



IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

- December 15-17, 2015
MHS Book Fair! (see page 6 and flyer for details)
- December 17, 2015
Governance Board Meeting 5-7 pm
- December 24, 2015-January 4, 2016
Winter Break: NO SCHOOL
- January 5, 2017
Students return to school

December 4, 2015

Volume 19, Issue 10

Ins and Outs

Dear Mission Hill Students, Families, Staff, and Friends,

This winter a series of events that are out of our control are causing unusual staff absences. We will need your support, sense of humor, patience and understanding.

Deborah Freeman is needed to care for her father and honor his life. She was out this week and possibly next week to be with him and family during this critical time. The kindergarten team (Stephanie, Yvonne, Kathy, Geralyn, Jada and other supporting adults) is making sure the students are well cared for in Deborah's absence.

Nakia Keizer has a medical issue that needs immediate attention. Nakia is out from November 30 to January 4. Emmanuel (Manny) St. Vil has taken the lead in the classroom while Nakia is away. We are looking for another adult to support him. In the mean time, Ayla and other staff members are assisting in many ways.

Ayla will be out from December 23 to January 11. She also has a medical issue to tend to. She will have reduced hours (8:00 to 4:00) during the week of her return, Jan.11 to 16 as she recovers.

Jon Bruno and family are expecting their third child at the end of December. He will be on paternity leave during the month of January. Natasha Jones will keep lines of communication flowing regarding IEP service delivery in his absence.

Lisa Martin, a paraprofessional in Kate's class, and Shaina Butler, a paraprofessional in Cleata's class, are both going on maternity leave soon. Danny, Jenerra's student teacher, will assist in Cleata's room. A support person for Kate's class has not been named yet. We'll let you know as soon as we know.

Come February we will all be back, our full team intact. When we look back some of us will be in better health, we will have celebrated new life, and we will have honored the life of a family member. Please bear with us as MHS staff members take on extra duties and responsibilities while our colleagues are out, and we anticipate their return.



Endangered animal poster by Andrew.

KINDERGARTEN

Room 108

*"Make new friends, but keep the old.
One is silver and the other's gold.
A circle's round, it has no end.
That's how long I'm gonna be your
friend."*

We have been singing *Make New Friends* as one way to welcome two new students to our class. On Monday morning Alice and Liam joined the Otters! Alice and Liam are both three-years-old. Welcoming the new students right after the school break offered us the perfect chance to review our classroom expectations: Kind words; Helping hands; Safe feet and Listening Ears. We also reviewed our list of ways to be kind. These include: Singing together; using kind words such as "You can play with me", "Please" and "Thank you"; and listening to each other. Please join us in welcoming Alice, Liam and their families to the Mission Hill School!
-Geralyn, Donna & Kyra

Room 106

The fall is a perfect time for pumpkin math. Each year our class investigates pumpkins. We start by reading a book titled *Our Pumpkin* by Renee Keeler. The story is about students who weigh, measure, and count the seeds of a pumpkin and see if the pumpkin sinks or floats. We first took a survey to see what the children thought would happen to the pumpkin. Do you think the pumpkin will sink? was the title of our survey. Most children said, "Yes." Children investigated the gourds in groups. At the measuring station they wrapped yarn around the pumpkin and then used rulers, color tiles, and links to figure out the circumference. They then tested to



Alice and Liam are new in Geralyn's class.

see if the pumpkin sank or floated. After that, they weighed it using a scale. All the while, having first made a prediction. Students guessed how many seeds were inside the pumpkins. We then cut them open and counted the seeds. Children grouped the seeds by ten to help them count. There was pumpkin pulp everywhere. Children were surprised by how many seeds came out of a small pie pumpkin.

Stay tuned for our results!
-Kathy D'Andrea

Room 107

"It's growing! Look at my plant!"
As a part of our life science study, we have been looking at the growing and changing patterns of beans. About a month ago, we had students observe the bean plants that our K2 students planted last May. They noticed pods, flowers and red beans. In a sense, they were able to see most of the bean's life cycle in each container. As we later explored the pods, students commented on their size, smell and feel. "They're so tiny", squealed Nikaye as she pulled out the miniature beans from a small, newly developed pod.

Once we harvested all the beans, we brought them inside for our planting project. We made our holes, dropped in our beans, covered them with soil, watered them and waited. Each morning our students checked on their plants but...no change. Then one day they sprouted! There was rampant excitement as they encouraged each other to take a look. The poem titled "The Little Plant" came alive for them as they watched their project change from a bean covered with soil to a tall plant with leaves and flowers, stretching towards the light.
*-Jada Brown, Jo-Ann Hawkesworth,
& Cristina Noonan*

Room 109

Stay tuned next week!
-Deborah & Stephanie

GRADES 1 & 2

Room 205

The Worm Helper Song
Little worms are under soil.

They dig in holes.
Worms wiggle all around.
They are garden helpers.
They look for some other worms.
Worms eat carrots & apples too.
They turn it into compost.
Then you put water in and it turns into soil.
There's inchworms too, they help them dig in the soil.
Other creatures come help them too.
Like beetles, ants, and worms too.
They're all a team and help each other.
Worms wiggle all around.
-Written by Keith Clark, age 7

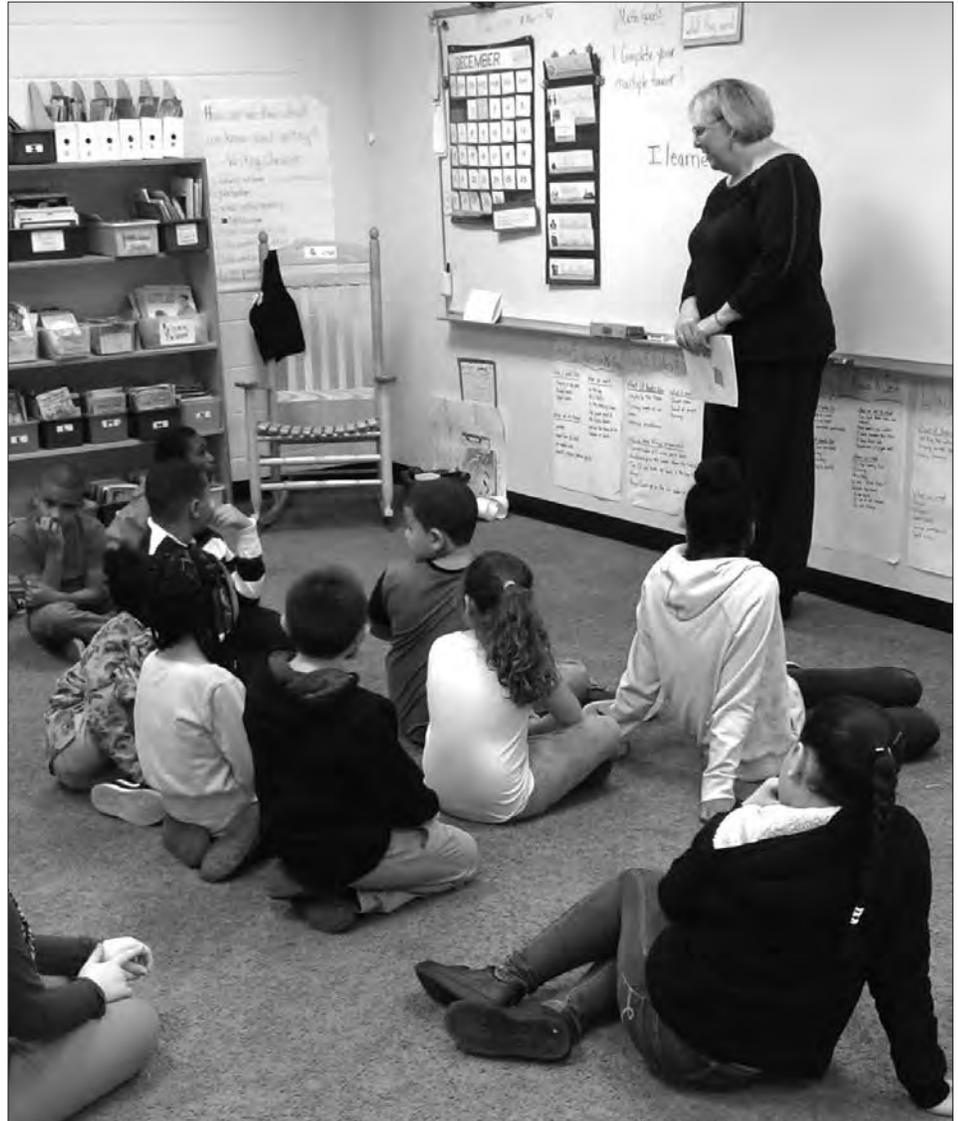
Room 212

Last Wednesday we had a wonderful curriculum breakfast. The children were excited to show their weather graphs, sketches and observation journals. They were also excited to show their collages of bees and ink drawings of spiders that they made in art. If you have not had a chance to see the exhibit, feel free to drop in before or after school with you child. As we continue through December; observing, sketching and recording, the children are beginning to wonder about snow-when will it come, what conditions do we need for snow to fall? Children are beginning to come into school with weather reports and predictions, based on what they have observed. If families are interested in furthering the conversation at home or in keeping an observation themselves, Clare Walker Leslie's Nature All Year Long or Keeping a Nature Journal: Discovering a Whole New Way of Seeing the World Around You are two good choices.

-Suzanne Brown

Room 217

Why are urban gardens important?
Why do we need to have gardens in



Mindfulness is being taught in several MHS classes by former staff member (and newsletter editor!), Betsy Caruso. See the attached handout for more information about this program.

the city? *The Curious Garden* by Peter Brown is a wonderful children's book about a little boy living in a dreary city. Room 217 thinks that dreary means dark, gray, brown, no joy and no life. We do not want to live in a dreary city! The little boy finds an abandoned railroad track that has a few tiny plants growing through. He becomes the gardener. Through love and patience, he nurtures the garden. It begins to grow all over the city in places you would never expect. The once dreary city becomes alive

with green. Other ordinary people are inspired to become gardeners to help transform their home. Here is a short dialogue that took place after our second reading of *The Curious Garden*...

Why do we need gardens in Boston?
Is it important for gardens to grow inside the city?

Yes, urban gardens need to grow in Boston and other cities too. *Cole*
They help keep the city clean. Nashly
Tree gardens, like the Arnold

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Arboretum, give us oxygen. Without urban gardens, the city would be dark with no green. *Keziah*

You can plant and let other people have vegetables. *Alize*

You need them so people can live, vegetables make us healthy and strong so you can grow. *Damarion*

There are vitamins in fruit and vegetables that you need. *Armani*

You need gardens in the city for food. *Julia*

You need gardens for the bees. If there are no bees you can't have vegetables or fruit. *Nyla*

-Kate Needham

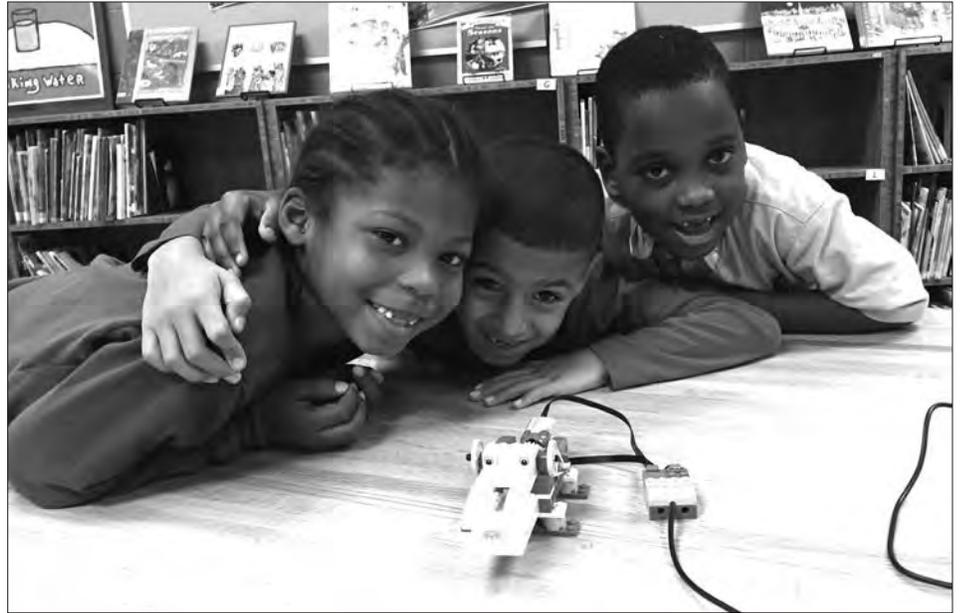
GRADES 3 & 4

Rooms 203 & 215

Mindfulness practice in Jenerra's and Abdi's classrooms takes a huge leap forward this week with coaching and instruction from Betsy Caruso. Betsy worked at MHS for 11 years, providing student support, tutoring and coordinating the music program, as well as editing the newsletter.

She was introduced to the practice of mindfulness in 2007. Currently, she is training as a Mindful Leader through Mindful Schools, and she will be a certified trainer in July. Betsy will work with our classes on Wednesdays and Fridays, about 20 minutes in each classroom.

Why Mindfulness? By practicing mindful awareness we learn to cultivate the following attitudes towards our life experience. Here are a few examples: Non-judging: Impartial witnessing of thoughts and feelings; with kindness and intentionality, resisting the inclination to judge and criticize our experience. Patience: Resting in the wisdom that things need to unfold in their own time and



Damarion, Hiram and Xavier with a crocodile made using robotic Legos.

allowing for this process to happen. Trust: Recognizing our own inner wisdom and ability to guide ourselves in the practice of knowing our minds. Letting go: Recognizing the inclination to hold onto experiences, whether positive or negative, and allowing oneself to let go of what is not needed or helpful. Connected to each of these is compassion. We hope to build these and other attitudes in our students through our Mindfulness work with Betsy.

Mindfulness is completely secular; there is no religious content (see "So, What is Mindfulness" info sheet in this newsletter). Betsy adds that mindfulness the same as Buddhism. When asked what families can do to practice mindfulness at home, she suggests that families ask children about what mindfulness is and how we practice it in our classrooms. She also offers these resources from Mindful Schools: (1) two films to watch for free are "Room to Breathe" (<http://tiny.cc/icgw6x>) and "Healthy Habits of Mind" (<http://tiny.cc/6dgdw6x>), and (2) to see beginning lessons with younger and older kids: <http://tiny.cc/pggw6x>. Other resources for parents: <http://www.mindfulchild.info/> Jon Kabat Zinn and *Parenting from the Inside Out* by Daniel Siegel.

Jenerra, Room 203 (grades 3/4) & Abdi, Room 215 (grades 5/6)

Room 204

As the weeks go by it is amazing to see how far the Bee Squad has come along! Our nature study has produced much work around observing plants and animals and what we can do to help our environment thrive. Students are beginning to think and discuss some actions they can take to make a difference in our community. Hamse suggested that we have an "action team" to brainstorm and research how we could advocate for more community gardens, but with safe gardening practices. The Bee Squad discovered that more than half of the class does some kind of gardening. Another idea that is well supported by the Bee Squad is to ad-

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vocate for no pesticides. Nate is ready to picket for this cause, but first we have to do more research. Students will continue to come up with new ideas about contributing to a thriving environment.

-Cleata & Shaina

Room 207

Picture this: 240 children and adults gathered in our auditorium. There is singing, sharing of work, school-wide announcements, and acts of kindness. We do this as we gather for our all school Friday Share.

During Friday Share, children from all age groups present their work. Sometimes the work is completed and other times it is work in progress. This is a great time to get a brief snapshot of what is happening in various classrooms.

Friday Share is open to all members of our community including family members. No advanced notice is needed if you would like to join us. We start at 9:45 AM sharp and finish around 10:15 AM. If you have never attended, I encourage you to do so. It will give you a glimpse of what is going on here at Mission Hill. So, check your calendars and the next time you have 30 minutes to spare, on a Friday morning, stop by and join us for Friday Share.

-Amina Michel-Lord & Amanda McCarthy

GRADES 5&6

Room 210

I writing against the class name, Crispy Leaves. I think we should not be known throughout the community as a group of leaves. Even though they can look beautiful, they shrivel up, die, and turn brown in the fall and winter.

The only leaves that are fully crispy



Exploring composting worms in room 204 during the Curriculum Breakfast.

are those that are dead and shrively. Do you want to be referred to as dead and shrively? Leaves are also used in a salad. Do we want to be tossed in a salad spinner? Drowned in a puddle of dressing? And eaten by a giant? I think not. That, my friends, is why we should not be called the Crispy Leaves.

-Amishai Goodman-Goldstein, student in Room 210

Room 215

Please read the combined newsletter for both our classroom and Jenerra's grade 3/4 classroom, above under Room 203 news.

-The FireFlies, plus Carlos, Cindy & Abdi

GRADES 7&8

Room 213

What's going on in the adolescent brain? Perhaps you've wondered that yourself as you watch your adolescent changing right before your eyes! In Room 213, we're exploring the topic with a collection of wonderful

resources: books, videos, interactive websites, models, and best of all, our own wonderful ideas and questions. Our study focuses in three areas: What is the structure and function of the brain? How does the brain change? How do I make the best possible brain for me?

We're learning a fabulous new vocabulary to talk about what we're learning: neuron, dendrite, axon, synaptic gap, neurotransmitters, central and peripheral nervous system, and so much more. The room is full of questions: What happens...? What is...? Is that why...?

Khalia made a great connection this week. When finding that the occipital lobe, the part of the brain connected to sight, was located in the back of the brain, she wondered, "Is that what people mean by having eyes in the back of your head?" Lots more to follow!

Room 214

In room 214, we are having an ongoing conversation about how to create

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a classroom environment that gives us an opportunity to be at our best. We've had several conversations and freewrite sessions around this idea. Along the way we decided to create a class constitution so we can have our ideas on paper and use it have a reference point. We came up with the following:

We, the students and adults of 214, in order to maintain a respectful community and a productive learning environment will limit distractions (side conversations, jokes,) and focus on the task at hand. We will try to understand each other. We will bring in snacks to share. We will treat each other fairly.

Each of us have the right to...

Have our own beliefs and opinions

express our beliefs and opinions

Respect others

Ask for what we need

This constitution is signed by all the members of the class and is hanging up in our meeting area.

-Reginald Toussaint

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MHS Book Fair Needs Volunteers!

Are you available to help out with the annual MHS Book Fair?

We need people from Monday, 12/14 to Friday, 12/18 between 9:30 am and 4:30 pm.

Jobs include set up and break down, sales, customer service, and book-keeping. If you are able to volunteer, please sign up online from the MHS

website homepage: www.missionhillschool.org

Questions? Please email Marietje at: mhalbertsma@missionhillschool.org or call the school at 617-635-6384. We hope to hear from you and thanks!

Opportunity For Family Volunteer

The Children's Archive at MHS is an ongoing collection of children's work in all areas of the curriculum. The collection, established at the founding of the school, in 1997, is a valuable resource, unique in BPS. The Archive is useful to children and teachers in the school as direct, qualitative evidence of learning. It is also of potential interest to the wider educational community and schools of education.

Brenda Engel, who originally established the Archive, is about to retire (at the age of 92). *We are looking for one or two interested family members who, with the help and advice of a faculty team, would take over management of the Archive.* Brenda is happy to help with the transition, explain the organization of the Archive and the established procedures for collecting and storing work.

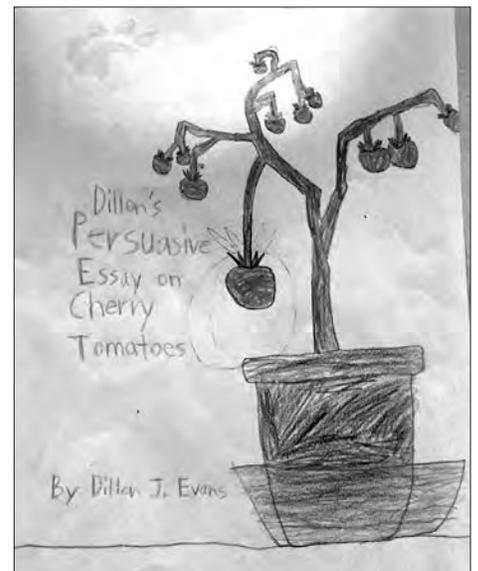
The time commitment is only three hours per week and the only qualification necessary is an interest and appreciation of children's creative and academic work. Contact Dani if you are interested: dcoleman@missionhillschool.org.

Family Council Meeting

The next Family Council meeting will be Thursday, December 10th at 5:45. It will be a potluck, so bring your favorite dish to share. Child care will be available. Plans for a bake sale in December will be discussed. If you can't make the meeting you may still contribute by working the table and/or baking something. Bakesale date TBA!

Free Art-Making Workshops

Families Creating Together is a multigenerational, creative arts program serving children of all abilities and their families. Free art making workshops are offered to families. To learn more, call 617-522-4832, email mfcabrera53@gmail.com or visit the school website at <http://www.familiescreatingtogether.org/>



Dillon's Persuasive Essay on Cherry Tomatoes.

Ayla Gavins, *Principal*
Deborah Meier, *Founder*
Tommy Chang, *Superintendent*

Mission Hill K-8 School
A Boston Public Pilot School
WWW.MISSIONHILLSCHOOL.ORG

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December 4, 2015

Hello MHS Families,

The MHS Family Council is in the process of creating a School Family Directory. It will contain lists of all students by class with family contact information. This is a traditional document, meant to support communication both in and out of school. A print copy will go home with all students before the holiday break.

Please return this form to your child's teacher no later than Friday 12/11/15.

If you do not return the form, your child will automatically be included in the directory with the contact information provided by BPS.

You may fill out the information you would like included below. If you have questions, please contact the main office at 617-635-6384.

Thank you!
MHS Family Council

NO, I DO NOT WANT TO BE INCLUDED IN THE DIRECTORY

YES, PLEASE INCLUDE ME IN THE DIRECTORY

Child Name:

Family Member #1 Name:

Family Member #1 Address:

Family Member #1 Phone Number:

Family Member #1 Email Address:

Family Member #2 Name (if two house family):

Family Member #2 Address (if two house family):

Family Member #2 Phone Number (if two house family):

Family Member #2 Email Address (if two house family):

So, What is **Mindfulness**?

The awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment. - Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mindfulness means a moment-by-moment awareness of thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and the surrounding environment. Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judgment. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we're sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future. The secular practice of mindfulness has become mainstream in recent years, partly due to the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn and the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, which he launched at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in 1979. Since then, thousands of studies have documented the physical and mental health benefits of mindfulness in general and MBSR in particular, inspiring countless programs to adapt the MBSR model.

A Brief Overview of Mindfulness

What Mindfulness is Not About:

- Not a relaxation exercise
- Not a way to avoid difficulty
- Not a way to by-pass personality problems
- Not about achieving a different state of mind

What Mindfulness is About:

- Being present to our experience however distressing or upsetting it may be
- Brings us closer to difficulties but without becoming caught up in our reactions to difficulties
- It is a slow, gentle coming to grips with who we are
- Settling in to our current experience in a relaxed, alert, open-hearted way

The **Attitudinal Foundations** of Mindfulness Practice

By practicing mindful awareness through sitting meditation we learn to cultivate the following attitudes towards our life experience.

- **Non-judging:** Impartial witnessing of thoughts and feelings; with kindness and intentionality, resisting the inclination to judge and criticize our experience.
- **Patience:** Resting in the wisdom that things need to unfold in their own time and allowing for this process to happen.
- **Beginners mind:** The ability to see things as if for the first time with a sense of curiosity and genuine interest. Allowing for preconceived ideas to not influence our direct experience of the present moment.
- **Trust:** Recognizing our own inner wisdom and ability to guide ourselves in the practice of knowing our minds.
- **Non-striving:** Allowing oneself to be on the path with direction but also being in the present moment each step of the way.
- **Acceptance:** Permitting that whatever arises in your experience to be fully present, no matter what your reaction may be, including resistance.
- **Letting go:** Recognizing the inclination to hold onto experiences, whether positive or negative, and allowing oneself to let go of what is not needed or helpful.

Connected to each of these attitudinal foundations is: **COMPASSION**