



# Seven Lessons In Mindfulness

A Course For The Nottingham Mindfulness Group Based On UCSD CFM Resources

## Week One – Awareness of Breath

### *Background – The Basics*

- Meditation is the formal part of Mindfulness, its base.
- It helps us to relax deeply and to “unlearn” the old, non-functional patterns of the mind.
- Meditation helps us to redress the balance between our use of the Analytical Mind (which thinks and problem solves) and Experiential Awareness (which engages with present moment reality). Most people find that the Analytical Mind tends to dominate (we're preoccupied with the mental chatter in our heads and we tend to give little attention to what is actually going on around us – living much of the time on autopilot). But regular meditation practice shifts the balance and re-focuses us more on Experiential Awareness.
- Over time, this shift brings freedom from “compulsive thinking” and it reduces our tendency to have automatic (and often instant) *reactions* to our thoughts – we become calmer and better able to formulate balanced, well-reasoned *responses* to our thinking (and we even learn to recognise and “let go” of unhelpful thought patterns).
- The aim of this meditation practice is not relaxation or attaining a state of happiness (although these are benefits widely associated with meditation), rather it is to build the skill of *present moment awareness*. This skill can then be transferred to our normal activities and wider life (a technique that is known as 'Informal Practice').

### Mindful Meditation

- The basic method is to sit in silence for at least 10 minutes a day and concentrate on something (usually the breath)
- Perseverance is very important – without it there will be no results or benefits

### *Practice for Week One*

- Every day for the next 6 or 7 days, sit quietly in a calm environment free from distractions and listen to *Meditation One – Awareness of Breath* by Lois Howland, doing your best to follow her instructions.

*Note – it is normal to find that you drift off into thinking frequently while trying to do this exercise. You are not “doing it wrong” and you are certainly not a failure! Whenever you realise that you are caught-up in thinking and not focussed on the meditation, gently (without self-criticism or judgement) let go of your thoughts and return your attention to the meditation.*



# Nottingham Mindfulness Group

## Meditation & Mindful Living

[www.NottinghamMindfulnessGroup.co.uk](http://www.NottinghamMindfulnessGroup.co.uk)

### *About 'Seven Lessons In Mindfulness'*

This course forms an introduction to Mindfulness that is intended to give a direct experience of Mindfulness techniques and their benefits. It uses resources freely provided by the UCSD Centre for Mindfulness, including recorded guided meditations that are narrated by their expert Mindfulness teachers.

While this course uses exercises and techniques that are drawn from the acclaimed Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course, it does not form a complete course of "Mindfulness-Based" therapy and it should not be considered as such. This course aims to provide the user with a direct experience of Mindful meditation and other Mindfulness techniques in a way that may help to enhance our experience of day-to-day life, and which will provide a degree of understanding (through direct experience) of Mindfulness practices.

If you are interested in Mindfulness as a therapy or treatment for stress, anxiety or depression (or if you experience periods of stress, anxiety or depression that are debilitating or otherwise a concern to you), you should consider undertaking a full, 8 week course in one of the recognised "Mindfulness-Based" therapies (such as MBSR or MBCT) – this is best done in a series of formal classes led by an appropriately qualified teacher, but home study courses are available. If stress, anxiety or depression are adversely affecting your life, you should consult your doctor or other healthcare professional.

### *Please Note:*

Our regular group meetings are designed to share information about Mindfulness and to offer the opportunity to experience and practice Mindful meditation. Our meetings are not structured to form a progressive course or formal training in Mindfulness, and they do not, in and of themselves, constitute a "Mindfulness-Based" therapy (such as MBSR or MBCT). Our Group publishes and promotes full details of the formal classes and courses in Mindfulness and "Mindfulness-Based" therapies that are available in Nottingham and the wider East Midlands – please ask us for a free copy of this information if it would be of interest to you.

Mindfulness and other forms of meditation are safe and appropriate practices for the vast majority of people and they are proven to offer a wide range of benefits, including the lowering of stress and deep levels of relaxation. Current research indicates that all forms of meditation (including Mindfulness) may be unwise for people with bipolar vulnerability or those who are suffering from Post Traumatic Stress (PTSD). If you are currently receiving treatment for any form of mental health issue (or have received such treatment in the recent past, or have reason to believe that you might need such treatment), you should consult your doctor or health care professional before engaging with Mindfulness or any form of meditation.