

## **INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS PRACTICE 6 WEEK COURSE – Developing a mindfulness practice for greater wellbeing.**

### **Does your mind work overtime? Do you feel stressed a lot of the time?**

Modern life is faster, busier and more stressful than ever. This course is aimed at people who are new to Mindfulness as well as those who are looking for the chance to reignite an existing practice which may have lapsed. We will explore how mindfulness practices can help you to better manage daily stress. The practices can help you to slow down and more able to live in the present rather than getting caught up in thoughts about the future or the past. The introductory course will help you to gain a richer understanding and a greater awareness of yourself, your needs and how to best meet them.

Everyone has day to day stresses of some sort or another and this course is appropriate for everyone who would like to learn practical tools and techniques that you can easily incorporate into your day and help to look after your general wellbeing and levels of stress. We ask that people are generally feeling well in themselves when attending the course.

If you are currently feeling unwell, anxious or depressed or if you have something major going on in your life now or recently that is having a negative or overwhelming impact and you wish to develop a mindfulness practice, please get in touch and we can suggest alternative courses with a more experienced teacher.

### **So what can you do?**

Mindful meditation is a proven way of reducing stress and has many other recognised benefits including promoting a greater sense of happiness! It is widely used throughout the NHS and there is a growing body of scientific evidence as to the widespread benefits.

### **Dates of the next course:**

There will be one more course in 2017.

1. Tuesday evenings for 6 weeks from 3<sup>rd</sup> October until 7<sup>th</sup> November, 7pm until 9pm.

Price: £160 and includes a book, a CD, weekly handouts and refreshments. £25 of the course fee will be donated to the SAMH, the Scottish Association for Mental Health, registered Scottish Charity number SC-008897. SAMH provide mental health care services and support in communities as well as working to end the stigma around mental health.

The course will be held in the Studio room at Acorn Art, 27 East King Street, Helensburgh, G84 7QQ. In the evenings it may be possible to park on the street, but if not there is ample parking in the Co-op just opposite.

For bookings & more info contact Cate on 07444 980939 or email [cate@helensburghyoga.com](mailto:cate@helensburghyoga.com)

### How to book:

This course must be pre-booked in advance as numbers are limited to a small group. Before booking, please read the detailed information 'about mindfulness' below so you understand what the course is all about and have a level of understanding about what to expect.

To reserve your place and book, please email [cate@helensburghyoga.com](mailto:cate@helensburghyoga.com) so we can arrange for you to pay a deposit of £50 and also have a quick chat about your expectations for the course.

The balance of the course fee is due on the first night of the course either in cash or by cheque or by electronic transfer before the start of the course.

If you have not already spoken in person to Cate about the course, she will give you a very quick call to say hello and have a brief conversation about what you hope to gain from the course and to answer any further questions you may have a few weeks before the start of the course.

If after any initial chat it's felt that the course does not meet your needs at this time, a full refund of your deposit will be given. If you cancel, a refund of the deposit can only be given if we are able to fill your place by someone else, which we will endeavour to do.

### **Booking Form**

Please book me a place on The Introduction to Mindfulness Practice course starting - May / Oct

Name .....

Email ..... Phone.....

I include a cheque for £ .....

I have deposited £..... into the bank account

**Signed:** .....

### **What is mindfulness?**

Mindfulness is paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment and without judgement. It offers ways of being present to our moment-by-moment experience, with an attitude of acceptance, curiosity and kindness. Mindfulness practice helps us to see more clearly the patterns of the mind and teaches us to engage with the present moment rather than being caught up in thoughts about the past or the future.

Mindfulness is a skill that we can develop which allows us to approach and observe our thoughts, physical sensations, experiences and feelings without being taken over or absorbed by them. This practice can become a powerful tool to improve our quality of life; by being more aware of our thoughts, physical sensations and emotions it means we have greater choice and we no longer need to habitually react or constantly be stuck in 'automatic pilot mode'.

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### **What are the benefits of mindfulness?**

Mindfulness allows us to live more fully in the present which can bring increased joy and vitality and has been clinically shown to be effective in the following areas:

1. Reduce worries, anxiety and distress
2. Enjoy more energy
3. Create a sense of calm
4. Learn how to relax more and regulate emotions
5. Enhance awareness and creativity
6. Improve concentration and increase productivity
7. Develop a sense of empathy and connectedness
8. Enjoy better health and sleep

### **Why is mindfulness important?**

Unhappiness, stress and depression are on the rise: the World Health Organisation estimates that this will pose the second-biggest health burden globally by 2020. There has been a wealth of research which has shown that the practice of mindfulness not only helps to relieve stress and anxiety, but also improves sleep, improves effectiveness at work, decreases irritability and increases satisfaction in close relationships. It has shown to improve the immune system and has been applied to a wide range of health conditions.

Life is just getting busier and busier with many distractions pulling for our attention. Most of us encounter day to day stresses and sometimes struggle to enjoy life as much as we might, or as much as we used to with the pressures of daily life. Many people who do not suffer from depression, or have a specific health condition do feel like they experience a general sense of dullness, or like something is just not being 'fulfilled' in life, the feeling of 'is this it?'. If this sounds like you, developing a Mindfulness practice could help to improve such feelings, to better manage the day to day stresses and strains we all experience to one degree or another and to find some more enjoyment in life.

### **About the course:**

This course offers effective methods for dealing with our busy minds and offers practical tools and techniques to better able to deal with the business of daily life, including the feeling of having a constant stream of thoughts in the mind, worries and stresses. The course is delivered across 6 weeks. This introductory course content is based on the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programmes developed by Professor Jon Kabat Zinn, who has combined modern medical research with Buddhist principles of wellbeing.

We closely follow the content of the book written by Danny Penman and Mark Williams called Mindfulness, A practical guide to finding peace in a frantic world and we provide this book and the associated CD as part of the course as well as shorter weekly handouts summarising the key points covered each week. The introductory 6 week course will cover most of the content of a full Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction course, but not all. As a participant, you are strongly encouraged to continue with your practice after the initial 6 weeks and this is really the only way to get the benefits, to practice! There are free meditation sessions held locally at the Wat Prah Dhammakaya Buddhist Centre on Charlotte Street, Helensburgh where you can gain ongoing

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support and develop your practice further if you wish. We will provide a list of further resources including online apps, websites and books. We may also provide some practice sessions if there is demand.

### **How can mindfulness help me?**

A regular mindfulness practice can develop a greater awareness of ourselves. This can help us to see the patterns of our minds a little more clearly and instead of trying to change the content of our thoughts, or trying not to think at all (*which is a common misconception of meditation*), we can instead learn to change our relationship to our thoughts, seeing them as mental events. We can view thoughts just like clouds in the sky, they come, and they go like a changing weather pattern. With this knowledge it can become easier to rest in the present moment, without having to go over the past in our mind, or worry about the future. There will still be unpleasant experiences (because life will always give us both pleasure and pain in some aspect or another), but we can lessen the suffering that is the result of unhelpful, automatic reactions. Even as a mindfulness practitioner you will still experience stress, but you may well find it much easier to manage this day to day.

### **Through mindfulness we can learn to:**

1. develop ways to prevent stress getting the better of us
2. instead of being in 'automatic pilot' mode, we can begin to enjoy life more
3. make more rational and wise choices when life gets more challenging
4. develop a greater sense of perspective and inner calm, peace and contentment
5. become more aware of ourselves, our bodies, our thoughts and mind
6. notice repetitive and habitual thought patterns and disengage from them
7. improve our self-worth and self esteem
8. be less self-critical and judgemental

### **What is covered within the course?**

The introductory course teaches us how to practice mindful meditation through a variety of techniques so we can choose which we connect with the most and continue to practice these in the future. Even with just 10 minutes practice a day it can make a big difference to how you feel and how you are able to cope with the day to day stresses of life.

We focus on the four foundations of mindfulness; being aware of our breath, our body, our feelings or emotions and our mental state. We cover mindful movement (this is very gentle and can be done seated if needs be), a lying down body scan meditation where we become aware of each part of the body, and seated meditations where we focus on the breath, the body, thoughts and sounds. If we get the opportunity we will also practice a walking meditation. We encourage you to do the seated meditations on a chair (not cross legged on the floor unless this is very comfortable for you). Each week we practice meditations and then discuss our experiences in class. We discuss some ideas and

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tools to help with any obstacles or challenges that may arise in relation to doing the practices as well as how we can begin to develop a little more kindness towards our self and others.

### **Who is this course for?**

This introductory course is perfect for anyone who experiences day to day stress and are looking for a way to help develop more calm, peace and perspective in your life.

It is useful if you tend to worry a lot from day to day, have trouble getting to sleep at night with thoughts whirring around your head or if you feel like something is missing from your life; you just feel a low-level sense of dullness and just don't enjoy life as much as you used to. Developing a mindfulness practice can help you to positively disengage from day to day concerns and to feel more joy and vitality for life.

### **If I am too busy - do I really need to practice at home?**

The key to developing a mindfulness practice is to practice! The benefits will only come with practice, and like most things in life, you only get out what you put in. To see more clearly parts of ourselves that we might have been living with for as long as we can remember may not happen overnight and will take a little commitment. We ask that you practice most days during the week, for between 10 - 30 minutes (we build up to 30 minutes towards the latter weeks). Each week the meditations change slightly, so you can find the one best suited to you, but you will be given simple instructions, a CD to follow and hand-outs to support you. Developing a new healthy habit is not always easy and we discuss the main challenges to this as part of the course.

If for some reason you are unable to practice as much as this, it would still be worth attending the course. You will learn how to practice and can do so more regularly later, (though of course you will get more from the course if you do the full daily practice as requested). Through beginning the practice and seeing the benefits it can bring, you may find you are motivated to practice more. You will also be given details of practice groups locally and in Glasgow where you can continue your journey and get support. You will also receive a list of resources to learn more and to help support your practice, including books, websites and online apps.

### **What will be the size of the group / class and will I need to speak?**

The maximum number of people in the group will be 10 (and if we have this many participants there may be a second teacher as part of the group). There will be opportunities to share your experiences within the group and in smaller break out groups if the group is larger than 6; however you are not required to speak if you do not want to. The group will be structured to be a safe and supportive environment. We will not be dwelling on the past or looking for psychological theories or explanations for our experiences – this is not a self-help or a therapy group. We will simply be exploring and investigating our present experience, where we are now and invite helpful discussion of our experiences of practicing the meditations and how this is affecting our day to day lives.

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### **Do I need to have an interest in Buddhism?**

No, the course is secular and open to anyone regardless of their beliefs. The practice originally stems from the Buddhist tradition; Professor Dr John Kabat Zinn integrated it into Western Medicine and developed the course content as secular. Although mindfulness has its origins in Buddhism, the practice itself is not religious. Anyone can practice mindfulness from any religion as can someone who has no religion; and those who do not believe in religion can also practice mindfulness. The practice is attracting increasing interest among western clinical psychologists and psychiatrists as a non-pharmacological technique which can bring about positive change and health benefits.

### **Who teaches the course?**

Cate Thompson will lead the course and depending on numbers of participants may be joined by a second teacher.

Cate was first introduced to Mindfulness practice in 2005. She has practiced some degree of Mindfulness ever since, some periods more intensely than others. Since 2014 when she started yoga teacher training Cate committed more seriously to the practice and has recently begun attending retreats and regular group practice sessions.

Cate completed the Mindfulness Teacher training offered by Ratna Devi and Dr Neil Rothwell in 2015. Ratna Devi (Dr Louise Holtbernd) is a practicing Buddhist and Mindfulness teacher based in Glasgow and regularly leads retreats on the Holy Isle and other places. Dr. Neil Rothwell is a clinical psychologist and is the clinical lead for Mindfulness for the NHS in Scotland. Cate is also a registered yoga teacher and works part time as a mentor to support University students with mental health issues.

She has a British Psychological Society (*BPS*) accredited degree in Psychology with Honours, a COSCA certificate in Counselling Skills (*Scotland's professional body for Counselling and Psychotherapy*), the First Aid for Mental Health certificate as well as a First Aid at work certificate. Cate is hoping to undertake further Mindfulness teacher training next year once her young daughter is a little older.

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