

## **Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy: A New Approach to Managing Recurrent Depression**

One of the biggest challenges with depression is that once you have been depressed, it tends to return, even if you have been feeling better for some time. If this has happened to you, you may end up feeling that you are not good enough, that you are a failure. Your thoughts may go round and round as you try to find some deeper meaning, to understand once and for all why you feel so bad. If you can't come up with a satisfactory answer, you may feel even more empty and desperate, and be even more convinced there is something wrong with you

### **But what if there is nothing “wrong” with you at all?**

What, if like virtually everybody else who suffers repeatedly from depression, you have become a victim of your own very sensible, even heroic, efforts to free yourself- like someone pulled even deeper into quicksand by the struggling intended to get you out? You may have already discovered that worrying or suppressing doesn't help but may feel powerless to stop it, finding it impossible to prevent the mind from being dragged back again and again to the very place from which you want to escape.

### **What if it were possible to learn wholly new skills that allowed you to cultivate a radically different way of working with the mind?**

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) teaches exactly these skills. It targets the two critical processes that lie at the root of depression and many other emotional problems: the tendency to overthink, ruminate, or worry too much about some things, and a tendency to avoid, suppress or push away other things. MBCT offers you a way to take back control of your attention so that, moment by moment, you can experience yourself and the world without being governed by the harsh self-critical voice of judgement that may so often follow you around.

### **What is Mindfulness?**

At the heart of MBCT is gentle, systematic training in mindfulness. Mindfulness means being able to bring direct, open-hearted awareness to what you are doing while you are doing it: being able to tune in to what's going on in your mind and body, and in the outside world, moment by moment. Also known as mindfulness meditation, this approach involves daily mindfulness practice.

Over recent years mindfulness has been scientifically tested and proven to help people deal with a range of illnesses including chronic pain and depression. The National Institute of Health Care Excellence guidelines recommend its use as a treatment for recurrent depression. And evidence shows that mindfulness can halve the risk of relapse in depression in those who have experienced several episodes of depression.

Adapted from:

Williams, J. M. G., Teasdale, J. D., Segal, Z. V., & Kabat-Zinn, J. (2007). The mindful way through depression: Freeing yourself from chronic unhappiness.

Williams, J. M. G., Teasdale, J. D., Segal, Z. V. (2014). The Mindful Way Workbook. An 8-Week Program to Free Yourself from Depression and Emotional Distress

## What does Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy involve?

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy is taught in 8 weekly classes lasting 2 hours. During the course, participants receive guidance in mindful meditation practices such as breathing meditation, body scan and simple yoga. There is opportunity for participants to explore their experience of mindfulness with teachers and fellow participants, exploring the links between mind, body and mood. MBCT teachers also use principles of cognitive therapy to share information about the processes involved in recurrent depression.

Courses are run several times each year and while waiting for the course to begin, participants are invited to join a pre-course programme. This may typically consist of fortnightly contact with a mindfulness teacher where you will be able to learn more about the principles of mindfulness and begin to use some short mindfulness practices in preparation for the intensive 8 week course.

Just as training the body takes time and effort, so training the mind also takes motivation and commitment. To benefit from mindfulness you need to be willing to do some home practice each day during the course and pre-course as well as being willing to try some meditation and yoga practices. The effects of MBCT may only become apparent later so approaching the course with a spirit of kindness, curiosity, openness, patience and persistence is most helpful.

## What To Do Next

Please contact Talking Therapies on **0300 365 2000** to discuss further if, having read the above information, you would like to speak to someone about MBCT and you:

- have experienced 3 or more episodes of depression,
- are not engaged in another psychological therapy or know you will have completed the other therapy by the time the MBCT course starts,
- are interested in taking part in intensive meditation practice within a group and are able to undertake between session tasks (meditation practice and some written exercises,
- are confident that, although you may well have depressed mood at the moment, you are in a good enough place to undertake a therapy which involves personal commitment,
- recognize that MBCT is not a magical cure, and takes patience and persistence,
- are not using illegal substances and drink alcohol in what would generally be considered only social drinking,

Comments from a previous participant:

*"I no longer simply go through the motions of life day by day, wondering how much more of this I have to endure. I live my life, I feel the things around me and I experience my present day."*

For more information on MBCT:

<http://mbct.co.uk/>

<http://www.bemindful.co.uk>