

## **Mindfulness- Based Stress Reduction: An 8 week course in mindfulness Starting September 26th 2017**

Please take time to read this information through carefully before forwarding your application form.

**Course teacher:** Gwennie Fraser

**Venue:** Grainger Suite, The County Hotel, Neville Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 5DF.  
(Immediately opposite Central Station)

**Course dates:** 6.30pm- 8.45pm

Session 1: Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> September

Session 2: Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> October

Session 3: Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> October

Session 4: Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> October

(No session on October due to school half term)

Session 5: Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> October

Session 6: Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> November

Session 7: Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> November

Session 8: Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November

**Day of Practice:** Saturday 18<sup>th</sup>  
November

10 am - 3.30 pm at Newton and Bywell Community Hall, Newton, near Stocksfield, NE43 7UL

**Cost:** £250 (£180 Concessions).

There are a small number of concessions available to people on state benefit or low income.

The fee includes an orientation session with your course teacher, eight course sessions of two hours, in between session phone contact with your teacher if you need support with the course work, a course handbook and a set of practice Audio CDs or MP3 files.

It also includes an experiential day of mindfulness practice which will be held after week 7 of the course on Saturday 18th November from 10 am to 3.30pm, in the beautiful setting of Newton and Bywell Community Hall, Stocksfield, 15 miles from Newcastle. This day provides an opportunity to experience an extended period of practice in a quiet, natural environment, and to deepen, develop and integrate your mindfulness practice and learning from the course along with others who have completed the 8 week programme.

### **Course aims**

The aim of the course is to bring more awareness and acceptance in to everyday life by establishing a daily mindfulness practice; to deepen understanding of the way we think, feel and react to stress; to understand and practice mindful responses to stress.

- It teaches us to take better care of ourselves so that we are able to live our lives in a fuller and healthier way.
- It promotes a way of being that helps us tackle life problems - physical, mental, social and emotional. The focus of the mindfulness practice is to learn to be aware of the small changes in the physical sensations in your body; what is happening in the world around you (using your physical senses) and your thoughts, emotions and moods.
- The course programme encourages us to develop the skill of being aware of our experiences (pleasant, unpleasant and neutral) from moment to moment - so that we can learn to respond more skilfully to situations rather than simply reacting automatically.
- Overall, the course is often helpful in dealing with an ongoing difficulty - the problem may not change but we can learn to relate to it differently.
- Staying in touch with the present, from one moment to the next, may lead you to experience yourself differently, perhaps feeling less stuck, or recognizing more strength, balance and confidence in yourself. Most people completing the programme report lasting physical and psychological benefits including:
  - Greater self-confidence and more acceptance of life as it is.
  - An increased ability to cope effectively with both short and long -term stressful situations.
  - An increased ability to relax and experience calm.

## **Who is the course for?**

The course is suitable for most people. The programme is known to benefit people with a range of physical and psychological health problems, but it is not necessary to have a specific health problem to find it helpful. We all experience difficulty in our lives and the course can teach skills to help manage difficulty. Illnesses or difficulty may not change, but the way in which we deal with our experience can shift, making it all feel easier. Being more aware and accepting of our thoughts and feelings means we are in a better place to make wise choices, and deal with difficulties more effectively.

Some participants come to the course because of a specific physical or mental health problems, or to learn how to manage existing health difficulties; others come to help themselves with more general stresses and an interest in living life more fully and skilfully, and a strong interest in learning how to establish a daily mindfulness practice. Sometimes people want to do the course for professional reasons as a first step towards learning to use the approach to help others. You do not need to have any previous knowledge or experience of mindfulness, or meditation, to come on the course.

## **A Note to Those in the Helping Professions**

I welcome on this course healthcare students and professionals who are interested in mindfulness for professional reasons. However, to become familiar with mindfulness and its use in working with others you must first experience the course on a personal level. It is important that everyone fully participates as themselves and not as an observer. This course is about all of us (including myself as teacher) experimenting with relating differently to our experience, including our pain and our suffering. The benefits of increased awareness and compassion for oneself extend naturally to others, and clients and patients are best served by those who embody mindfulness themselves. It is essential to understand that this eight-week course does not, on its own, equip participants to teach mindfulness to others.

The 8 week course is a pre-requisite for those interested in going on to train in mindfulness-based approaches for use with clients. Information on training in teaching mindfulness-based approaches can be found on the website for the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice at Bangor University ([www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness](http://www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness)). You can access a link to the national Good Practice Guidelines for teachers ([www.mindfulnesssteachersuk.org.uk](http://www.mindfulnesssteachersuk.org.uk).)

## **Orientation/assessment phone call**

After I have received your application, I will contact you by email to arrange a convenient time to speak on the phone for up to 45 minutes. This is an important opportunity to talk about your application together and what the course involves in more detail, and any particular personal considerations there may be for you in undertaking the course at this

time. It is also a chance for you to ask any questions you may have, and to generally explore whether it is a good time for you to be enrolling on the course.

Your place on the course will be confirmed following this call. Very occasionally I consider that the time is not right for an individual to attend the course. If this is the case I will discuss it fully with you.

### **Home Practice**

Home practice is an important part of the course and involves listening to CDs and practising exercises we have done during the classes, which involve lying down, walking, or sitting, or doing gentle stretches. The most important learning on the course is experiential and needs your active participation and commitment in order for you to get the most benefit from it.

You will be asked to commit to one hour of mindfulness practice every day at home. This involves approximately 40 minutes guided mindfulness practice using the CDs provided, some informal mindfulness practices which are woven into daily life, and reflecting on these practices.

Finding this time for practice involves a shift in routine and can initially seem like a challenge, but it is in the home practice that people gain the lasting benefits of the course. It is helpful to develop a commitment to doing the practices, even if you sometimes find them boring, or have preferences for some rather than others, or might feel you have better things to do!

During the course you will be supported in the process of establishing a personal mindfulness practice, and in developing your learning from it. You will have the opportunity to personally explore and reflect on your experiences of the practices in the supportive environment of a group.

### **Support during the course**

Should you experience any difficulties in connection with the course in between course sessions, I will be available via email during the week and you can also make contact with me on the phone. It is important to use this as a resource rather than get stuck in any difficulty with your practice.

During the course there will be discussion, but most of our talking together will be in relation to the specific practices we have been learning. There will not be time to discuss the content of ongoing individual problems and difficulties. The course teacher will not be able to offer therapeutic support. It is therefore important that you take responsibility for caring for yourself during the course. It can be a good idea to ask for particular support from someone you can turn to amongst friends and family members.

## **Approaching the course**

I hope you will find the course inspiring and beneficial, and to be part of the shared learning of a supportive group environment. The journey of learning and discovery on this course is a process which unfolds individually in different and sometimes subtle ways. Bringing curiosity and an open mind to the course is the best way of approaching it, rather than having fixed expectations.

The course includes some gentle stretching and body awareness exercises. Some of the exercises can also be done by sitting, so those of you who are not able to do certain exercises can still benefit by doing what you can. If you have any concerns about participating in these exercises due to physical health problems or a personal history of body trauma, please feel you can discuss this with me.

There is evidence to suggest that mindfulness training can help people who have suffered from repeated episodes of depression to reduce their risk of relapse. If you have suffered from depression in the past it is important that you are currently well enough to manage the demands of the course. Please discuss this with me if this is of relevance to you.

The course involves learning to turn towards our difficulties and can therefore be challenging at times. It is probably not a good time to do the course if there are significant current changes or if it is a time of particular crisis in your life.

Mindfulness cannot magic away our difficulties. It is a way of learning to relate differently to the difficult things in life, and being able to do this offers us a lot, sometimes in very simple ways. By relating to difficulty differently, the way we feel about it can change, which in itself can be beneficial.

## **Attendance**

The learning of the course is structured to help build and develop a personal mindfulness practice through the progressive stages of each week of the course. Regular attendance is therefore important if you wish to derive the most benefit from the course.

Attending the first session is essential. If you are unable to attend the first session then you will need to defer until the next course. I regularly offer courses three times a year. Please do check the course dates carefully before forwarding your application, and indicate if there are any dates you know you will miss. It is not advisable to join this course if you will be unable to attend multiple sessions. I am happy for you to defer your application to the next course if you are not able to attend this course for any reason.

If, after starting the course, something arises and you cannot attend a session, then please phone me in advance to let me know. My phone number and email address are given here. You can always leave a message and I will return your call.

## **What to wear**

Clothes in which you will be comfortable moving, sitting and lying down and some warm layers, including warm socks.

## **What to bring**

Curiosity and an open mind! You will need to bring a yoga/camping mat or blanket to lie on for the first three weeks of the course. An extra light blanket, or something warm to cover yourself with, when lying down. A cushion if you need one for support sitting in a chair. Please wear loose, comfortable clothing suitable for gentle stretching and movement practices in the first three weeks of the course. You will need to bring your handbook to all course sessions.

## **How to book**

Please complete and send the application form by email. Once I receive it I will contact you to arrange an orientation call in advance of the course starting. The payment of a deposit of £125/£90 is required once your place on the course has been confirmed following this call. Payment can be made by BACS (these details will be forwarded on request) or as a cheque (made payable to "Gwennie Fraser" and sent to High Woodhead Cottage, Hesleyside, Bellingham, Hexham, Northumberland NE48 2HX).

Please note that full payment of course fees is required before the start of the course.

\* Places on the course are limited and tend to fill in advance of the course starting. Places will be allocated following assessment on a first-come, first served basis. It is advisable to check availability before forwarding your application.

If you have any further queries before forwarding your application, please feel very welcome to contact me.