

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is about paying attention - deliberately - and without judgment, as best you can, to what is going on in your body and your mind and in the world around you.

- Mindfulness and meditation can help us develop our inner resources to cope with stress, anxiety and depression, the effects of pain and chronic disease; studies worldwide show significant clinical improvement in the symptoms of recurrent depression, ME, anxiety and stress as a result of this practice.
- Mindfulness can make life more enjoyable, interesting, and fulfilling.
- Being in touch enables us to cope with difficulty and the more we meditate and practice mindfulness, the more we experience a greater sense of calm, wellbeing, and equanimity.
- We also become more able to recognise the many choices available to us when stressful situations arise.

This leaflet aims to introduce the concept of mindfulness and provide some basic information about books and materials available in the UEA Library, courses run by the UEA Counselling Service and websites that might be of interest and links to other local resources.



Introduction

Mindfulness is a technique in which a person becomes intentionally aware of his or her thoughts and actions in the present moment, non-judgmentally. It plays a central role in Buddhism and in a secular context it has attracted increasing interest among Western psychologists as a non-pharmacological means of dealing with anxiety and depressive mood states.

A powerful influence taking us away from being 'fully present' in each moment is our automatic tendency to judge our experience. We can find it not quite right in some way - not what should be happening, not good enough, not what we expected or wanted. These judgements can lead to sequences of thoughts about blame, or what needs to be changed, or how things could or should be different. Often, these thoughts will take us, quite automatically, down some fairly well worn paths in our minds. In this way, we may lose

awareness of the moment, and also lose the freedom to choose what, if any, action needs to be taken.

By contrast, mindfulness practice can increase awareness so that we can respond to situations with choice, rather than react automatically. We do that by practising becoming aware of where our attention is and deliberately changing the focus of attention, over and over again. Mindfulness is not about trying to get anywhere -but simply being aware of where you are - and allowing yourself to BE where and AS you are.

Mindfulness is meditation in our lives. It looks at how we are often deceived by our minds into *reacting* to rather than *responding* to events, thoughts, bodily experiences and emotions.

Library Resources

A basic search on the UEA Library Public Catalogue on the topic of mindfulness shows a variety of books and materials. Some were written by Jon Kabat-Zinn who has been very influential in this field. As Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical School he taught mindfulness meditation as a technique to help people cope with stress, anxiety, pain and illness. In 1979 he developed the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Programme in 1979, an eight week course which combined meditation and yoga to help patients cope with stress, pain, and illness by using moment-to-moment awareness.

Kabat-Zinn, J, Segal, Z. V., Williams, J. M.G., & Teasdale, J. D. (2007) *The mindful way through depression : freeing yourself from chronic unhappiness* Guildford Press: New York and London (RC 537 WILL)

This readable new book offers practical help for those dealing with depression. It explains why our normal attempts to 'think' our way out of a bad mood or just 'snap out of it' can lead us into a deeper downward spiral. Drawing on meditative traditions and cognitive therapy, the authors demonstrate how to sidestep mental habits that lead to despair, including rumination and self-blame, so that you can face life's challenges with greater resilience. Part 1 examines how mind, body and emotions work together to compound and sustain depression and how this vicious circle can be broken. Part 2 provides both insight and practical exercises to relate this thinking to your own experience. Here basic practices of mindfulness are introduced and in Part 3 these are refined to relate to negative thoughts, feelings, sensations and behaviours that combine to create the spiral of depression. Part 4 provides a unified strategy for living more fully and effectively, particularly in the face of depression. The book has 273 pages plus a CD of seven guided meditations.

Kabat-Zinn, Jon (2005) *Full catastrophe living: using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. New York: Delta (RA785 KAB)

This 467 page book is designed to give the reader full access to the training program patients undergo in the stress clinic and is a manual for helping readers to develop their own personal meditation practice and for learning how to use mindfulness to promote improved health and healing in their own lives. Part I guides through the major techniques, with directions for how to practice them. Part II provides a view of how mindfulness is related to physical and mental health. Part III discusses what stress is and how our awareness and understanding of it can help us to handle it more appropriately. Further parts explain how mindfulness can be used in specific areas that cause people significant stress and also give you practical suggestions for maintaining momentum in the meditation practice.

Kabat-Zinn, Jon (2005) *Wherever you go, there you are: mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. New York: Hyperion. (BF637.M4 KAB)

This smaller 278 page book aims "to provide brief and easy access to the essence of mindfulness meditation and its applications, for people whose lives may or may not be dominated by immediate problems of stress, pain, and illness. It is offered particularly for those who resist structured programs and for people who don't like to be told what to do but are curious enough about mindfulness and its relevance to try to piece things together for themselves with a few hints and suggestions here and there." The first part explores the rationale and background for taking on or deepening a personal practice of mindfulness. The second explores some basic aspects of formal meditation practice and the third sets out a range of applications

and perspectives on mindfulness. Certain chapters in all three parts end with explicit suggestions for incorporating aspects of both formal and informal mindfulness practice into one's life.

Segal, Z. V., Williams, J. M.G., & Teasdale, J. D. (2002) *Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for depression: A new approach to preventing relapse* Guildford Press: New York (RC 537 SEG)

This is a key early book in the history of mindfulness-based therapy and is valuable for its clear and authoritative account of this path. It is not therefore primarily a self-help book. After introductory chapters on depression and the development of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), it aims to provide a full account of a MBCT programme, session by session. It includes the handouts and forms used in sessions and presents the material in ways that can be adapted and used easily. There are 332 pages.

Audio Guides

The library also has associated audio material such as sound recordings on Sitting meditation, The Body Scan and Mindful Movement produced by Kathleen Madigan, Mindfulness instructor'(all BF637.M4 MIN).

Counselling Service Courses

The UEA Counselling Service sponsors courses facilitated by Kathleen Madigan who has training in the teaching of Mindfulness- Based Approaches from the University of Wales, Bangor, Centre for Mindfulness Research. If you are interested to find out about plans for the next Counselling Service-based Mindfulness course please email csr@uea.ac.uk or telephone 01603 592651 or call in to the Main Counselling Service.

Websites

www.mindfulness-east-anglia.co.uk [the website for Kathleen Madigan]

www.mindfulness-meditation.net [site for Catherine Grey and Anna Black, teachers in London]

www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness [North Wales Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice]

www.mbct.co.uk [the website for Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy]

www.stressreductiontapes.com [Order Jon Kabat-Zinn's CDs here]

<http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/index.aspx> [Centre for Mindfulness, University of Massachusetts, USA]

Information provided for clients of the University Counselling Service

