

# Brief Mindfulness – Course Introduction

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21st Century life is full of amazing opportunity. With a few taps or clicks we can connect with people just about anywhere in the world. We can read about just about any subject we want to. We can watch an amazing variety of video, listen to an amazing variety of music - instantaneously.

Technology speeds life up. It took Shakespeare 4 days to travel from London to Stratford-on-Avon; today it's a two hour drive. Mail used to come once or twice a day; now we face a constant stream of emails and tweets, day and night.

But all this information, opportunity and rapid responsiveness takes careful management.

If we try to keep up with too much information and too many opportunities it puts our brains (and bodies) under tremendous strain.

## ***Do you ever feel overwhelmed and unable to keep up with all this information?***

Well, there's a good reason why. Our bodies and brains evolved in much simpler environments, with much smaller social groupings, much less information and much less change. There was a lot less to take in, and a lot more time to think it over.

When there's too much stimulus and pressure, the natural response is stress and anxiety. It becomes harder to enjoy life. We can lose touch with our own sense of meaning and purpose, leaving us feeling bleak and even depressed.

Mindfulness provides an alternative. It provides us with skills to manage all this information and change, opportunity and expectation.

Mindfulness helps us savour the simple pleasures in life, whether it's a lovely sunset, good conversation or the delighted smile of a little child. Instead of constantly chasing a better life, which we never quite attain, we can get more pleasure from the life we've already got.

## ***Mindfulness helps us to stay in touch with what really matters.***

It helps us to make our own choices in a more considered way - so we can take advantage of the opportunities of 21st Century life without being taken over by them.

In the following sections I'll cover the following topics:

- Why Mindfulness?
- What is Mindfulness?
- What is *Brief* Mindfulness?
- About this course
- What next?



## Why 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.

## What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is notoriously hard to describe - it's one of those experiences you really have to experience rather than simply read about. But I'm sure you're curious about it so I'll try my best....

A good place to start is with the times when you're already experiencing some mindfulness. Think about moments when you've felt most alive and engaged. Perhaps moments when you're out in nature, enjoying a beautiful sunset or a stunning view. Perhaps when you're immersed in your favourite sport or hobby. Perhaps when you've been delighting in the company of someone special.

Whatever it is, I bet you're not watching the clock or wondering what's next. You're not missing your high speed broadband connection. When you're fully present with what you're currently doing, fully alive to your experience - that's mindfulness.

The great thing is that you don't have to wait for peak experiences to happen to you. With mindfulness, you can start to access these qualities even in the mundane experiences of daily life.



## *Mindfulness isn't mere relaxation*

Mindfulness *is* relaxing - but it's not *just* relaxation. (Relaxation methods are often used as controls in mindfulness experiments. For example, Mindfulness has been found to make specific improvements to the immune system, but such benefits have never been found with relaxation techniques).

Mindfulness combines relaxation with focus. So you're relaxed but awake and alert. It's a quality of mind that's great to have in time-off *and* when you're engaged in activity.

People sometimes think that mindfulness is about taking time out or slowing down. That's an understandable misunderstanding, because you do need to take a little time out in order to cultivate mindfulness, and it's easier to practice mindfulness when you slow things down.

But that's not the point - the point is to cultivate the relaxed yet focused mind that can respond beautifully to whatever happens, in rest and in activity. That gives you a richer and more vibrant experience of life. Your life - just as it is - becomes more enjoyable.

## *Why Brief Mindfulness?*

So, what do you have to do to get all these benefits? I'm sorry to say that it's not like flicking a switch - you do need to develop some particular skills and habits. It does take some time and effort to cultivate mindfulness.

There's a cruel paradox here: the busier we are, the more we need mindfulness. But when we're really busy, how can we find the time?

That was my starting point for developing Brief Mindfulness. I wanted to provide ways you can activate Mindfulness in the midst of a busy life.

So Brief Mindfulness includes ways to weave mindfulness into your everyday routine. The "Reconnect" in particular takes just 30 seconds, and you don't need to close your eyes or change your posture. So you can do it pretty much any time or anywhere.

I've also been collecting other ways to cultivate mindfulness in less than a minute. I've included 3 of them in my "Alive at Work!" download. (You can get it from the course resources page, <http://www.briefmindfulness.com/hee/resources>).

How effective are these short exercises? Of the 63% of previous participants who filled out the survey, 96% had experienced some reduction in stress, 69% had found more enjoyment, and 88% had become more focused or effective.



## About this Course

Above all else, this is a practical course. After all, what would be the point of the course if it didn't make a difference in your actual day-to-day life?

Mindfulness skills are generally quite simple and straightforward – but they are also quite subtle, and can't be rushed. It takes time to learn them, start putting them into practice and integrating them into your life. So please don't expect too much from this 120 minute workshop!

So what *can* you expect?

- In the workshop you'll learn basic mindfulness principles, and practice the core "Reconnect" technique
- You'll experience the stress-reducing effect of mindfulness, on one of your "live" stressors
- You'll have the chance to sign up for the 3 week programme, which consists of daily emails to remind you, inspire you and fill out some of the things you've learnt. During the programme you can also email me with any questions or difficulties you have – or just to share your success stories! This helps you take the "Reconnect" out from the training room and into your life.

## What Next?

If you'd like some more background reading, you'll find it on the course resources page, <http://www.briefmindfulness.com/hee/resources>. (When we meet I'll give you a short course manual – but if you prefer to have that in digital form, you can download it from the resources page too).

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to email me: [shakya@briefmindfulness.com](mailto:shakya@briefmindfulness.com) or call me on the number below.

What I most want to say, though, is that very much looking forward to seeing you on the day, and sharing this mindfulness journey with you,

All the very best,



Shakya Kumara  
Brief Mindfulness Founder, Trainer and Coach

