

Mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) Mindfulness at work

Minding your mind – Meeting the challenges of work and life mindfully

An 8-week course - open to all University of Leeds staff

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a form of attention and awareness training that helps people relate more effectively to their day to day experiences. It involves paying attention to thoughts, feelings and body sensations in a way that increases awareness, acceptance and self-compassion to help manage difficult experiences, and create space to make wise choices.

‘Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose in the present moment and non-judgmentally to things as they are’. Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1994.p4

Who is Mindfulness training for?

- Staff interested in exploring how to use their minds more effectively to achieve goals in accordance with their values.
- Staff who want strategies to deal with the general complexity and pace of modern life.
- Staff experiencing work related stress, sensitivity to a stressful environment or difficulties with their work such as poor concentration, perfectionism or procrastination.
- Staff caught in cycles of worry, anxiety, irritability, low mood, poor self esteem and lack of confidence.
- Staff who want to learn ways of working with general stress and anxiety more effectively and for increasing their overall well-being, self-awareness and insight.
- Staff with physical and psychological health problems.

Everyone can benefit from mindfulness. We all face pressures and stresses and can get stuck in our personal reactions. The things that stress and challenge us may not change, but the way in which we deal with them 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.

What is Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction? MBSR is an 8 week course developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in the USA that has been used over thirty years to help with pain, depression, anxiety and to create mental balance and well-being.

MBSR- Mindfulness at work courses for staff at the University of Leeds

Our courses are based on MBSR but are adapted to be relevant to managing work stress and increasing mental balance and effectiveness at work.

More information about mindfulness is available on the following websites:

The ‘be mindful’ website has information about the clinical application of mindfulness
www.bemindful.co.uk

Mindfulnet www.mindfulnet.org includes information on mindfulness in the workplace and the neuroscience of mediation practice.

What are the benefits of mindfulness training?

Over the past few decades, randomised-controlled trials of 8 week courses in MBSR and MBCT (Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy) have shown that mindfulness-based approaches are effective in managing stress, worry, anxiety and depression, as well as improving people's relationships, sharpening attention and aiding self-regulation and mental balance.

The course will not only teach you ways to reduce stress, but also ways to become more tolerant, 'stress-hardy' and resilient, so you will be less thrown by life's difficulties.

Most people completing MBSR programmes report that they gain lasting benefits, such as:

- more energy and enthusiasm
- a greater capacity for relaxation
- more self-confidence
- greater clarity and focus
- increased concentration
- increased ability to handle stressful situations

'Participants in a workplace MBSR programme study reported 31% decrease in medical symptoms, a 31% decrease in psychological distress and 17% decrease in 'daily hassles'. Williams. K 2006 – MBSR in a worksite wellness program, in Baer (Ed) Mindfulness based treatment approaches. Academic Press.

Cognitive performance

The stress and emotional regulation skills central to MBSR are also key components in improving cognitive functioning. Mindfulness develops 'meta cognition' – the ability to observe thought processes as they occur non-judgementally. It enhances sustained attention and 'executive control' – the ability to monitor performance and ignore distracting information when under time pressure. (Shapiro et al, 2008) summarised the key research finding for Mindfulness and cognitive performance.

- enhances the ability to maintain preparedness and to focus attention
- improves information processing ability

Sally Rose from the Staff Counselling and Psychological Support Service will lead the course

Sally is an experienced psychotherapist and psychological practitioner. She has practiced mindfulness for several years and used it in 1-1 counselling and coaching work with individual staff and provided short taster sessions in the Personal Resilience Suite at SDDU.

Sally has completed 2 levels of Mindfulness Teacher Training with the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice at Bangor University in 2010 and 2013.

COURSE OUTLINE

The course content

- General mindfulness/mental balance training based on mindful attitudes, attention and mind/body awareness skills.
- Mindfulness based stress awareness reduction; recognizing and responding to stress reactions, how they manifest physically and mentally to minimise their negative effects on health and functioning.
- Psychological flexibility and workability – Skills for effectiveness – using mindfulness to increase the capacity to be aware and step back from automatic habits of thinking and behaving to free up attention and energy to focus on personal and professional values and to stick at things even if they involve difficult feelings.

The course comprises eight weekly 2 hour classes in a group of up to 14 people. There are three components of the course; guided practice, shared enquiry and talks/ theoretical input.

Guided Mindfulness Practice

You will learn to develop mindfulness through ‘formal’ mindfulness meditation practices, including a body scan meditation, various sitting meditations, gentle movement and body awareness exercises. You can sample a guided mindfulness practice with Professor Mark Williams. at www.mentalhealth.org.uk/information/wellbeing-podcasts . There are also ‘informal’ practices, for example, bringing mindful attention to ordinary, everyday experience.

Regular home practice

Home practice or practice whilst at work is important aspects of the course. Course material and guided practices on CDs are available to support this learning.

Enquiry

An important part of the course is shared enquiry into your experiences of the practices and any barriers you face. The aim of this part of the course is to help you apply the practices and teaching personally. We don’t focus on the narrative content of your personal difficulties but on learning about and developing mindful ways to respond to them.

Talks and theoretical input

The course is mainly experiential but you will also be given information about mindfulness and the mindful approach to living and working well with the pressures of life and work. By the end of the course you will have substantial experience of the practices and approach and will be able to make an informed choice about which aspects benefit you most and make a plan for incorporating them into your ongoing life.

Booking

These courses are run by the Staff Counselling and Psychological Support Service. To get dates and details or book on to an introductory taster session or a courses and please email staffcounselling@leeds.ac.uk