

## **What is Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)?**

MBCT is an 8-week programme for relapse prevention of depression and stress reduction.

### **What to expect from your teacher or instructor**

The teachers of mindfulness must have completed their own 8 week programme. They must have at least one year post course practice before achieving a minimum of Teacher Training Level 1 with a recognised training provider and have ongoing supervision with an experienced practitioner.

Equally, if not more important, the teachers must have a personal commitment to mindfulness practice and regularly attend mindfulness workshops and a minimum of one retreat each year.

(Based on Good Practice Guidelines UK Network for Mindfulness-Based Teachers)

We consider the following quote captures the essence of good teaching practice:

“There is no basis for discriminating between the minds of those seeking help and those offering it. The challenge for teachers is to participate in mindfulness, to experience it from the inside”. (Segal, Z, Williams, M Teasdale, John 2002)

### **What is mindfulness and how can it help me?**

Being mindful helps us to focus on the present moment and allows for a clearer understanding of how thoughts and emotions can affect our health and quality of life. Mindfulness can be developed through meditation practice.

All of us have ‘wandering minds’ when we get lost in our thoughts. Perhaps we find ourselves mentally ‘time travelling’ into the past or the future. This is perfectly normal but it can become very distressing if we get trapped in a vicious cycle of self-critical thoughts and worries. Left to its own devices the mind can easily reinvent the past or imagine future catastrophes. Before we know it, the mind has written its own story and we are acting out the drama!

The mindfulness course is a practical, skills-based programme to help you train your mind and befriend your body. You will learn to anchor yourself in your breath and body, and develop a sense of curiosity and kindness towards yourself and your direct experience.

Mindfulness is not the same as relaxation training but it does teach us to manage stress in a different way, with full awareness in the present moment.

## **What are the benefits of being in the present moment?**

Most of us are often on what we call 'autopilot', meaning we are 'sleepwalking' through life, not fully awake or aware of our 'here and now' experiences.

For example, how many times have you drank a cup of tea, eaten a meal, watched TV, travelled in a car or had a conversation without being fully present? Lost in your own thoughts you have little recollection of the taste of food, the characters on the TV, the journey, or even what you talked about. Worse still, how many times have you said or done something you later regret?!

Being mindful of the present moment gives us an opportunity to stand back, take a breathing space, and make wiser choices. It helps us to 'come to our senses' and enjoy the pleasurable things in life.

## **Is this a 'new age' hippy type meditation?**

Mindfulness is a *form* of meditation but it's definitely not about achieving any particular goal and it's not 'new age'. In fact, mindfulness is an ancient practice and there is now very strong scientific evidence to suggest it works.

NICE (National Institute for Clinical Excellence) advises the NHS about best practice and recommends mindfulness for relapse prevention in depression. Evidence indicates mindfulness can also help with chronic pain anxiety stress and physical health problems.

## **What will be expected of me on the course?**

The mindfulness course is an eight week programme meeting weekly for 2 hours. It is not a therapy group and you will not be expected to talk about your problems. You will be expected to make a full commitment to attend regularly and undertake daily home practice. The sessions are mostly spent practicing the three main components called the body scan, sitting practice and mindful movement. If you have physical health or mobility problems we will adapt to your needs.

Mindfulness is not for everyone because it requires a high commitment to practice and be with your direct experience whatever this might be! Nonetheless, those who have completed the course have gained valuable skills with one participant saying:  
*"This course was a gift to myself!"*