



MindfulnessUK[®]
Training

Compassionate Mindful Resilience

Participant Resource Pack



4 Session Programme



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Compassionate Mindful Resilience Course

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SESSION ONE

Exploring Mindfulness and Compassion

Welcome to the Compassionate Mindfulness-Based Resilience Course (CMR)

Introduction

Over the next 4 sessions we plan to introduce you to a range of meditations, techniques and coping strategies to help you deal more effectively with stress and build your resilience in a new way, enabling you to feel more content, in control and at ease.

The course lasts for 4 sessions and each session is for 2 hours. We start promptly so please do try to arrive on time.

Each session builds on the one before and in order to gain maximum benefit from this training it is recommended that you attend all 4 sessions. If you know that you are unable to attend a session, please let your teacher know in advance and they can still support you with appropriate practices to follow.

What you need to get the best out of this Course

- 1) Ask yourself how committed you are to learn a new way of going about your daily life. Can you prioritise, viewing these sessions and your home practice as you would a doctor's appointment and put time aside just for you?
- 2) Keep an open mind and look out for your own expectations. We are trying to help you change long-term beliefs and patterns of thought and behaviour. This can take some time, so stick with it.
- 3) Mindfulness and Compassion is an education, not a treatment, though it is therapeutic. You get out of it what you put in.
- 4) Keeping a journal helps you to identify what is changing in your life as you progress through the course.
- 5) Please wear comfortable clothing to every session so that you can relax and move with ease.
- 6) The teacher will support you as best they can throughout the course.
- 7) If you have any problems, uncertainties or difficulties please contact your teacher.

COURSE AIMS

- ✓ Learn Mindfulness and Compassion to support emotional well-being
- ✓ Understand more about stress and how it affects the mind and body
- ✓ Recognise compassion fatigue and how to overcome it
- ✓ Develop resources creatively to embrace mindfulness and compassion within your lives.

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness means paying attention...

...in a particular way:
on purpose
in the present moment
non-judgementally.
(Jon-Kabat Zinn 1996)



...to what's happening in the present moment
in the mind, body and external environment,
with an attitude of curiosity and kindness.
(The Mindful Nation Parliamentary Report October 2015)

Jon Kabat-Zinn in 'Wherever you go, there you are' says:

"This kind of awareness nurtures greater awareness, clarity and acceptance of present-moment reality.

"Mindfulness is the art of conscious living "

So, Mindfulness involves:

- Bringing our attention and awareness to our thoughts, feelings, sensations and physical experiences in the present moment as they arise and pass away.
- Doing so with intention, which includes renewing our awareness should we lose it.
- Putting past experiences behind us, and not pre-living potential future experiences. Living life in the here and now by waking up to our present moment reality.
- Not passing judgement or criticism on what we notice as we pay attention.
- Mindfulness is the opposite of being on automatic pilot, absent-minded, or spaced- out.
- If practised regularly (ideally daily), Mindfulness gives us the ability to:
- Respond appropriately and with skill to life events and situations, as opposed to simply react from habit.
- Lessen stress and anxiety.
- Manage current physical and psychological difficulties in a new way.
- Increase our ability to remain calm and centred in a fast-moving and changing world.
- Identify our core values and feel more able to choose to live our lives according to our values.
- Not take life and its' events for granted by enabling us to savour life more fully.
- Develop a deeper sense of compassion for ourselves, those around us and our world.
- Live life with greater happiness and balance.

*'The real voyage of discovery consists not
in seeking new lands, but in seeing with
new eyes* Marcel Proust

From the Beginning

This course involves considerable time on self-reflection and inquiry, so we are going to start with some questions around your thoughts and feelings right from the beginning. We will then revisit this at the end of the course and reflect on your responses to the following questions:

Why am I here?

What would I like to learn from coming on this course, including any expectations that I might have?

Where would I like to get to by the end of the course?

The Benefits of Mindfulness

'Here and now' - The practice of Mindfulness enables us to interact with life and those around us in a more responsive, skilful and relaxed manner. We feel more content and happier and our experiences of the pleasurable things in life are deepened and enriched. Less of our time is spent in "automatic pilot" and more of our time in the "here and now".

'Respond as opposed to react' - The results of paying attention to the "here and now" can be significant and even profound. We notice some space around our thoughts and emotions and they no longer seem all consuming. This new and greater perspective gives us potential to consciously and with awareness respond to our thoughts and emotions as opposed to simply react, and to reflect on whether they are helpful or true. Recognising and coming to terms with our mind can be a joy.

'Habits' - We can see more clearly where turning to face life's challenges may be appropriate, and where habitual patterns of turning away and non-engagement may not be.

'Healthy acceptance' - Greater equanimity can arise; events that we find challenging and difficult don't seem quite so significant. We gain a greater acceptance of our current situation, which can give us the inner tools to both change that which is necessary and learn to be content with that we can't or don't wish to change.

'Self-kindness' - The self-compassion and kindness inherent in giving ourselves the time to undertake a daily Mindfulness practice can be a catalyst for greater kindness and compassion in itself and implies a commitment to our own happiness and well-being.

'Letting go' - Mindfulness gives us the ability to let go – let go of stress and anxiety, of the constancy of thinking, of reliving the past or pre-living the future. The conditions that cause the stress and anxiety may well still exist, but we can relate to them in a more peaceful, harmonious and relaxed way which decreases our unhappiness and discontent.

There have been numerous research studies highlighting the benefits of regular Mindfulness practice. These include:

Mental

- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Greater calmness and clarity
- More effective concentration
- Increased resilience in difficult situations
- Improved listening skills
- Improved ability to quieten the chattering mind

- Increased ability for lateral thinking and creative solutions to problems
- Greater self-awareness and awareness of others

Physiological

- Reduced heart rate
- Lower blood pressure
- Better breathing patterns
- Better/Deeper sleep
- Healthier digestion
- Strengthening of immune system

Psychological

- Improved confidence and self-esteem
- Ability to be kinder to oneself and others
- Increased empathy and compassion
- Heightened awareness of the body leading to recognition and release of pain

How to Begin with Mindfulness in Daily Life

We can start to introduce the concept of taking mindfulness into **everyday life**, bringing a meditative approach to the ordinary. Think about what activity you might try- one that is in your daily routine such as brushing your teeth, boiling the kettle, chopping vegetables etc. You may like to fill in the diary below to record what you did and how it was for you.

Mindful activities and/or home practice record form.

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Week 1							
Week 2							
Week 3							
Week 4							
Week 5							
Week 6							
Week 7							

The Neuroscience Behind Mindfulness

Until recently, it was thought that our brains developed during our childhood and teens and then stopped once we had reached maturity. In fact, the medical world believed that it started to deteriorate during the 20's until the end of life. We now know, as a result of modern medical technology and scientific research, that this is far from the truth. Our brains have an extraordinary capacity to keep changing and adapting to new circumstances, whether it is learning a new language or hobby or adjusting to new challenges such as a change in career. This ability of the brain to reshape and alter its' physiological make up throughout life is known as **neuroplasticity**. The advent of functional MRI scanners over the last decade have taught us so much about how the brain works by observing and recording what happens when a person is lying in the scanner, meditating. Before this time, we were only able to see the brain in static images, which did not give us the full picture. Even small changes can be detected from one moment to the next, giving us fascinating insights into the functioning of the brain.

Amygdala The amygdala is part of the “old” or “lizard” brain, a part that developed millions of years ago, before the higher functions of thoughts and emotions evolved. The amygdala is primarily involved in our survival and it is still providing the same function in us today, always looking out for predators. Whilst this was helpful when we lived on the savannas and we had to remain constantly vigilant, the amygdala still fires off even when our survival is not threatened, such as when we worry about what the boss will say about your performance at work, why your friend has not called, your appearance and so on. When our amygdala is stimulated, a cascade of events is triggered via the pituitary gland, including adrenaline and cortisol secretion, which increases blood pressure and heart rate, sweating and makes us feel anxious.

Memory also plays an important role in this fight and flight response of the autonomic nervous system. We are constantly scanning our surroundings in order to identify potential harmful threats. Therefore, if we had a bad experience say with a teacher sporting a moustache in our childhood, we may automatically move into a state of amygdala arousal every time we see someone with facial hair. This primitive, unconscious response can be overridden by identifying habitual reactions and bringing conscious reasoning to the encounter.

Negativity bias Our brain is designed so that negative experiences trump the positive. Negative experiences stick like Velcro to the brain in microseconds whereas it has been shown that positive experiences take at least 20 seconds of our attention to embed in the memory banks. This is why we often see life from a “glass half empty” viewpoint, we have been designed this way and it is not our fault. The more negativity we experience, the more it is embedded, and this can lead to depression and low mood. Depression creates changes in the brain, which can make them more predisposed to further episodes. Mindfulness meditation has been shown to help heal these brain changes.

Trauma can also have a huge impact on the functioning of the brain, reducing the hypothalamus, the area responsible for storing memory, by up to 20%. Over time, the brain can recover, and memory and concentration may return to previous levels.

Benefits of Mindfulness and meditation on the brain and nervous system

- Stimulation of the left pre-frontal cortex, which is responsible for a sunnier outlook on life, occurs during meditation practice.
- Mindfulness helps by enabling us to see things in a clearer perspective and teaches our body not to react to the threat so readily by turning down its' activity over time, rather like turning down the volume on a radio. Regular meditation has been shown to reduce the stimulation of the amygdala to such an extent that it can actually shrink in size!
- Research demonstrates that it can improve mood, promote optimism and lower stress responses.
- By providing the brain with a store of good experiences including of happiness, peace, pleasure, appreciation, gratitude, loving-kindness, it can offset earlier negative experiences and change the inner atmosphere of our lives. Specific practices can help us to tap into and savour good memories, thereby giving ourselves a lift whenever we wish.

Cultivating Compassion



The Core Components of Compassion

1. It requires **kindness**, that we be gentle and understanding with ourselves rather than harshly critical and judgmental. It is very common to see clients who are outpouring kindness and care to others whilst beating themselves up about not doing enough, thereby placing themselves under more pressure and reinforcing their self-critical and judgmental self. The teacher will help clients to see the reality of their situation by enabling them to develop an awareness of their behaviour and thought processes and then advise them of very simple, but profoundly effective, ways of changing their relationship and perception of themselves. Recommend that they imagine their best friend is with them, seeing the way they are behaving, asking what the friend might say to comfort and protect them?

The teacher may also suggest that they find a term of endearment so that when that inner voice starts criticising, they say soothing phrases to themselves. Perhaps using something like, “sweetheart”, for instance, may be helpful. So, when things start to get difficult they say “It’s OK sweetheart, it’s time to look after yourself, what is the best thing you can do right now to ensure self-care?”

2. Recognition of our **common humanity** promotes feelings of connectivity with others in the experience of life, rather than feeling alienated by suffering. This is one reason why learning mindfulness in a small group setting is so helpful. Whilst everyone’s story is different, their suffering is the same. Tara Brach¹ writes “Feeling unworthy goes hand in hand with feeling separate from others, separate from life. If we are defective, how can we possibly belong? It seems like a vicious cycle: the more deficient we feel, the more separate and vulnerable we feel.”

¹ Brach, T, (2003) Radical Acceptance, Rider

3. **Mindfulness** - that we hold our experience in balanced awareness, rather than ignoring our pain or exaggerating it.

Kristen Neff says that we must achieve and combine these three essential elements in order to be truly self-compassionate.

Self-soothing exercises



Not only does survival depend on the fight or flight instinct, it also depends on the “tend and befriend” instinct. In times of threat or stress, animals that are protective of their offspring are more likely to pass their genes successfully on to the next generation, meaning that care giving behaviour has a strong adaptive function. Hence mammals are born with an “attachment system”- see the work of Harry Harlow on rhesus monkeys and John Bowlby on attachment.

Although our experience as an infant and child develop our inner belief systems and the way we treat ourselves, these can be changed, and exercises and compassion practices can be influential in this process.

When we soothe our own pain, we are tapping into the mammalian care giving system. One important way this system works on a physical level is the triggering of oxytocin. This is a “hormone of love and bonding” and plays an important role in social relationships. Oxytocin has been shown to increase feelings of trust, calm, safety, generosity and connectedness and also facilitate the ability to feel warmth and compassion for ourselves. It reduces fear and can counteract the increased blood pressure and cortisol associated with stress.

Examples of self-soothing exercises

- Hugging practice
- Stroking skin or hair
- Talking to yourself in terms of endearment

- Finding refuge - refuges include people, pets, memories, ideals, places, nature, teachers
- Touching the lips to stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system
- A big exhalation, or two
- A compassionate gesture

Key elements that assist in the development of compassion

Care and concern for others wellbeing -There is plentiful evidence to suggest that having compassion for yourself is related to having compassion for others. True, many people who lack self-compassion, who constantly judge themselves, are still very caring towards other people.

Sympathy and empathy - Although compassion involves feelings of care and concern for others, it also involves taking the perspective of those who are suffering- walking a mile in their shoes, sympathy and empathy. So, rather than making quick and easy judgments about others, compassion considers how it must feel to be the other person, looking at things from the inside rather than the outside.

Positive effect - by engaging in perspective taking when we give ourselves compassion, it also has the positive effect of seeing the other's perspective. Research shows that people with higher levels of self-compassion are more likely to engage in perspective taking when contemplating the failures and weaknesses of other people. By its very nature, compassion is relational, stepping back and forth between various perspectives to see the mutuality of the human condition.

Non-Judgement: This is a core component of mindfulness and compassion practice. It is not easy but getting to a point of recognising the judgements we make and noticing these and letting them pass rather than following them or acting on them is really important in developing kindness and compassion to ourselves and others.

Forgiveness – Bringing a sense of forgiveness through compassion practices helps to bring a greater awareness of common humanity and the human state of suffering. Ultimately, we all only want to be happy. Softening and bringing forgiveness is important to prevent further anger, hurt and suffering to others and ourselves.

Altruistic behaviour stimulates feel good chemicals such as dopamine and endorphins.

Engagement - When you are altruistic – helping someone – your oxytocin level goes up, which helps relieve stress. Altruistic behaviour also may trigger the brain's reward circuitry – the feel-good chemicals such as dopamine and endorphins. The hormonal benefits of good deeds, however, depend on the genuine intent of acts of altruism.

Self-compassion - The analogy one often hears with regard to self-compassion is that we

must first look after ourselves to be compassionate towards others, like the use of an oxygen mask on a plane should something go wrong. However, we all know people who are extraordinarily compassionate to their friends, family, colleagues and others, but very hard on themselves. It is a cultural problem in this society that we have been brought up to look after other people first and this behaviour is deeply ingrained. It really is very challenging for some to bring compassion to themselves as it goes against their belief system. I have, however, witnessed many a metamorphosis when a client brings a compassionate attitude to themselves.

Compassion fatigue

To prevent ourselves feeling overwhelmed by pain, sometimes we have a tendency to tune out and shut down. This is what happens with care givers of any kind who have not developed the resilience for their work in supporting others, whether personally or professionally. By being compassionate to ourselves, we build the resources to be more genuinely compassionate to others without detriment to the self.

Developing Self- Compassion

Regular Mindfulness practice changes the structure and pathways of the brain. Some of these changes occur in the part of the brain associated with compassion and kindness. These changes can be strengthened by intentionally cultivating kindness and establishing a habitual pattern of compassion and kindness to ourselves. Giving ourselves the time to undertake a daily Mindfulness practice implies a commitment to our own happiness and well-being in itself.

Starting with the recognition that we are all the product of thousands of years of human evolution and gene development and have been subject to a lesser or greater extent to influence and conditioning by our parents, family and society, we can relate to and view our current situation as “not being our fault”. This is not to say that we have no wish or responsibility to change things from here but is simply viewing where we are now from the perspective of past events and circumstances. For those of us who are prone to frequent critical and self-judgemental thoughts, this can open our minds and hearts to a new way of looking at the problem.

Loving yourself means accepting yourself as you are with all your faults and shortcomings. Such ideas can feel uncomfortable to some of us raised in western society where we may have a tendency to feel guilty and selfish if we direct acceptance and kindness to ourselves.

Simply bringing our mindful attention to our self-critical and self-judgemental thoughts can help us recognise their transitory and ephemeral nature further increasing our potential to establish new habits and pathways. These patterns can be strengthened by intentionally cultivating kindness during Mindfulness and meditation practice, for example with a loving kindness meditation.

The compassion and kindness engendered is available for others as well as ourselves. It

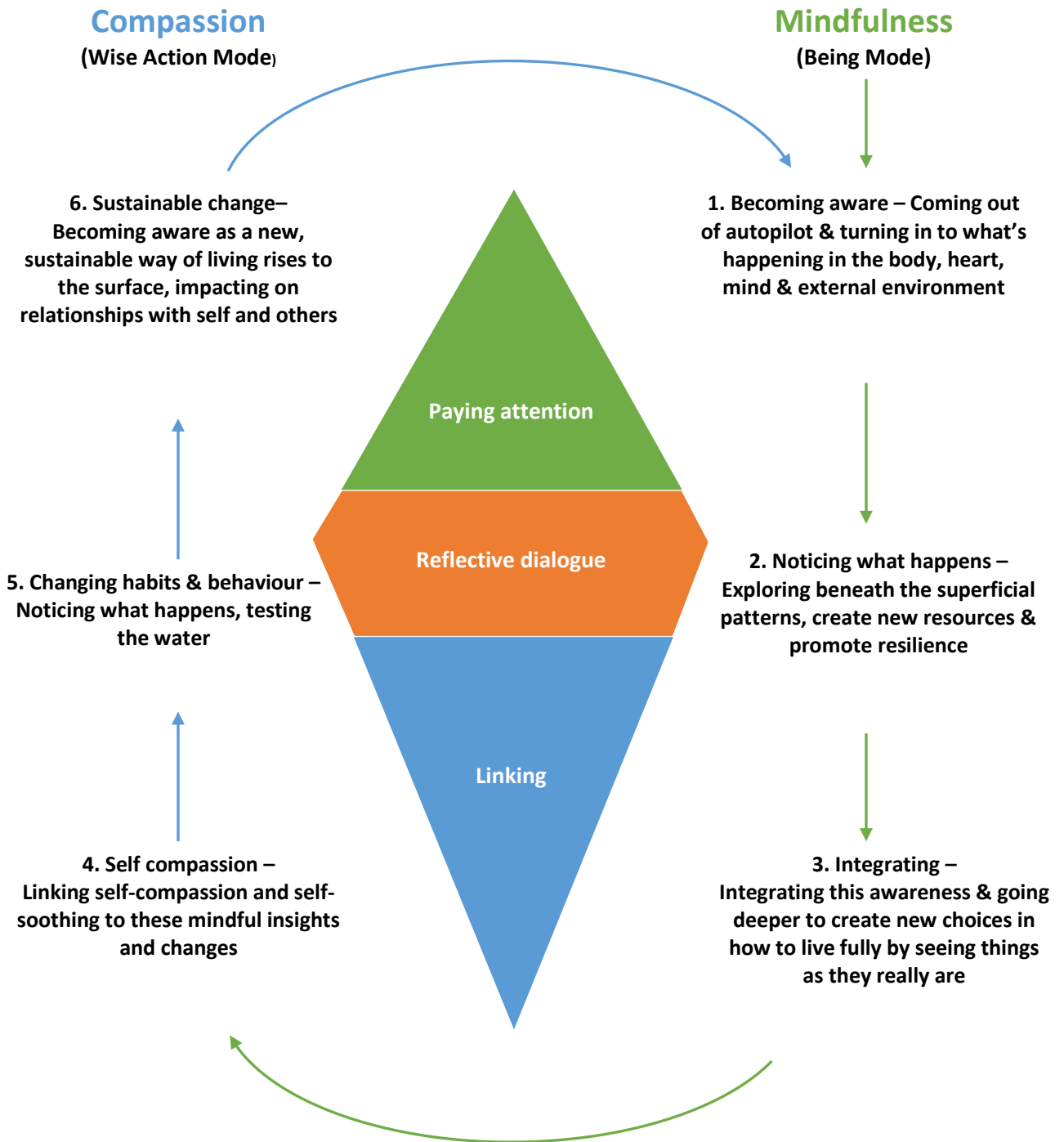
is taught within some spiritual traditions that genuine compassion for others is dependent upon genuine compassion for ourselves. Compassion and kindness can be endless resources so don't worry that they will run out!

By building compassion back into your life, it enables us to build compassion for others. Understanding others and re gaining a sense of empathy is important.

Remembering the Good Practice – Sharon Saltzberg

*Sit in a comfortable relaxed way close your eyes. Let go of analysis and expectation.
For 10 mins call to mind something you have done or said that you feel was a kind or good action- a time when you were generous or caring or contributed to someone's wellbeing.
If something comes to mind, allow happiness that may come with the remembrance.
If nothing comes to mind gently, turn your attention to a quality you like about yourself.
Is there an ability or strength within yourself that you recognise?
If still nothing comes to mind, reflect on the primal urge towards happiness within you and the rightness and beauty of that.
In any of the above reflections, even if impatience or annoyance arise do not be disheartened or anxious see if you can return to the contemplation without guilt or judgement.
The heart of skilful meditation is the ability to let go and begin again over and over again.*

Iceberg Model of Compassionate Mindful Inquiry



UNTIL ONE IS COMMITTED

“Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too.

All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way. I have learned a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets: Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it!”

William Hutchison Murray

Home Practice

10-minute
compassionate body
scan practice

One mindful
daily activity

SESSION TWO

Cultivating Emotional Intelligence

By identifying what causes us stress, we can then build our resources to cultivate emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence has been defined as:

"The ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behaviour" (Peter Salovey and John Mayer).

Practice- RAIN

- R- Recognise
- A- Acknowledge
- I- Investigate
- N- Nurture

Ref Tara Brach

How Stress Affects Our Body

What happens when we feel stressed?

When you perceive that you are in a threatening situation you feel unable to cope with, then a cascade of things happens in the neurological, emotional and hormonal systems. Messages are carried along nerves in the brain from the cerebral cortex, the place which regulates our thought processes and the limbic (emotional) system to the hypothalamus.

The Hypothalamus

The hypothalamus is an important regulatory centre in the centre of the brain. It controls the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) which, in turn, controls all the automatic functioning of the body ie the functions without conscious control such as heartbeat, blood pressure, breathing etc. When stressed, the Sympathetic branch is stimulated, and the release of adrenaline and other physiological functions leads to the "fight and flight" response, which includes:

- Increases strength of skeletal muscles
- Decreases blood clotting time
- Increases heart rate
- Increases sugar and fat levels
- Reduces intestinal movement
- Inhibits tears, digestive secretions.
- Relaxes the bladder

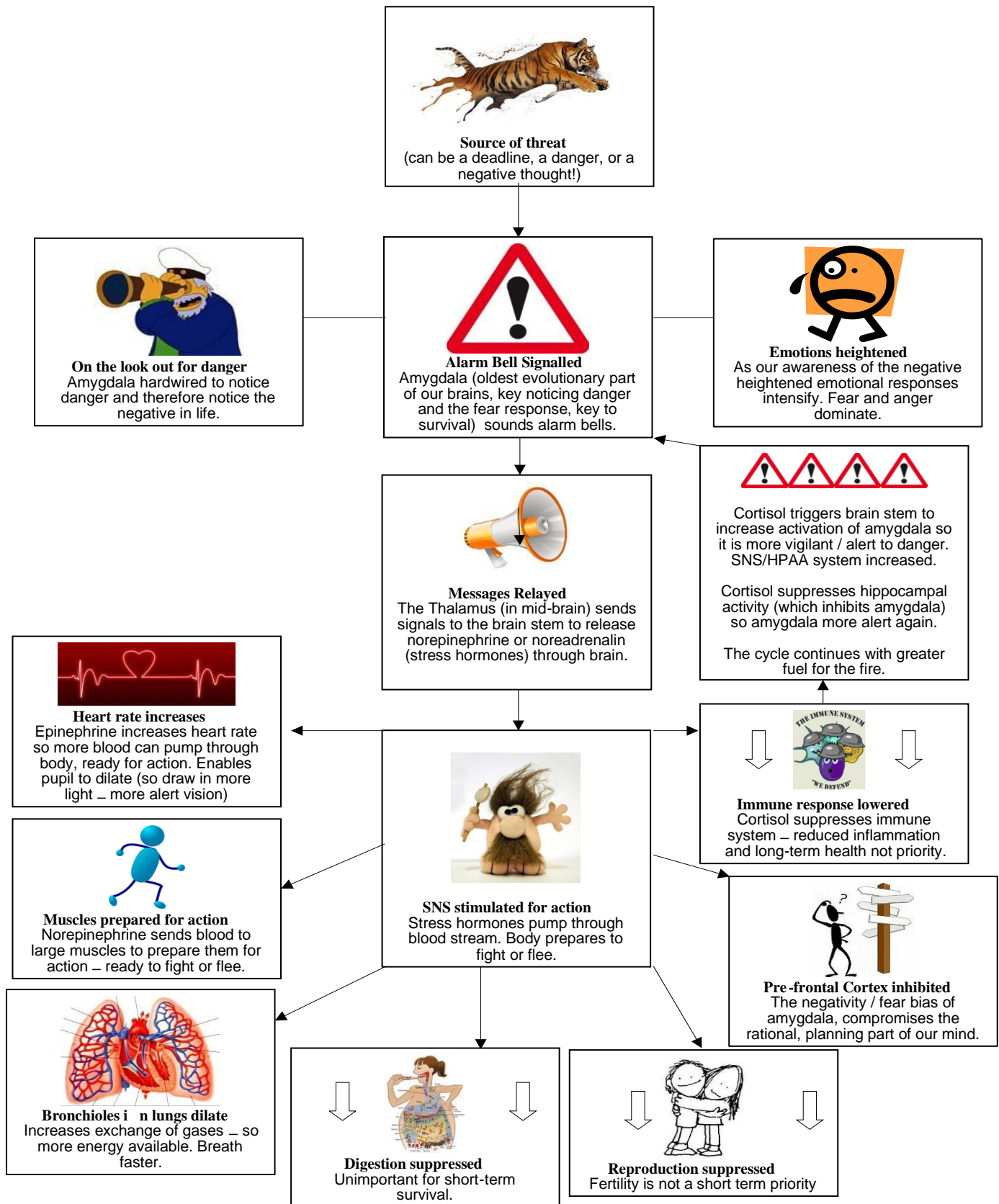
- Dilates pupils
- Increases perspiration
- Increases mental activity
- Constricts most blood vessels but dilates those in heart/leg/arm muscles

The other branch of the ANS is known as the Parasympathetic and it has the opposite effect on our body to the Sympathetic responses above.

How does Mindfulness help?

Mindfulness helps in a number of ways:

- 1) Through increased awareness we can identify what causes us stress and help to reduce our exposure to stressful situations
- 2) It trains us to take conscious control over our breathing, slowing the breath down for example, and thereby soothing the body
- 3) It stimulates the other branch of the ANS called the Parasympathetic system which is responsible for our “rest and digest” functions. By continuously stimulating this branch, it turns down our stress response, rather like turning down the volume on the radio and over time our system becomes calmer and more balanced.



(Shared with permission from Anna Taylor)

How Mindfulness Works with Stress Reduction

Millions of people suffer with stress every day. Most of us don't want to talk about our stress and anxiety or face these things within ourselves. We can cope, of course we can. Woody Allen once said, "I don't mind dying as long as I don't have to be there."

As much as we may wish to ignore our stressors or pretend, they don't exist, the unfortunate truth is that we cannot control the world around us, and there will always be situations capable of provoking worry, stress and anxiety. The answer isn't to turn away, it's to turn towards it, **like turning into the skid!**

We are not aiming to eliminate our stressors, but to engage with them differently and this is where mindfulness comes in. By changing the way we see ourselves in relationship to them, we can actually change our experience of the relationship and therefore modify the extent to which it taxes or exceeds our resources or endangers our well-being.

If we can change the way we see, we can change the way we respond. We have a choice!!

DOING VERSUS BEING MODES OF MIND

<i>DOING MODE (THINKING SELF)</i>	<i>BEING MODE (OBSERVING SELF)</i>
Automatic pilot	Conscious choice
Analysing	Sensing
Striving	Accepting
Avoidance	Approaching
Past and future	Present
Thoughts as facts	Thoughts as events, not facts
Depleting	Nourishing

NB: Mindfulness is not saying that doing mode is wrong and being mode is right but it's about making a conscious choice as to which one is more appropriate and supportive at that moment.

How Mindfulness Helps to Cultivate Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence can be cultivated through motivation and practice. There are 3 main components to the development of emotional intelligence:

1) Emotional awareness

- This involves increasing perception of your own emotions and those around you
- Noticing emotions without passing judgement
- Accepting your emotions as they are right now
- Understanding that everyone and everyone's emotions are different in certain situations
- Knowing that everyone is doing what they do in the belief that this will make them happier
- Understanding that we are all products of our own conditioning
- Knowing that we have the capacity to change

2) Emotional Application

- Utilising your emotions for the benefit of yourselves and others
- Identifying mind traps that contribute to stress and fear
- Acknowledging the negative emotions rather than trying to block them out
- Mastering the emotion by working out where they originated- usually neurological processes aligned with conditioning

3) Emotional Management

- Regulating emotions as they arise
- Reflecting on how you're feeling periodically
- Developing an internal locus of control
- Sometimes mindfulness techniques can help to deal with difficult situations where you know or feel negative emotions arise. We can then approach the task with the right resources to cope more effectively with the situation
- It strengthens our ability to govern and control our emotions.

Mind traps

One major way that mindfulness helps with stress is by enabling you to observe the mind traps that may play a role in your stress and your reaction to stress. Once you know what they are, you will begin to recognise them as you begin falling into them, and eventually you may be able to avoid them and this can make a real difference in your life.

Everyone's mind, startled by challenge, responds spontaneously with an emotional state, characteristic to him or her, and that confuses it. Described as hindrances, they hinder the

mind's capacity to clearly assess what's happening. As energies, they ruffle the mind's surface and distort the truth. Mindfulness recognises these confusing energies and responses and enables you to see through them or around them so that good sense can prevail. Concentration dissolves hindrances. When a mind is concentrated, deeply relaxed and steady, filled with warm intention, upsetting thoughts and feelings arise, but they don't stick.

Negative Self- talk

Self- talk is the way you talk to yourself. It refers to your habitual ways of thinking and how you automatically interpret events. Often this internal monologue is negative. The beauty of mindfulness is that you can learn to treat these negative thoughts as mental events rather than facts.

Habitual styles of thinking

By becoming familiar with your own negative thought patterns, you can then become mindful of when you might be falling into your traps.

These are some of the most common mind traps. See if you can recognise any of these in yourself and your responses to situations:

1) **Catastrophising** is a style of thinking that amplifies anxiety. It's a what-if game of worst-case scenarios. An example would be telling someone that it's raining pretty hard, and they respond with "yes, it seems like it will never stop. It's going to flood and we're all going to lose our crops.

2) **Exaggerating the negative and discounting the positive.** For instance, "I'm doing better at work but I'm still making mistakes." This discounts the positive and gives more power to the negative. Experiment with replacing "but" with "and" to give both aspects equal weight.

3) **Mind reading** involves convincing yourself what other people are thinking and feeling and why they act as they do, without actual evidence. For instance, you may incorrectly assume that someone doesn't like you. Such misinterpretations can lead to anxiety and depression.

4) **Being the eternal expert** is a recipe for heightened stress, as it necessitates being constantly on guard.

5) **The shoulds** are an all too common thought pattern that can lead to guilt or anger in addition to stress. You may apply your list of shoulds to yourself and others, and no one will reach your expectations.

6) **Blaming** involves holding others responsible for your own pain or holding yourself responsible for the problems of others. If you perceive the solution lies outside of you, you deprive yourself of the power to effect change.

So, by labelling our response eg the mind is catastrophising, we can depersonalise it. We can create space and have choice to instigate mindfulness.

Take a little time to consider your own mind traps and how these patterns effect how you think, behave, relate to yourself and others.

IF YOU CAN NAME IT, YOU CAN TAME IT

Learning to respond rather than react

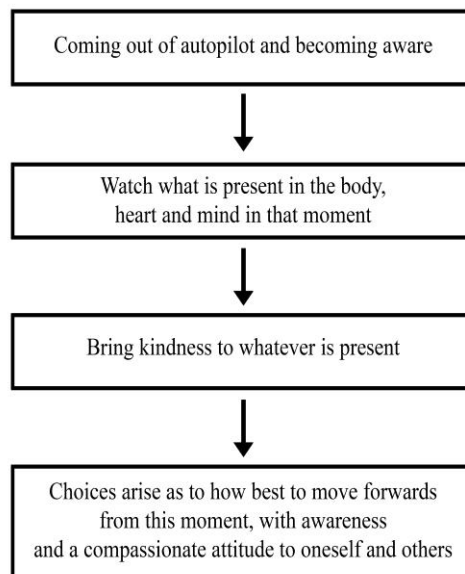
“Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that, space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom”. (Viktor Frankl)



- S- Stop what you are currently doing**
- T- Take one or more abdominal breaths**
- O- Observe your thoughts, feelings and sensations in this moment**
- P- Proceed mindfully**

Try to use this coping strategy when you start to feel stressed or anxious.

Figure 1.1 The Relationship Between Mindfulness and Compassion



The setting of intention behind listening and communications is important and this can support intra and interpersonal habits and patterns around communication experiences.

There is so much more to listening than just hearing with your ears. It means using everything to listen- your mind, heart, intuition, body, spirit/soul.

According to Alidina²,in order to listen to someone deeply and mindfully:

- You must stop doing anything else and set your intention to listen deeply.
- Always look the person in the eye when he speaks.
- Focus entirely on them, putting, aside all your own concerns, worries and agenda.
- Really listen to what the person is saying and how he's saying it.
- Listen with your whole being, your mind and heart, not just your head.
- Be aware of how your posture and tone of voice is part of the listening process.
- Notice your own automatic thoughts as you listen and try to let them go and come back to listening.
- Keep your questions genuine and open rather than trying to change the subject, gently deepening the conversation.
- Let go of judgement, judgmental thoughts, as far as you can.
- Let go of trying to solve the problem, you do not need to give the person the answer.

² Alidina, S (2010) Mindfulness for Dummies, Wiley

TAKING IN THE GOOD ABOUT A LOVED ONE OR LOVED PLACE



This is a technique for learning how to consciously build positive mental and emotional strengths by spending time, savouring our current experiences or recalling positive experiences from the past, being mindful of memory, in relation to the people or animals we care about or the places we love. We spend so much of our time rushing around that we can miss opportunities to appreciate what is right under our noses. We can thank neuroscientist Rick Hanson for introducing this valuable technique into popular culture he says **“The brain is like Velcro for negative experiences and Teflon for the positive”**.

By resting our attention on positive experiences with reference to people, pets or places, we are increasing our ability to deal with stress and reactivity, making us more responsive to life’s challenges, strengthening the immune system, and leading us to greater overall happiness. Whatever we give our mental energy and attention to will make a lasting impression on us and our relationships with others, helping us appreciate and connect with those around us.

Home Practice

“Taking in the Good”

Compassionate Mindful
Movement Practice

Autobiography In Five Short Chapters

Chapter One

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost...I am helpless.
It isn't my fault...
It takes forever to find a way out.

Chapter Two

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in this same place.
But, it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

Chapter Three

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall... it's a habit... but,
My eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is *my* fault.
I get out immediately.

Chapter Four

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

Chapter Five

I walk down another street.
- Portia Nelson, 'Autobiography in Five Short Chapters'
(1994)

SESSION THREE

Developing Resilience

Having learnt some practices and coping strategies to develop personal resilience, we can start to explore how we can become resilient in our lives when interacting with others.

Mindful Relationships

Interpersonal mindfulness, the art of mindful communication and listening, can impact in a significantly positive way, supporting our health and well-being and improving relationships.

We experience ourselves as separate entities, but the practice of meditation and Mindfulness brings us much more in touch with the common humanity we all share. As social animals most of us spend a great deal of time interacting with others and each person we interact with, be it at home, work, socially, or elsewhere, whether the relationship is good or difficult, can provide a doorway to a new world.

Despite our commonalities, as we know, people can be an enormous stress in our lives. Positive emotions help us feel connected, whereas negative feelings such as dislike, hate, being critical or judgemental, anger, resentment, intolerance, envy or jealousy – these all have their roots in feelings of separation. Sometimes it can be the people we are most intimate with that cause us the most stress, maybe because there is more of a sense of responsibility or that they know you so intimately that they know which buttons to press.

Patterns

We not only develop ingrained, habitual styles of thinking as we develop, but also habitual ways of interacting with others. If these patterns are based on dysfunctional parent-child relationships, they may result in dysfunctional relationships with family, co-workers and others in your life today. Mindfulness brings awareness to the dysfunctionality of relationships- their origins and how they manifest now. It helps to recognise and understand the past, acknowledging and validating experiences. Compassion practices help to soften around our behaviour and reactivity, allowing a sense of security, strength, patience, empathy and wisdom to manifest.

Meditation practice develops the qualities that help us put others' needs and feelings above our own, such that we take happiness from the joy and happiness of others as much as - or more than, even - from our own.

Qualities of Interpersonal Mindfulness

We all need to attend to our relationships to help them flourish and grow, like the cultivation of a garden. When relationships become strained or difficult, bringing mindfulness and compassion can potentially prevent them from withering away.

Goldstein and Stahl³ suggest six qualities they consider essential in cultivating interpersonal mindfulness and dramatically improving relationships:

1) Openness

Similar to beginner's mind, this is a quality where you're open to seeing the other person and the relationship as new and fresh, and where you're open to the other person's perspective.

2) Empathy

The first step to empathy is first to identify your own feelings and then you can do this with the other person. Trusting your own intuition in respect of how others are feeling can be effective.

3) Compassion

This quality combines empathy and a wish to ease the suffering of another. Imagine the person as your own child and how you would comfort them.

4) Loving Kindness

This is a quality where you truly wish others well- to be healthy, safe, free from harm and free from fear.

5) Sympathetic joy

This is a quality in which you delight in the happiness and joy of others.

6) Equanimity

This is a quality of wisdom, an evenness and steadiness of mind that comprehends the nature of change. Equanimity gives you more balance and composure in understanding the interconnectedness of all life.

I would also add the following:

Vulnerability, honesty, respect, unconditional positive regard.

Emotional intelligence builds trust in the self and relationships. Through mindfulness practice of observing, listening, communicating, building relationships with the self and others, we can become more emotionally intelligent and trust our own responses more fully.

We can learn to understand the emotional reactions of others without judgement, seeing them as being reliable and honest. We need to remind ourselves of the 10,000 things that have shaped the other person and their emotions, long before we came along.

³ Goldstein, E, Stahl, B (2010), A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook, New Harbinger

Rick Hanson's 10,000 things Meditation Practice

Relax and steady the mind focussing on the breath.

Pick a situation in which you feel someone has wronged you.

Be mindful of your reactions to this person, especially the deeper ones.

Scan yourself for any ill will.

Now reflect on some of the various causes – the ten thousand things – that have lead that person to act in the way that he has.

Consider biologically based factors affecting him, like pain, age, innate temperament or intelligence.

Consider the realities of his life, race, gender, class, job, responsibilities, daily stresses.

Consider whatever you know about his childhood.

Consider major events in his life as an adult.

Consider his mental processes, personality, values, fears, hot buttons, hopes and dreams.

Consider his parents in light of whatever you know or can reasonably guess about them; consider too the factors which may have shaped their lives.

Reflect on the historical events and other upstream forces that have formed the river of causes flowing through his life today.

Look inside yourself again. Do you feel differently now about him? Do you feel any differently about yourself?

This practice helps us to walk in another's shoes. Often with this practice, you may not know a lot of detail about the person. Often when we don't we fill in the gaps with unhelpful thoughts. Thinking differently and looking differently at other people's suffering and recognising that we are all human and we all suffer can be very helpful in reconnecting us with wider humanity.

By placing value on our emotions, we get to know their fabric really well and can remain steadier in times of adversity. It can also help us to determine which emotions are appropriate for which situations.

People with high levels of emotional intelligence are very skilled at detecting emotional distress in others and this culminates in high levels of resilience.

Going at our own pace

If self-compassion is new to you, it's important to go at your own pace, thereby preventing backdraft, represented by the circles of safety, challenge and overwhelm.



Remember, we all have a choice as to how much we do and can always return to the place of safety, using mindfulness and self-soothing exercises to steady us once more until we feel more resilient and resourced.

Identifying the differences between “wants” and “needs”

Wants are personal to the individual and may be materialistic, for example:

“I want to look.....” or “I want to buy a better car”

Needs are universal, experienced, and discovered by sensing in and deepening awareness of what we **really** need. For example:

- Relational needs such as feeling accepted, seen, heard, validated, connected and respected
- Material needs such as a shelter, food, heat, clothing
- Personal needs such as health, emotional growth, developing wisdom

By identifying your core values, you can check whether these are aligned with your needs in order to have a sense of living life congruently.

Home Practice



Compassionately
communicate



Use your own phrases
to feel resilient



Affectionate breathing
practice

SESSION FOUR

Feeling Resourced and Connected

Remember to keep sewing your parachute a little bit every day, rather than waiting until you have to jump out of a plane”.

Adapted from Jon Kabat-Zinn

The Mountain Meditation

This practice helps to create a sense of stability and equanimity.



Adapted from Jon Kabat-Zinn, ‘Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life’.

Bring your awareness to your breath – the rise and fall of your abdomen.

Once the mind has settled a little, bring to your mind a picture of the most beautiful mountain you know or can imagine. Notice its mass, its peak, its shape, the steepness of its sides, any trees, maybe snow and ice, streams and waterfalls. Sense the base of the mountain rooted into the earth’s crust. Notice how massive, stable and unmoving the mountain appears.

Once you feel familiar with the image of the mountain, see if you can bring it into your own body – your head is the lofty peak, your shoulders and arms the sides of the mountain, your bottom, legs and feet become the lower slopes and solid base rooted to your cushion or chair. Invite yourself to fully become the breathing mountain – a centred, stable and unmoving presence. Don’t worry if you find this difficult – a sense of your body as the mountain will be fine.

Now notice your emotions, thoughts and feelings – visualise them as the weather around your mountain. Is your weather right now sunny and calm, windy, wet and turbulent, foggy and murky, cold and harsh, or a mixture? Just allow your weather to be the way it is – there is no need to change it. Allow the weather to simply happen around your mountain.

Notice if it changes, intensifies or lessens through the meditation.....

Stay with yourself as the breathing mountain for as long as you feel able to.....as the weather changes, the light changes, the days change, the seasons change, the years change, the mountain just sits, simply being itself.

Storms may come, but still the mountain sits. Calmness abiding all change.

Abdominal Breathing

Many people who seek treatment for symptoms of stress and anxiety have discovered that their breathing is impaired or restricted in some way. Very often they are experiencing rapid and shallow breathing, known as hyperventilation.

When the breath is rapid and shallow and moved predominantly by the upper chest, back and shoulder muscles, it is tiring, using muscles that were not designed for this purpose. Hyperventilation causes loss of carbon dioxide which results in the blood becoming more alkaline, adversely affecting the transport of various important elements in the blood and may result in:

- cerebral vasoconstriction – mental fuzziness, memory lapses, headaches, poor sleep, bad dreams
- cerebral glucose deficit
- coronary vasoconstriction – chest wall tightness or pain, palpitations
- cardiac arrhythmias
- too little oxygen in the cells results in lowered cellular energy production
- bronchial constriction – exacerbation of asthma
- gut smooth muscle constriction – exacerbation of IBS
- platelets clump together more - increased risk of blood clots
- calcium imbalance
- magnesium deficiency
- muscle fatigue, spasm and pain
- loss of CO₂ directly stimulates neuronal activity, with increased sensory and motor discharges – muscle tension and spasm, heightened perceptions
- higher incidence of allergies due to histamine excess – sweaty palms and flushed face.

It is very common – figures suggest that 40% of people attending their GP are hyperventilating. When we understand the symptoms of hyperventilation it often helps us to make sense of all the apparently disconnected symptoms. Once we have an explanation, we are more informed of the benefits of natural breathing and can feel more in control of our health and wellbeing

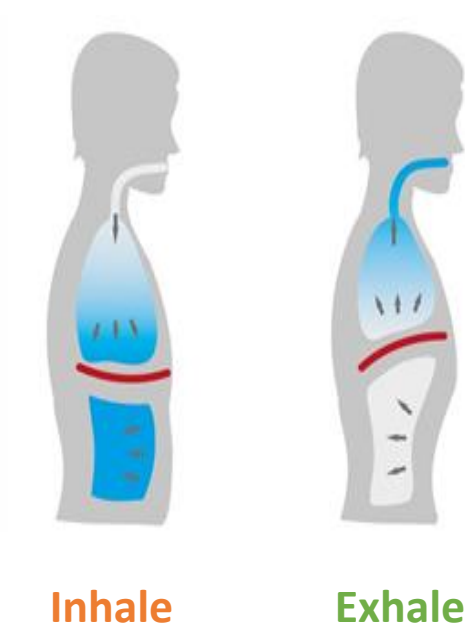
Overview

If you imagine a little baby lying in their cot fast asleep, you'll see the gentle rise and fall of the abdomen as it breathes in and out. Somewhere along the line many of us have left this relaxed pattern of breath behind. There may be several reasons for this which may include:

- 1) poor posture, rounding the shoulders and collapsing the front of the body
- 2) increasing stress in people's lives and a corresponding rise in associated hormones
- 3) sedentary lifestyles, weakening muscles used in effective breathing techniques
- 4) emphasis on tightening the stomach muscles
- 5) a history of asthma
- 6) tight and restrictive clothing

Clearly, without this oxygen and movement we become susceptible to illness and disease. We have an increase in circulating stress hormones which, in turn, promote upper chest breathing and the cycle is perpetuated.

What is abdominal breathing?



Abdominal breathing is also known as diaphragmatic breathing. The diaphragm is the large muscle located between the chest and the abdomen. When it contracts the dome is forced downwards, displacing the abdominal organs and causing the abdomen to expand. This causes a negative pressure within the chest forcing air into the lungs quite naturally. The negative pressure also pulls blood into the chest improving the venous return to the heart. To breathe out, the diaphragm domes upwards, creating more space in the abdomen for the organs to return to their original position, flattening the belly and air is pushed out of the lungs.

Abdominal Breathing Practice



Anchoring with feet on the floor and chair/ surface for grounded support



Whole breath awareness- movement of the body with the breath



Hands on chest and abdomen, sensing into them individually and their relationship



Remove hand that is moving the least and place back on the lap. Sit with an awareness of how it feels to sense the hand moving the most on the body



Remove that hand and feel what it's like to have an awareness of the body breathing now. Note any differences from when you started the practice.

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Feeling more connected – P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.



The intention is that you take what you have learnt from this course into your daily lives. So here is a simple way to remember the key aspects of what we have learnt and to keep you connected to them.

- P Present moment awareness** – notice when you are on auto pilot and keep bringing your mind back, gently and kindly, to the present moment when you notice it has wandered off
- R Resilience** - practicing Mindfulness and Compassion enables us to cultivate this and be better equipped to deal with stress and cope with situations that arise in our lives
- A Acceptance** – noticing what comes in to our awareness and bring a gentle acceptance to this, just as we would a close friend or loved one when they share what they are experiencing in their bodies, hearts and minds
- C Compassionate Communication** – being compassionate to ourselves and others enables us to feel more connected in our lives, be mindful of how you speak to yourself and others, be kind and reach out for support when you need it
- T Taking in the Good** – remembering the negativity bias – it’s not our fault it is how we are hard wired. Taking in the good and gratitude practice support us with this and help us feel more positive
- I Intention**– set the intention to practice and change the neuro pathways in your brain, allowing you to continue to have choices in how your respond to life’s experiences as they arise. Set an alarm, schedule it in to your day, talk to others about what you are doing and why.
- C Caring for others** – Mindfulness and Compassion helps us to keep our own cups full and continue to be effective caregivers to the people we support and love in our lives
- E Every day** – practice Mindfulness and Compassion every day, if you remember you haven’t practiced, be kind to yourself, then sit or set aside time to practice that day.

A Return to Love by Marianne Williamson

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.
We ask ourselves,
Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?
Actually, who are you not to be?
You are a child of God.
Your playing small does not serve the world.
There is nothing enlightened about shrinking
So that other people won't feel insecure around you.
We are all meant to shine, as children do.
We were born to make manifest the glory of God
that is within us.
It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.
And as we let our own light shine,
we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.
As we are liberated from our own fear,
our presence automatically liberates others.”

We hope you enjoyed the course. Thank you for coming

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