

Brief Mindfulness

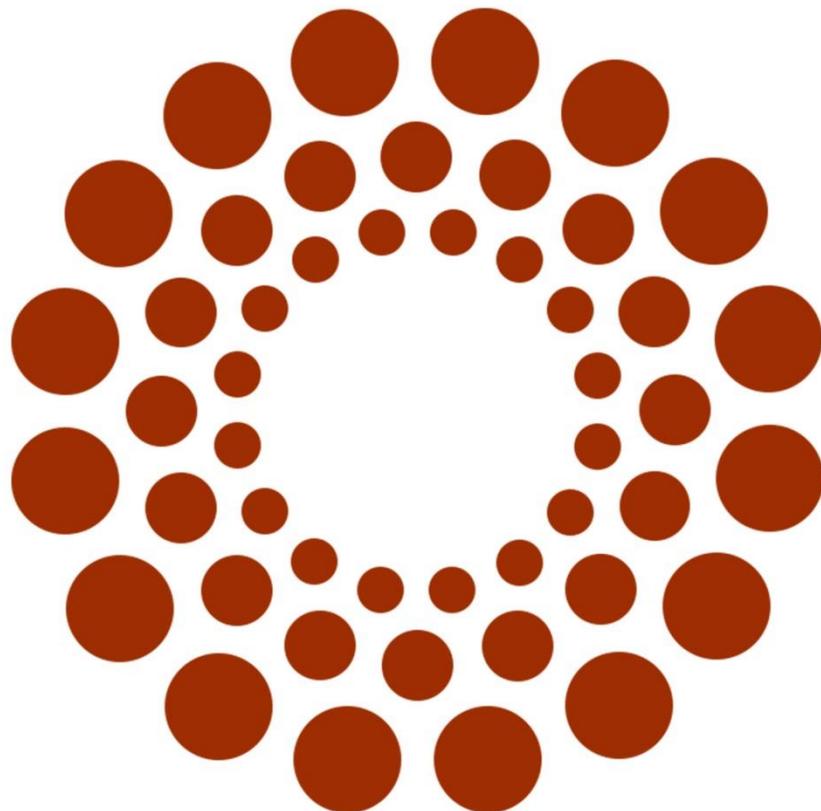
Part 2

Training Programme
with

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(Brief Mindfulness Founder)

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Summary of Part 1

- When you felt most engaged and alive
- Characteristics of Mindfulness:
 - **Presence**: not caught up in regrets about the past or worries about the future, but **Engaged with experience as it's happening**
 - **Purpose**: Not aimless or vacant, but **knowing what matters** – a clear sense of purpose and value
 - **Connection**: Not isolated, but **feeling connected with life** – the world around you, other people, yourself
- Dropping in a Question
- Reconnect
- Defusing a Stressor

Benefits of Mindfulness

Cultivating mindfulness brings a wide range of different benefits (all of which have been demonstrated in published research):

Less stress

With mindfulness you become more resilient in the face of the challenges life throws at you. Stress comes down (by up to 30%) and anxiety reduces too (by up to 70%). You develop better responses, and when you do take a knock, you bounce back more quickly. There are even physical benefits - your immune system gets stronger, and your sleep improves.

Clearer mind

Mindfulness helps you to focus more clearly, with less distraction, for longer. So you can get more done, and produce better work. You're less bothered by pressure, and your memory improves too.

Emotional intelligence

As awareness increases, this includes emotional awareness. That helps you avoid "emotional interference" from anxiety, anger etc. Instead you get a boost of calm, clear confidence that generates better responses to challenging situations. You can communicate, negotiate and influence more effectively.

Creativity

In a positive, mindful state of mind, you're more open to fresh new possibilities (from your own mind and from those around you).

Decision making

With your mind performing at its best, you're better able to intuitively weigh up different factors in a complex situation and come up with better decisions more quickly.

Enjoying life more

Mindfulness helps you to enjoy work more and find it energising rather than draining. That means you've still got energy and positive emotion at the end of the day - so you can really enjoy quality time with your loved ones.



Brief Mindfulness

Why *Brief* Mindfulness?

Firstly, we lead busy lives! Many people find it hard to make time for meditation – so Brief Mindfulness includes the “Reconnect” that you can do in 30 seconds, without closing your eyes or changing your posture.

Secondly, we’ve got lots to do! Inside and outside work, we’ve got responsibilities that require us to get things done. Most of our day has to be spent in activity. So Brief Mindfulness is designed to help integrate mindfulness into that purposeful activity. It explicitly addresses the dimension of purpose, to help you avoid wasting time on less important activity, and stay focused on what matters most.



Brief Mindfulness

Rapid stress reduction; enjoyable high performance

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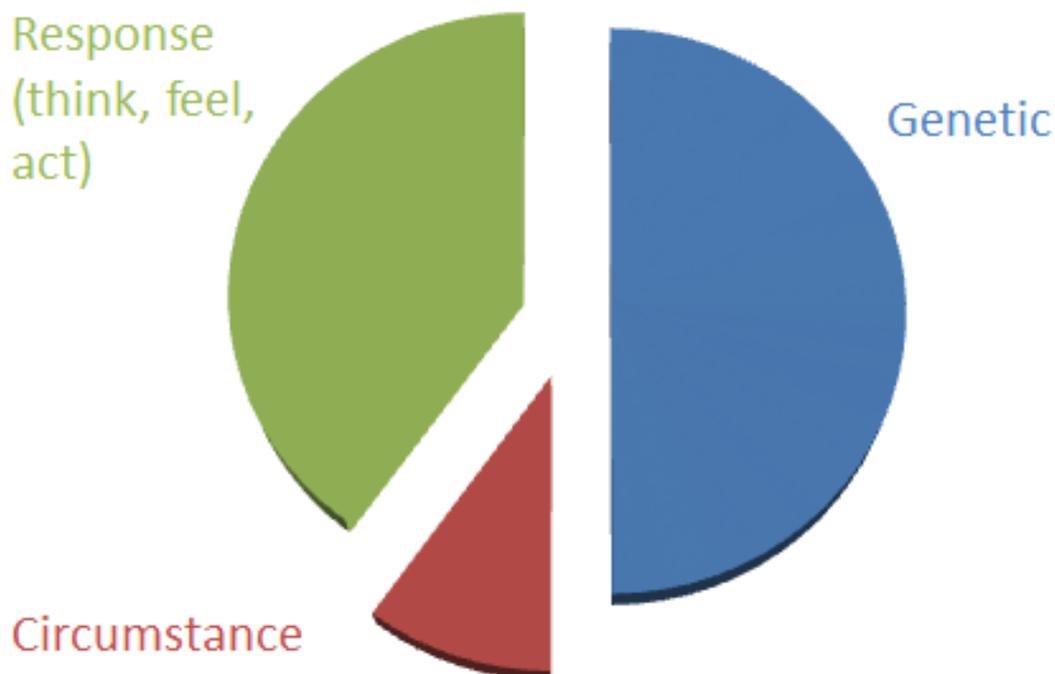
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What Leads to Happiness?

We all want to be happy, but it's surprisingly elusive: if you try and grasp hold of happiness, it tends to just evaporate. Happiness is a by-product of acting well, rather than something you can aim for directly.

There's some very interesting science around happiness. We each have a "happiness set-point." Like a thermostat controlling your heating and keeping rooms at a pre-determined temperature, there's a mechanism in your brain that takes your happiness back to your particular set-point. Your happiness levels go up or down according to events, but over time will naturally revert to the set-point.

This is dramatically illustrated by surveys amongst two groups: lottery winners and people who'd been paralysed in accidents and become quadriplegic. Of course the lottery winners became happier at first, and the quadriplegic people became less happy. But within a year, there was no difference between the two groups: they were both back to their set-points.



The set-point is determined by 3 factors: 50% of it is genetic and 10% is due to external circumstance (education level, income, marital status etc.). But 40% is derived from your day-to-day behaviour and the way in which you think about yourself and others.

Fortunately, the set-point isn't fixed – with sustained practice you can adjust the dial on the thermostat. Cultivating gratitude is a good way of doing this – see the exercise below.



Gratitudes

One of the best-researched and well-proven ways to increase happiness is incredibly simple: write down 3 ways you've benefitted from others:

1.

2.

3.

One experiment found that when people did this every day for three weeks, they became happier people – and stayed that way.

A few tips to make the most of this:

1. To help you remember, it works really well to share this exercise with someone else. I know couples who make this part of their ritual in the evening. Other people do it by exchanging daily emails.
2. Don't write the same things day after day – it needs to be 3 new things
3. It's fine to just notice little things – in fact, that's what makes the biggest difference
4. Don't worry if you don't *feel* grateful. If you just keep noticing things you *could* feel grateful for, ways in which you've benefitted, then the emotions will come.
5. You can get extra benefit from this by expressing your appreciation, especially to the people to whom you're grateful. They'll be pleased and it'll improve your relationship with them too.



Making Meetings More Enjoyable and Effective

How enjoyable and effective are meetings, in your experience?

What do people do in meetings that

- Prevents meetings being enjoyable?
- Prevents meetings being effective?

Remember the characteristics of Mindfulness:

- Presence: engaged with experience as it's happening
- Purpose: sense of value / purpose
- Connection: feeling connected with life

That's possible any time! And people can meet on this basis.....



Meditation – Training the “Muscles of Mind”

In the modern world there are more and more pulls on our attention. This makes it hard to focus, generates stress and dissipates our energy.

To counteract these effects, we need “muscles of mind” – the ability to return, time and time again, to our chosen focus. To train our mind in this way we do need to be persistent – but also extremely kind and gentle.

With stronger muscles of mind, you can:

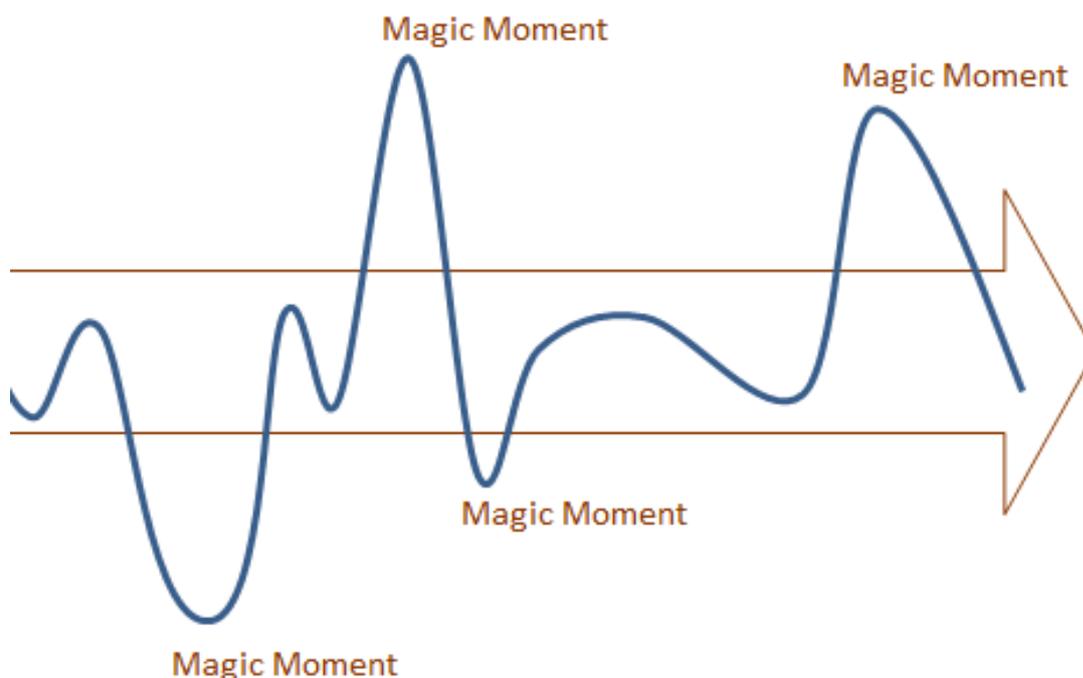
- (Presence) be more focused, more easily, for longer
- (Purpose) know what’s a distraction and more easily set it aside, so you can put more energy into what matters most
- (Connection) stay more “alive” to yourself, other people and life in general

How does this work?

First of all you need to understand the natural movements of the mind. It’s naturally curious and is constantly moving from object to object. This is wonderful! It’s the natural energy of a young child exploring a fascinating beachscape for the first time, delighting in every new rockpool, creature and possibility.

How do we develop this natural quality of mind to also have the focus and discipline we need, without losing the energy and joy?

Firstly by recognising and appreciating the ever moving nature of mind.



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Then by gently, kindly and repeatedly returning to a chosen focus. This is “meditation”, and it works as follows:

- Choose a focus
- When you notice that your mind has wandered from that focus
 - Remember it’s not a mistake, nothing’s gone wrong, it’s just what minds do
 - Celebrate that you’ve noticed! You’ve returned to *presence*, remembered your *purpose*. It’s a “Magic Moment”!
 - Gently, kindly, with curiosity (*connection*), bring your attention back to the focus

There are many different meditations, with many different functions and aims. You’ll find a 10 minute guided meditation practice on the course resources page,

<http://www.briefmindfulness.com/brief-intro/resources>

This is particularly helpful to calm a busy mind and develop fuller awareness of your emotions and states of mind – which helps reduce stress and increase enjoyment.

As with all meditations, this practice will also help build your ability to sustain focus and be more effective. But don’t worry about that for now, just enjoy the process of meditation. Enjoy the play of your own mind!

Strengthening the Mind’s Muscles – Any Time!

The mind is always moving, whatever you are doing. It’s always possible to choose a focus and practice bringing your mind back to it. It’s best to start simple: choose a simple activity and a simple focus. For example, you might choose to practice mindfulness while showering, brushing your teeth or walking to the office. It’ll work best if you choose a particular focus within the activity, for example the temperature of the water, sounds, the colour yellow, the feel of your feet on the pavement.

Important: Remember to maintain broad awareness – if you’re walking down the street, your primary concern is traffic and safety!!

Strengthening the Mind’s Muscles – As You Work!

In a meeting, you might choose to focus on:

- Current agenda point
- Desired outcome (self and other stakeholders!)
- Facial expressions
- Tone of the meeting

At your desk you might choose to focus on:

- Prioritising your day
- Clearing your in-box
- Current task: outline of report, quick draft of introduction *etc etc*

Tip: choose a focus for 10-25 minutes, then take a micro-break. It’s generally too hard to have a single focus for longer than that (and too hard to resist the pull of emails *etc etc!*).

