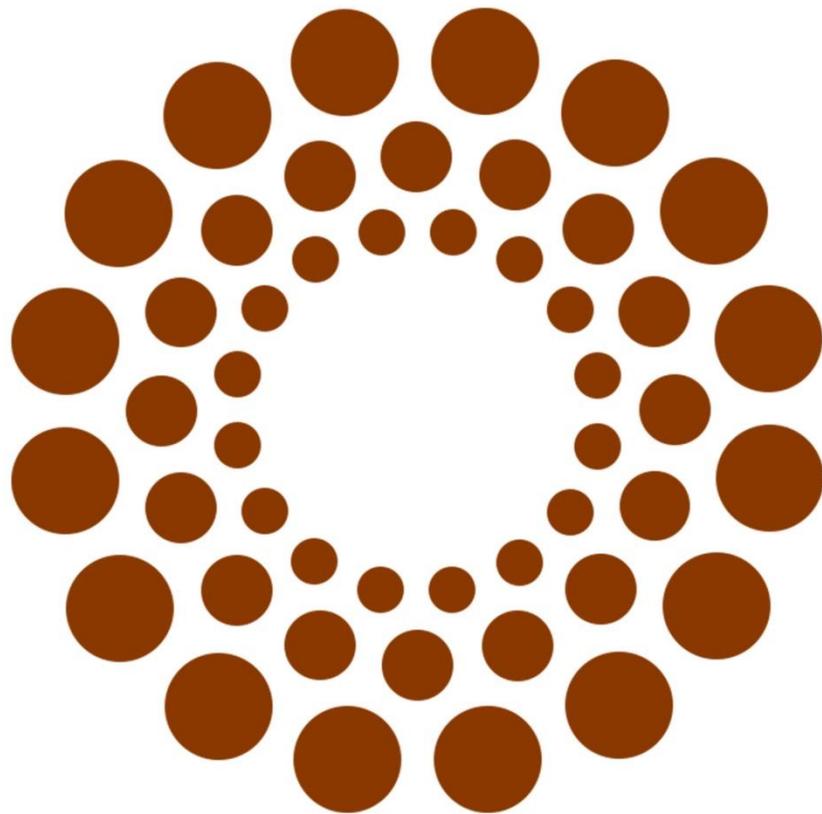


# Brief Mindfulness

Training Programme  
with

Shakya Kumara

(Brief Mindfulness Founder)



# Course Outline

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## Week 1: Laying the Foundations

- When have you felt most engaged and alive?
- What is mindfulness? What are its benefits?
- What do you want from the course?
- Simple body scan
- Mastery
- Creating helpful conditions

## Week 2: Come to your Senses!

- Harnessing the power of body awareness
- Cultivating clarity of purpose
- Stabilising your mind

## Week 3: Qualities of Experience

- Exploring qualities of experience
- Savouring pleasure
- Exploring the neutral & finding more life in it
- Becoming comfortable with the uncomfortable

## Week 4: Appreciative Awareness

- Discovering more beauty and enjoying it more
- Reinforcing progress through appreciation
- Building the basis for confidence, self-esteem and positive relationships

## Week 5: Thoughts, Emotions and Impulses

- Becoming aware of the play of the mind
- Creating space around unhelpful thoughts and emotions
- Opening “The Gap” – the chance to make the choice

## Week 6: Choosing Suffering or Enjoyment and Freedom

- Creating conditions for enjoyment and freedom – not for suffering
- Cultivating positive thoughts and emotions; letting go of negative ones
- Distinguishing positive and negative
- Acting in ways that boost happiness (for yourself and others)



# Engaged and Alive!

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Ask your partner: “In the last 6 months, when did you feel most engaged and alive?”

Help them to draw out the particular experience, e.g. by asking for more details, building a vivid picture of their experience.

## Mindfulness

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### Some Qualities of Mindfulness

- **Presence**: not caught up in regrets about the past or worries about the future, but *Engaged with experience as it's happening*
- **Inter-Connection**: Not isolated, but *feeling connected with life* – the world around you, other people, yourself
- **Significance**: Not aimless or vacant, but *knowing what matters* – a clear sense of value/purpose

With Mindfulness practice, you can cultivate those qualities on purpose, rather than waiting for them to happen spontaneously. That means you don't have to wait for peak experiences – you can have more of this experience more of the time.

### 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.

## Experience of Mindfulness

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(If you weren't able to make the workshop and you're doing this by yourself, follow along with the guided body scan under week 1 on the course resources page

<http://www.briefmindfulness.com/on-line/resources/>)

How did you find the guided body scan? Makes some notes here:



## Elephant and Rider

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There are many models of the human mind. One model is of an elephant and a rider. The rider is the conscious part of the mind – the part that you think of as “you.” Then there’s the unconscious part – which is much bigger and much stronger.

It’s best if the elephant and rider are in good communication and work together well. A good rider will know their elephant well, and know how to bring out the best from their elephant.

To look at it in terms of neuroscience, conscious mental processing happens in just one part of the brain – the pre-frontal cortex. Estimates vary wildly about how much of the processing power is unconscious – from 90% to 99.9999%! Whatever the truth is, it’s clear that we can get tremendous benefit from utilising the unconscious mind well. That means conscious and unconscious processing being more connected – in particular, bringing more conscious awareness to otherwise unconscious processes.

How to do that? Here’s one way: dropping in a question.

It’s like dropping a pebble into a still pond, and watching what happens next. You drop the question in, and wait to see what happens. You might get an answer in all sorts of ways – a thought, an image or an emotion, for example.

Or you might get nothing at all. That’s perfectly normal and fine. Even dropping in the question makes a difference. At the very least your mind will be more ready for the question another time.

## What do you want from this course?

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Engage with body awareness, e.g. by following the 10 minute body scan from the course resources page, then drop in the question, “What do I want from this course?”

1.

2.

3.



# Theme for this Week: Clearing The Space

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If you just practice mindfulness during the workshops, it will make a difference – but not much. For it to make a substantial positive difference in your life, it needs to be “woven in” to your everyday life. So the main purpose of the workshop is to set you up to have a good week of mindfulness practice. Each week there will be a different theme, a different emphasis to our practice.

The theme for the first week is “clearing the space.” If you’ve got a million and one things calling on your attention, it’s hard to be mindful. It’s not impossible – but it’s hard. So when you’re starting out, it’s a really good idea to make things easier for yourself.

So the theme for this week is laying some foundations, creating a bit more space, in order to make it easier for you to become more mindful.

## What’s On Your Mind?

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Let’s start by looking at what’s already on your mind. Here’s an exercise that will make that conscious – and help reduce the need for it to be on your mind. The idea is to get thoughts out of your head and onto paper, and reassure your mind that they’re under control.

### *Preparation:*

- Sit down comfortably with a pen and this manual. Spend a few minutes noticing what you can see around you, what you can hear, and the sensations you can feel in your body.

### *Notice your Thoughts:*

- As you sit there, notice what thoughts come to your mind. If a thought comes into your mind and just passes away, just let it do so. But if it stays on your mind for more than a few moments, write it down in the left column of the table on the next page.
- Continue like that for 10 minutes, writing down any “sticky” thoughts and then coming back to present awareness
- (By the way, you only need to write down thoughts once - even if they keep coming back, there's no need to write them down again)

### *Decide your Responses:*

- After the 10 minutes is over, revisit each “sticky” thought. In the right-hand column, write down what you're going to do about it. Try and write specific, easily do-able physical actions (e.g. if you just write "birthday present for Dad" that doesn't tell you what to do - but "look for attractive shrub in garden centre X" is a lot easier to act on)

### *Reassure Your Mind*

- It will help your mind to put these thoughts down if it knows you’ll come back to them. So put what you’ve written in a place where you know you’ll see it at the right time (e.g. your briefcase or in-tray).



# What's On Your Mind?

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Where did your mind go?	



**Brief Mindfulness**

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# Theme for Week 1: Creating the Space

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If you've got a million and one things calling on your attention, it's hard to be mindful. It's not impossible – but it's hard. So when you're starting out, it's a really good idea to make things easier for yourself.

So the theme for this week is laying some foundations, creating a bit more space, in order to make it easier for you to become more mindful.

So, how can we reduce the number of different pulls on our attention?

## Tidy / Aesthetic Environment

Our physical environment can really pull on our attention. When there are lots of different things around, many of which needing action, it creates a tension. Tidying up can have a remarkably liberating effect! This can be hard to get started with – so I suggest choosing just one specific thing to tidy away (e.g. one piece of paper). That's enough to get the ball rolling.

If you want to go further, or try a different tack, you could make your environment more beautiful in some way. A neat new arrangement, a vase of flowers, hanging up that picture you've had lying around for ages... whatever it is, it helps draw your senses into the present moment in a pleasant way.

## Reduce/Refine Input

We live in an era of tremendous stimulus – TV, internet, phone, tablet.... we've got ever more sources of stimulation. This all puts us on slightly higher alert than is necessary – without pauses and empty spaces we never quite relax.

So try reducing input, just a little bit. If you're used to having TV with every meal, try turning it off just once, and see what the effect is. If you're used to surfing the net on your tablet while watching TV and half having a conversation with your partner, try cutting out just one of those attention streams. (By the way, the science says that people who mono-task are much more efficient – even when they need to multitask they're better at it than people who multitask all the time).

## Completion & Mastery

There's nothing that pulls on the mind like things that need to be done. The more things that we know need our attention, the more the conflicting pulls.

Step 1 is to write everything down. If you've got a commitment that's not on a list then at some level your mind is going to worry about it. Too many of these and it's going to start waking you up at 3 in the morning, just to make sure you don't forget.



So write everything down (and refer to the list!) so your mind knows you'll remember what you need to remember. That'll help you relax.

Step 2 is to close some open loops. Each time you reduce the number of uncompleted tasks, that takes away a little bit of tension. So my suggestion for this week is to pick one thing and commit to getting it finished. (Or pick something and decide *not* to do it. That gets it off the list too!).

There's an added benefit here. It's surprisingly hard to decide to do something and then follow through on that decision. But it's important to be able to do that – to be able to make and keep commitments to ourselves. It's an important part of mindfulness practice – we call it intentionality. So by choosing something to complete and actually completing it, you build your "intentionality muscle." And that really pays off over time as you get more and more in control of your destiny.

## Micro Assignments

So, what will you do in order to "Clear the Space" for Mindfulness? I suggest you give yourself three little "micro-assignments" – tiny little things you can easily do which will get you started in each of these three areas. You'll find space to record your micro-assignments on the next page.

The other thing to think about is when you'll do the Guided Body Scan over the coming week. As part of your 22 minutes per day course-commitment, I suggest you do the Guided Body Scan on 6 of the coming 7 days. (So you can happily miss one day!) Think of a time when you can realistically sit quietly without being disturbed for 10 minutes – for some people it's right at the start of the day, for others it might be at the end of the day or just before they go to bed. You might need to experiment to find a good time.

Also think about how you'll remind yourself. As with any new habit, it's really easy to forget! So you might like to leave yourself a note or set a reminder on your phone. Or maybe there's someone in your life who would enjoy seeing you more relaxed and at ease with yourself, and more able to engage with them and with whatever you need to do – they might like to remind you! Whatever reminder mechanism you choose, I suggest you write it in the slot on the next page. Writing these things down helps convince yourself that you really mean it!



# Micro-Assignments

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Tips for formulating intentions:

- Make them really specific
- Make them small enough that you know you will do them
- Make them appealing enough that you actually want to do them!

## Tidy / Aesthetic Environment

What 1 thing will you tidy?

## Reduce/Refine Input

What 1 input will you cut out, and when?

## Completion

What 1 thing will you finish off?

## Brief Body Scan

When will you do your daily Guided Body Scan?

How will you remind yourself?



# Week 1 Diary

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## Guided Body Scan (5 times)

	When did you do it?	Notes (how did it go? What did you learn?)
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

## Other Micro-Assignments

	When did you do it?	Notes (how did it go? What did you learn?)
tidy 1 thing		
reduce or refine 1 input		
complete 1 thing		

