

ELEMENTAL  
MEDIA presents



a **self**-experiment film

# MY YEAR OF LIVING

*mindfully*



[www.myyearoflivingmindfully.com](http://www.myyearoflivingmindfully.com)



## ■ INTRODUCTION

Amidst a global mental health crisis, when we are more likely to suffer from a psychological disorder than we are to develop diabetes, heart disease or any kind of cancer, there's not one, single recommendation for what we should be doing to take care of our mind.

From the producers of the internationally acclaimed documentary *The Connection*, comes a new feature film and global Impact Campaign that will ignite informed discussion and more importantly, meaningful change.

In the same way that the World Health Organisation advocates that physical exercise has numerous important benefits, it is time for an evidence-backed movement towards helping us protect, nurture and nourish the one filter through which we experience our lives... our minds.





"I need mindfulness like I need  
**medicine.**"

Mogos Tewelde,  
Eritrean refugee

## ONE-LINE

In the midst of a growing mental illness epidemic, an investigative health journalist enlists a team of scientists to put meditation to the test. But after a 30,000 kilometre journey around the world from the bright lights of Manhattan to the dusty refugee camps of the Middle East, what begins as a year-long self-experiment transforms into a life-changing experience.

## SYNOPSIS

Award-winning health journalist Shannon Harvey faced a troubling paradox. Despite unprecedented progress in modern medicine, 140 million people around the world are addicted to drugs and alcohol. At the same time, more people will die by suicide than are killed by soldiers, terrorists or criminals combined. Why?

For Shannon, the problem was personal. Overwhelmed with exhaustion from insomnia and an incurable autoimmune disease, the 37-year-old mother of two young children needed to make a change. But although there was a mountain of information telling her what she should be eating and drinking, how much sleep she should be getting, and how much exercise she should be doing, when Shannon looked for a widely-accepted evidence-based recommendation for what she could do to protect, nurture and nourish her mind – there was *nothing*.



Shannon's search for the brain's equivalent of a 30-minute jog around the block, or the mind's daily serving of five fruit and vegetables, led her to mindfulness meditation – the ancient mental awareness practice, which in recent years, has been shown to be just as effective as medication and psychotherapy in treating everything from chronic stress and pain, to depression, anxiety and addiction.

Following in the footsteps of self-experimentalists such as Morgan Spurlock and Michael Mosley, Shannon enlisted a team of scientists to track her brain structure and function, stress hormones, immune system, gene expression and cellular ageing to see what would change if she meditated every day for a year.

Shannon's subsequent 30,000 kilometre journey around the world took her to unexpected places, from the bright lights of Manhattan, where she met skeptic-turned mindfulness advocate Dan Harris, who had a panic attack in front of millions of people live on Good Morning America, to the frontline of a humanitarian crisis in the Middle East, where she met a community of African refugees turning to mindfulness for severe post traumatic stress brought on by war, torture and homelessness.

In this story, the best of investigative science journalism meets the most personal of storytelling as Shannon interweaves her journalistic diary with intimate stories of the people she meets along the way, and the unprecedented interviews she has with leading scientists including molecular biologist-turned Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard, best-selling author Daniel Goleman, pioneering neuroscientist Richard Davidson, and the father of contemporary mindfulness, Jon Kabat-Zinn.

At a time in which there has never been a greater need for a cheap, simple, and effective solution for psychological suffering, this story begins as a year-long experiment and ends up being a life-changing experience.





"It remains a grim reality that the vast majority of people affected by mental health problems globally still do not receive adequate care."

– The Lancet Commission on Global Mental Health and Sustainable Development

## ■ THE ISSUES

According to a team of 28 world-leading experts assembled by the Lancet medical journal, every country in the world is facing and *failing* to tackle a host of mental health crises, from epidemics of anxiety and depression, to conditions caused by violence and trauma.

In the Middle East, where more people have been displaced by conflict than after World War II, only a fraction of the millions of refugees receive any kind of mental health support for their psychological scars, let alone interventions backed by evidence.

But it's not just the frontline of the humanitarian disasters where mental health is woefully neglected. The World Health Organisation has warned that depression will be the biggest burden of disease in developed countries by 2030.

In the same way that billions of dollars have been spent on prevention and treatment in response to public health catastrophes such as HIV/AIDS and cancer, the time has come for an evidence-based, mainstream response to mental health.

Current evidence suggests that when delivered by qualified practitioners in clinical settings, mindfulness training can be equal to medication and psychotherapy in treating chronic stress and pain, depression, anxiety and some addictions.

At a time in which there is only one psychiatrist available per 100,000 people in over half the countries in the world, mindfulness is by no means a panacea, but at present it's the only solution which works as an adjunct to conventional care and is also low-cost and scalable.



## THE TEAM

*My Year of Living Mindfully* is produced by Shannon and Julian Harvey, who have spent the last 18 years creating everything from commercial TV, to releasing independent feature films, crowd funding, and online video and social media campaigns.

It follows the success of their internationally acclaimed documentary, *The Connection* which is about the compelling new science demonstrating the link between our mind, body, and health. Since the 2014 release of *The Connection* they have established an international audience that engages with a weekly blog and podcast featuring interviews with world-leading health scientists.

After a sold-out cinema tour, *The Connection* inspired a global grassroots movement, with hundreds of community screenings taking place all over the world and some of the film's biggest advocates becoming hospitals, medical centres and universities.

Prior to starting Elemental Media, Shannon worked as a TV, radio and online journalist for organisations such as the ABC and Fairfax. She has also presented at the Happiness and Its Causes Conference in front of 2000 people, was invited to speak at Google in Silicon Valley to launch Mindfulness Week, and has been featured in Wellbeing Magazine, Women's Health, on ABC Radio, WNBC New York, and PBS. Her recently released book *The Whole Health Life* earned her the National Press Club of Australia's Health Journalist of the Year award.

Having cut his teeth making commercial television for the Nine Network's flagship programs such as Getaway and 60 Minutes, Julian is an award-winning filmmaker who directed the 2013 adventure documentary, *The Crossing*, which won the Audience Award at Sydney Film Festival and was subsequently released by Umbrella Entertainment in 2014. He also produced the 2011 award-winning horror mockumentary, *The Tunnel* (Transmission/Paramount), which has now been seen by over 15 million people world-wide. In 2011 he was awarded SPAA's Breakout Producer of The Year.





## ■ THE RELEASE

Following special premiere screenings at the Transitions Film Festival in Melbourne (February 23, 2020) and Cinequest in San Francisco (March 4, 2020), *My Year of Living Mindfully* will screen in Sydney, New York, Boston, London and Tel Aviv throughout March and April

The film's May online launch (such as on iTunes, Amazon, and [www.myyearoflivingmindfully.com](http://www.myyearoflivingmindfully.com)) will coincide with a *free* global three-month Host Your Own Screening program, aimed at facilitating 300+ community-led screenings and discussions in universities, hospitals and other community and healthcare settings.

## ■ CONTACT

Julian Harvey  
[jules@figureeight.com.au](mailto:jules@figureeight.com.au)  
0404 897 584

