

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Life (MBCT-L) Course Information

What skills will you learn during the MBCT-L Course?

- MBCT is a skills-based course rather than group therapy.
- To develop a better understanding of the workings of your mind.
- To recognise patterns / mental habits – and realise that there are alternatives.
- To stand back and take a wider view of difficult thoughts and feelings.
- To recognise early warning signs of stress, anxiety and low mood. Then take helpful action when you spot them.
- To put less effort into trying to ‘fix’ things and strive for results.
- To be kinder and more gentle towards yourself.
- To cultivate joy.

What actually happens during an MBCT-L Course?

- Group gathers together (introductions, what brings us here? Receive all course materials in first week).
- Sessions normally begin with a **meditation practice** (e.g. attention to breath or body).
- **Reflection** on experiences of the practice.
- **Feedback** on experiences of home practice during the previous week.
- **Discussion of the theme of the session.**
- Another short meditation practice and/or cognitive therapy exercise.
- Reflection on the practice / exercises.
- Discussion of home practice for following week.
- Opportunity to speak to the teachers individually at the beginning or end of each session.

What is covered in each session?

- Mindfulness starts when we **recognise the tendency to be on automatic pilot** and we make a commitment to learning how best to step out of it and become aware of each moment. Practising how to purposely move attention around the body shows both how simple, and how difficult, this can be.
- Further focus on the body begins to **show more clearly the ‘chatter of the mind’** and how this tends to control our reactions to everyday events.
- With greater awareness, we begin to notice how busy and scattered the mind can often be. Learning to intentionally take the awareness to the breath, or body sensations, offers **the possibility of being more focused and gathered.**
- The mind is most scattered when it tries to cling to something and avoid/escape other things. Mindfulness offers a way to stay present, to view things from another place, to help **take a wider perspective, to clearly see our own reactivity and relate differently to experience.**

- Relating differently involves bringing to experience a sense of ‘allowing’ it to be just as it is, without judging it or trying to make it different. Such an **attitude of acceptance** is a major part of **taking care of oneself** and seeing more clearly what, if anything, needs to change.
- Negative moods and the thoughts that accompany them restrict our **ability to relate differently to experience**. It is liberating to realise that our thoughts are merely thoughts, even the ones that say they are not! We learn to **respond more skilfully**.
- **Skilful Action and taking care of ourselves** in the face of challenge, supports our wellbeing. Flourishing is supported by active engagement with what is important to us and what nourishes us. After taking a Breathing Space, we can learn to take care of ourselves with acts that give pleasure or a sense of accomplishment or provide a clear focus for mindfulness. We can cultivate our minds and bodies in ways that **support joy and flourishing**.
- **Maintaining a balance in life** is helped by regular mindfulness practice. Good intentions can be strengthened by linking such intentions to a positive reason for taking care of oneself.

What does Home Practice involve?

- Approximately **1 hour each day, over the 8-week course**.
- You **may need to reorganise other aspects of your life** to fit the home practice in and talk to family or friends about what is involved.
- **Experiment with practicing at different times of the day** if you find things hard.
- **As best you can, keep an open mind** – you may notice that your experience changes from one day to the next and one week to the next.
- If things are difficult or something interferes with your practice – **don’t give up**. You can always start again (and again and again!!!).

What are the challenges?

- **At first, practicing meditation may feel strange or unfamiliar** – as best you can, try to keep an open mind.
- **It is not obvious at the outset, which practices will be helpful** – you may not see the benefits immediately – try to persevere, even if you find things difficult at first. People respond differently, at different rates.
- **It can seem very daunting to be asked to practice for an hour a day**. However, by endeavouring to do this you have the best chance of benefiting from the course.
- **You may find yourself wanting to give up at times**. This is common. Please speak to your course teacher to discuss any particular issues that are making it difficult for you.
- **Some people feel apprehensive about being in a group**. However, there can also be immense benefits from learning from other people with similar experiences and seeing that you are not alone.
- **During the course, you may face emotional issues that you would prefer to avoid**. Difficulties you might experience during meditation are often informative. You will learn a different way of responding to these difficulties

Who will teach me?

- Our MBCT course teachers are fully trained and hold the OMC 'Certificate of Competence to teach MBCT'. They are listed on the UK Network for Mindfulness-based Training Organisations website, which means they have been able to demonstrate (via an assessment process) that they meet the UK Good Practice Guidelines for Mindfulness-Based Teachers, i.e. they are suitably trained, committed to continuous professional development, hold appropriate insurance and are receiving supervision for their teaching.

Practicalities of the MBCT-L Course.

- **It is important to try to attend every session**, as the sessions build on each other. Please let the teachers know, or email the OMC, if you are unable to attend, and the teachers will help you catch up on things that you have missed.
- **It can sometimes feel difficult to come back if you have missed a session – come anyway!**
- **The course can be challenging - there may be times when you do not feel like coming -** Please email the OMC to ask for one of the teachers to contact you, to discuss any problems you are experiencing.
- **Practical difficulties can get in the way of sessions and home practice** – please feel free to discuss this with your teachers.
- **Physical concerns can make people feel daunted** – for example if you experience pain, you may be worried about sitting still for long periods. Please discuss this with the teachers – it is always possible to adapt practices.

Arrival on the day: We ask that you arrive a little before the session start time, if possible, to ensure a prompt start. However, we are aware that Oxford traffic can be unpredictable so please do still come along even if you are late arriving. Please see the Travel Information document for further details. There will be tea & biscuits available before each session.

What to wear: Since the sessions involve spending quite some time sitting and also doing some simple movements, please dress comfortably and preferably in layers so that you can adjust for feeling warm or cool. If you have your own yoga / exercise mat and blanket you are welcome to bring these along, otherwise mats are available here.



Practice-Day (Saturday 10am-4pm on the 8-week course, Day 4 on the 5-day course): The Practice Day, from 10am-4pm, offers the opportunity for extended period of practice. Much of the day will be spent in silence to support the practice, and the course teachers will lead familiar guided meditation practices. There will be opportunity at the end of the day to reflect on the experience and ask any questions participants may have. As the day will involve spending quite some time sitting, walking and a period doing some simple stretches, please dress comfortably.

Tea/coffee and biscuits will be available throughout the day, but no planned breaks, other than lunchtime. Please bring your own lunch, which will also be spent in silence. Please let family and friends know that you will be spending the day in silence and not be contactable (unless in emergency) during this time.

Terms and Conditions: Please ensure you have read our full terms and conditions, including cancellation policy, prior to booking on the website.

Please get in touch with us, using the contact details below, if you have any further questions.

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