

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

Mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) is a structured, 8 week educational program focusing on the development of mindfulness skills. It was developed by Dr Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical Centre in 1979 for a wide range of chronic pain and stress related disorders. The course involves eight 2.5-hour sessions and an all day retreat. Each class consists of theory and practical components, including gentle movement practices, mindfulness meditation and practical strategies for managing stress. It has been widely researched over 30 years.

Mindfulness can be described as:

'Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally' (Kabat-Zinn 1994)

The practices involve intentionally bringing one's attention to present moment experiences (such as bodily sensations, thoughts, emotions, sights and sounds) to reduce the tendency for over-thinking and ruminating analysis. The ability to direct attention in this way is cultivated through a range of mindfulness exercises, including sitting meditation, awareness of breathing, body-scan exercises and gentle yoga. Participants also practice mindfulness in ordinary activities like eating, walking and standing.

Who will benefit?

MBSR has benefited people reporting a range of conditions and concerns:

STRESS - related to work, school, financial, illness, ageing, pain

MEDICAL CONDITIONS - including chronic illness and pain, high blood pressure, fibromyalgia, IBS and skin conditions

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS - including anxiety and mild depression (MBCT may be more appropriate, and referral can be arranged if needed), fatigue and sleep disturbances

PREVENTION AND WELLNESS - general health enhancement and wellness focussing on prevention and learning how to take good care of yourself and for feeling a greater sense of embodiment, balance and ease.

What is involved?

Eight weekly 2.5-hour classes and a one full day retreat.

The classes are highly participatory, supportive and structured

Each session provides a range of activities, including:

Guided instruction in mindfulness meditation

Gentle stretching and mindful yoga/movements (can be modified to accommodate pain or injury)

Group discussion and dialogue
Exercises to enhance awareness in everyday life
Daily home assignments
Home practice materials including meditation recordings and a workbook

Participation in MBSR requires an ongoing commitment for the duration of the course. Participants will be asked to attend all classes, including the all day session and to practice daily for around 30-45 minutes.