

Additional File 1 – A full description of the mindfulness practice.

Week and Subject	Description	Practices
<p>Week 1: Where is your mind? <i>Coming off automatic pilot and being present. Training the mind to pay attention – taking control.</i></p>	<p>In this first session participants are introduced to mindfulness. What it is, what are the benefits of practicing and why specifically it may be able to help with asthma?</p> <p>Central to mindfulness is self-awareness, understanding what we do and why? As we develop self-awareness through practicing mindfulness we are better able to self-regulate and change behaviours.</p> <p>Mindfulness is the awareness that comes from paying attention, on purpose, non-judgementally to our experience in the present moment. Effectively, we learn to be with our experience, both internally and externally, as it is, not wishing it to be different. Central to dissatisfaction in life is wanting things to be different to how they are, which means we add a layer of negative psychology to our experience. For example, we of course do not want to be in pain, but by bracing against it, resisting it, we make it worse.</p> <p>Mindfulness cannot change our experiences but can alter how we relate to them. We will consider the model of how mindfulness works, through training attention, the attitude or approach we bring to experience and by setting our intention. We will explain how we begin to train mindfulness and we will also look at the impact of stress.</p> <p>Research has shown that nearly half the time our mind is not on the task intended, it is wandering. The problem with this is that when our mind is wandering it is unhappy. It gets caught up in past events, re-running them or worrying about the future, it has a negative bias and is generally preoccupied with ourselves. This means that our thoughts are emotionally charged and we are more likely to be judgemental and reactive. This leads to misinterpretations and misunderstandings. Mind wandering is increased when we are in a low mood or we are stressed. We will introduce mindfulness practices to train attention, so learning to gather and calm a “scattered” mind.</p>	<p><u>Reducing stress and anxiety</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Settling and “checking in” - A simple technique to release tension and learn to relax - 5 Senses practice - When stressed or anxious we can learn to calm ourselves by deliberately turning to the sensory mode of mind <p><u>Attention training</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Core mindfulness practice: Breath awareness meditation (sensations of the breath in the abdomen used as a focus). If there is anxiety around focusing on the breath then an external focus such as sound can be used. - Attention training - Breath counting as a simple means to train attention <p>Commitment to practice is important, but should not to be a burden. Cultivate the attitude of kindness and acceptance. The intention is to provide a “tool kit” of practices that can be used and adapted for each individual.</p> <p>Adaptations for Difficult Asthma Populations: If individuals have a problem focusing on the breath they can use breath co-ordinated with simple movement or train attention using an external focus. Throughout guidance, focus on sensations in the abdomen rather than the chest or nostrils.</p> <p>Acknowledge there may be issues with the breath, but that participants are able to stop if they become uncomfortable. In this case, momentarily stop particular practices, and direct the attention to the sensations of feet on the floor.</p>

Week 2: Reconnecting mind and body

Becoming emotionally aware – Learning to control our emotions rather than them controlling us.

In this session we are deliberately learning to tune into physiological signals from the body. Learning to reconnect with the body. Often we are caught up in our heads thinking and miss the physiological signals and before we realise we find ourselves caught up in an emotion – the signals from the body at this point serve as feedback to amplify our emotion. If this is allowed to continue it can spiral out of control and we find ourselves overwhelmed by emotions. With mindfulness we are learning to “tune” into physiological signals and so using the body as a “barometer”, an early warning system of emotions arising. We can then take action to interrupt this automatic feedback loop that amplifies emotions.

We will explore distinctive signatures in the body for emotions and discuss how somatic sensations affect decisions (embodied cognition). We will look at how mindfulness can be used to regulate emotions. How acknowledging emotions can effectively “turn down” the volume and we will consider refractory period of emotions and how that colours our behaviours.

Week 3: Mind games

Understanding our minds can ‘play tricks’ with us, becoming aware of familiar thought patterns that may be based on false mental models. Appreciating that we often miss the interpretation of experience and that “thoughts are not facts”.

This week explores the games our minds like to play, the familiar stories that come round. We look at exercises to see how our mind makes assumptions and how our thoughts can affect how we feel and influence our actions. We will look at how we often miss the “interpretation” stage and think that an experience itself has led to how we feel and behave.

We consider that our thoughts are not facts and that they can at times get us into trouble.

We will look at how we can use mindfulness to deal with thoughts. We will expand this to look at how mindfulness can be used to explore difficulties both emotional and physical. We will consider how ‘turning towards’ and acceptance of difficulties can prevent the extra layer of negative psychology being added.

A key practice of MBCT, a Breathing Space will be introduced here. This will be used as a means of giving space and changing perspective. A way of taking a pause and stepping back especially when facing difficulties.

Week 4: Practice and Habit

Establishing practice, learning to take care of ourselves and integrating mindfulness into our daily routine.

This final session looks at how to establish and sustain a mindfulness practice. We will explore different options for integrating mindfulness into daily life. As most of the time we are moving we will look at using mindful movement as a formal practice.

Reducing stress and anxiety

- Settling “checking in” - to release tension and relax

Reconnecting mind and body

- Stretch & Breath

Raising awareness of physical sensations in the body, playing with limits, edges to become aware that we can be with discomfort and move away from it, as well as accepting our limitations. Connecting to the body can be easier with the simple movement of stretching. This practice may be beneficial prior to a seated or formal meditation as a means of setting into a practice.

- Core mindfulness practice: Body scan

Playing with narrow and broad focus as a means of training attention.

Learning to really tune in and sense body sensations rather than think about them.

Continuing to work with attitudes of kindness and acceptance, both within our mindfulness practice and towards ourselves.

Developing curiosity (growth mindset) and working with an approach mindset. Learning to be with experience as it unfolds rather than getting caught up in not wanting things to be a certain way and pushing against them.

Reducing stress and anxiety

- Settling “checking in” - to release tension and relax

Learning to Pause - responding rather than react

- Breathing Space – Introducing the breathing space as a bridge between formal and informal practice. Learning to respond rather than react – take a pause to step out of habituated patterns. Overtime being able to use this as a means of being with difficult experiences.

Observing thoughts - becoming familiar with what goes on in our heads

- Core mindfulness practice: Breath, Body, Sounds and Thoughts

A prelude to the mindfulness practice of sitting with our experience. Here we settle with the breath, turn towards body sensations as a way of approaching difficulty e.g. discomfort in body. Opening to sounds as an analogy that things come and go before coming to observe thoughts. We are learning to be with thoughts observing them rather than getting caught up into them. Suggestions of how to observe thoughts e.g. on clouds, buses etc... are introduced. As we observe thoughts we begin to be aware of the familiar patterns of thoughts that drive our emotions and behaviours.

Continuing to work with mindsets and attitudes. Aware of the “harsh critic” that sits in our head and berates us. Cultivating compassion for ourselves.

Reducing stress and anxiety

Settling “checking in” - to release tension and relax

Learning to pause and take appropriate action

- Breathing Space – expanding the Breathing space to pause and add an action

We will look at how we can take care of ourselves, what action steps we can introduce to prevent stress and exhaustion and lowering of mood.

We will recap on mindfulness techniques that have been introduced during the course and how we might be able to adapt them. We will look at informal practices that can be used throughout the day, as well as looking at short “emergency” practices that can be used specifically to deal with difficulties. Establishing a “tool kit” for on going use.

step

Integrating mindfulness

- Core mindfulness practice - Mindful movement
- Informal practices e.g. STOP
- “Emergency” practices e.g. RAIN

Participants will be able to take away a personalised plan for integrating mindfulness into their lives and how it might help them. The importance of continued practice and support will be considered, along with cultivating how to be “kind” to ourselves. We will discuss optional practices such as compassion and gratitude practices. They will receive additional recordings to assist with maintaining their practice, as well as practices such as a sleep meditation
