teach or practise mindfulness and self-care, so you can approach facilitation with greater awareness and flexibility.

Take 10 minutes to reflect and write down your thoughts:

- **YOUR BACKGROUND:** *Which cultural, religious, or family traditions have shaped your view of health, wellbeing, and self-care?*
- **YOUR COMFORT ZONE:** *Which mindfulness or self-care practices feel most natural to you? Which feel less comfortable? Why?*
- **YOUR ASSUMPTIONS:** *What do you expect people to do or feel during mindfulness activities? Could these expectations come from your own cultural perspective?*
- **YOUR FLEXIBILITY:** *How could you adapt a practice so that someone from a different background could connect with it?*
- **YOUR ACTION STEP:** *Write a short plan for how you would safely share one mindfulness or self-care practice with peers.*