

# A simple introduction to Mindfulness in the classroom



Health Improvement Team

# Meet the team

## The Health Improvement Experts



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*Safeguarding*



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*Mental Health &  
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**Health Improvement  
Advisor**

*Preventing  
Extremism in schools*

# Our services to schools

The Health Improvement team's three services



## Universal

All schools receive this service for free.



## Health Partnership

Workshops, resources and training.



## Bespoke

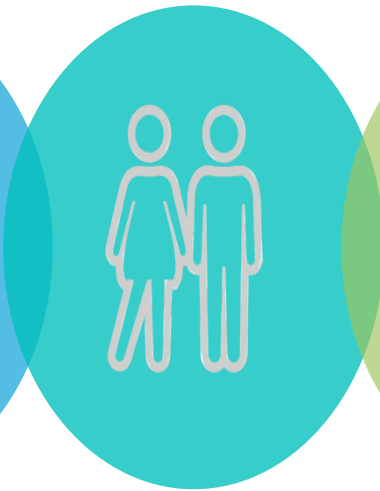
Four day customised service.

# What we do

We provide support and training in five areas:



**Safeguarding**



**RSE**



**Nutrition**



**PSHE**



**Emotional wellbeing**

# Aims of the workshop



## Increased knowledge

In the concept of mindfulness



## Increased understanding

Of how mindfulness can help in school



## Increased confidence

In introducing mindfulness in the classroom



## Increased awareness

Of mindfulness resources and training





# MINDFUL NATION UK

Report by the Mindfulness All-Party  
Parliamentary Group (MAPPG)

October 2015

# Key recommendations

- Education

Teaching schools to be designated to pioneer mindfulness teaching, co-ordinate and develop innovation, test models of replicability and scalability and disseminate good practice

Given the DfE's interest in character and resilience, we propose a comparable Challenge fund for £1 million a year to which schools can bid for the cost of training teachers in mindfulness

# Workplace

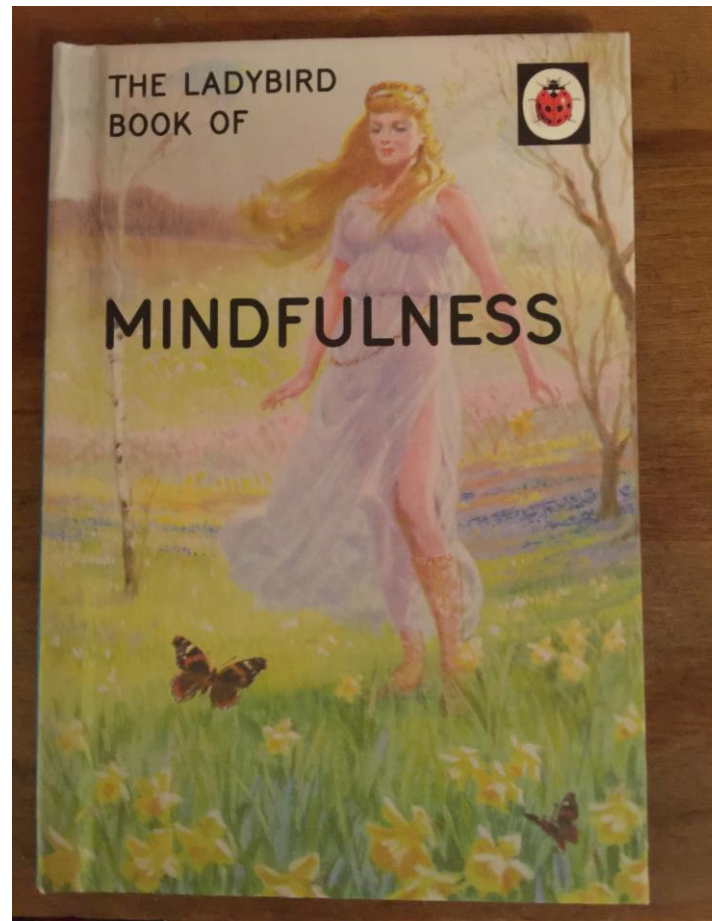
Increased research into what works best

Government departments should encourage the development of mindfulness programmes for staff in the public sector, particularly health, education and criminal justice to combat stress and improve organizational effectiveness

Use as a occupational health intervention



# What is mindfulness?



Alison has been staring at this beautiful tree for five hours.

She was meant to be in the office. Tomorrow she will be fired.

In this way, mindfulness will have solved her work-related stress.



# Myths and misconceptions

Mindfulness is not:

- Positive thinking
- A relaxation technique
- Going into a trance
- Trying to blank your mind
- Religious



I AM FINDING IT DIFFICULT  
TO CONCENTRATE BUT I  
AM NOT SURE WHY



**Mindfulness involves paying attention...**

**on purpose**

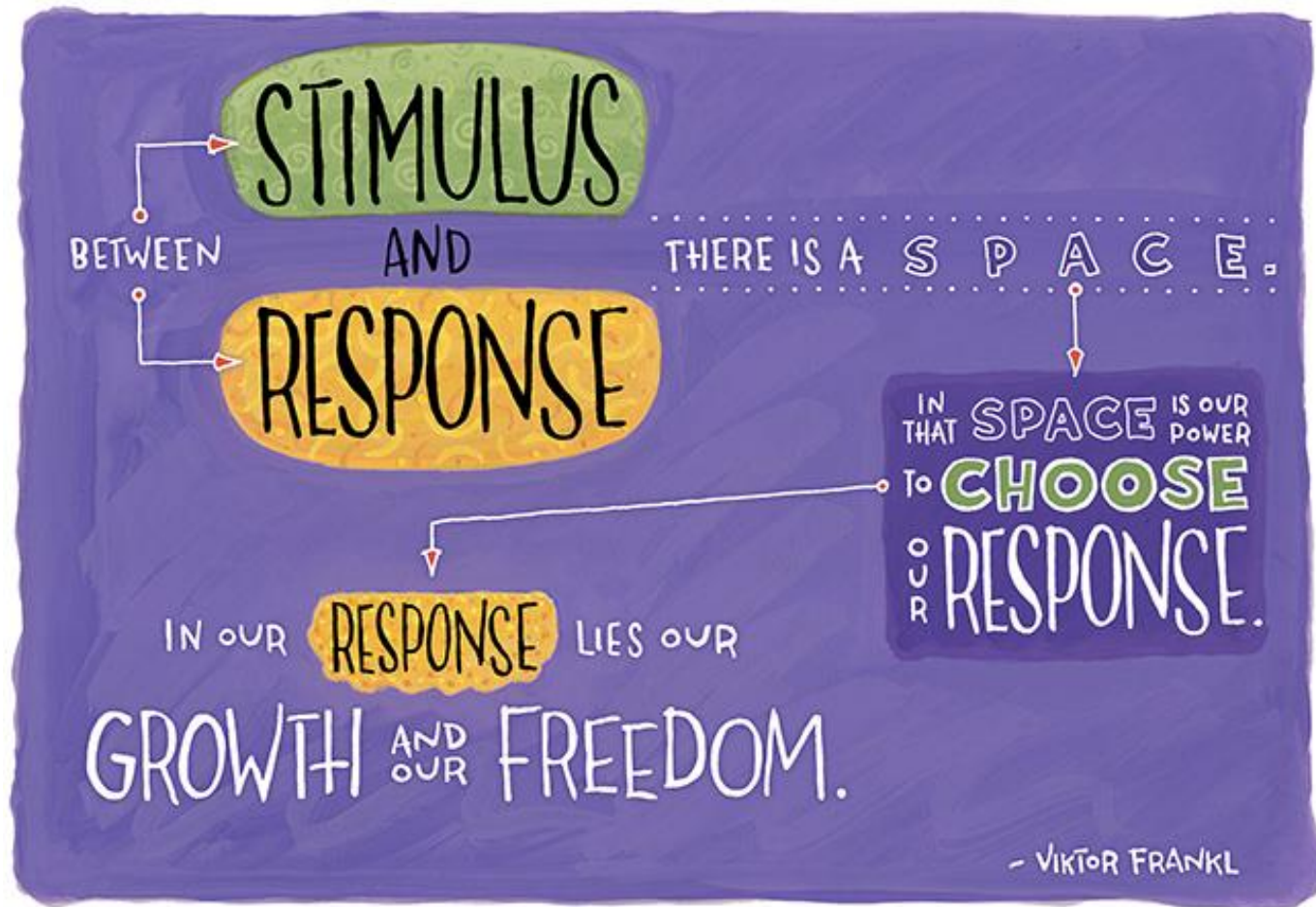
**in the present moment**

**with curiosity and kindness**

**...to things as they are**

(Kabat-Zinn, 1994)

If we learn to be mindful, we may find  
a way to make different choices





## Three essential aspects to mindfulness practice:

- **Connection** - training the mind to settle and focus, using the breath and body as an anchor
- **Curiosity** – developing interest in experience and a willingness to investigate experience
- **Care** – developing a spirit of non-judgemental ‘friendliness’ towards self and experience

# **'Doing Mode' & 'Being Mode'**

**Past & Future v Present**

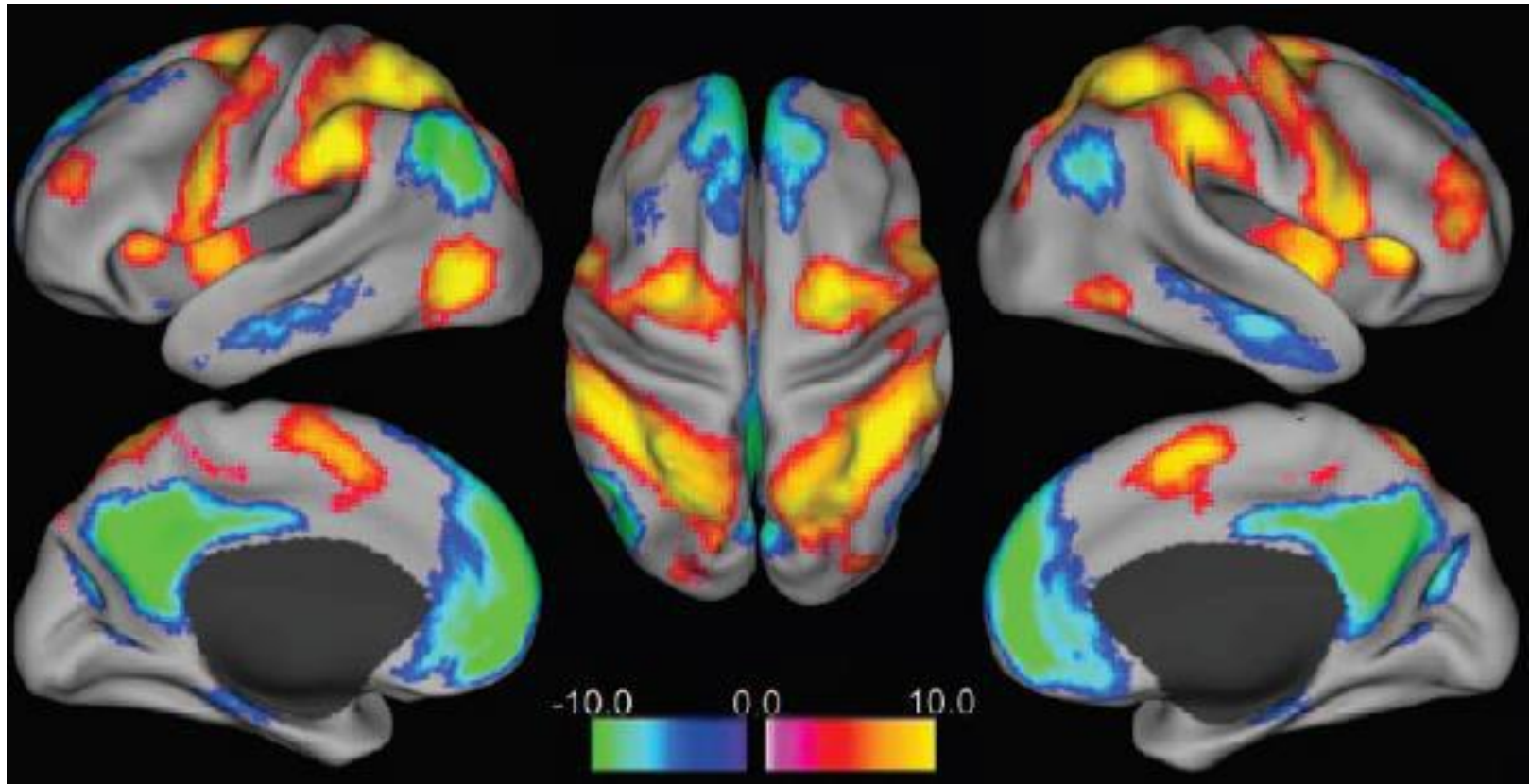
**Conceptual/ the mind v Embodied/ the body**

**Habitual / Autopilot v Intentional / Creative**

**Reacting v Responding**

**Thoughts as facts v Thoughts as mental events**

## Two distinct neural networks for thinking (blue/green) and sensing (red/yellow)



# Thinking/ doing mode

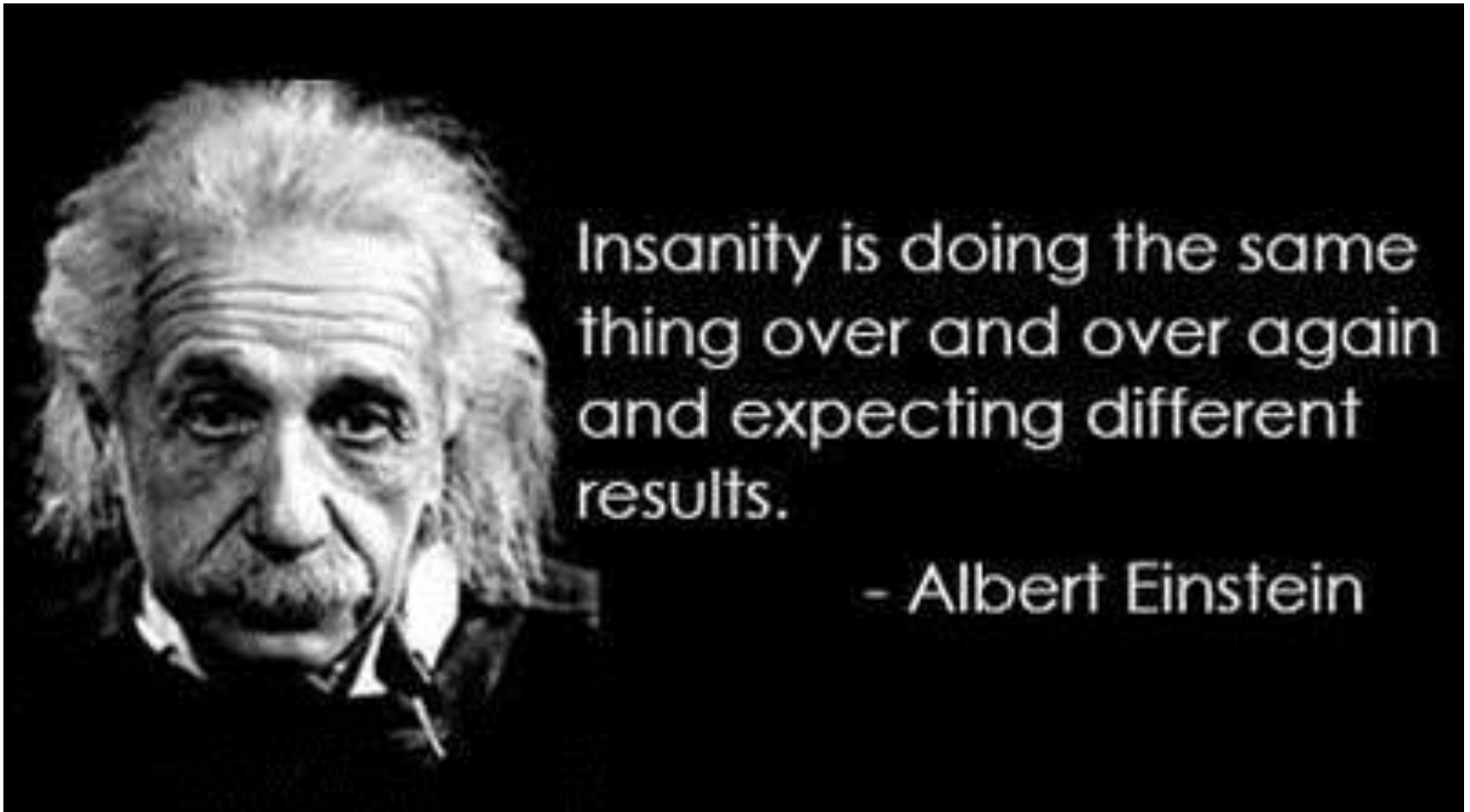
## ✓ Helpful

- Essential for our evolution- vigilance, theorising
- To formulate meanings
- To get things done

## ✗ Over-used...

- Preoccupation with commentary
- Planning (even when not wanted)
- Negative rumination, over-think, low mood and stress

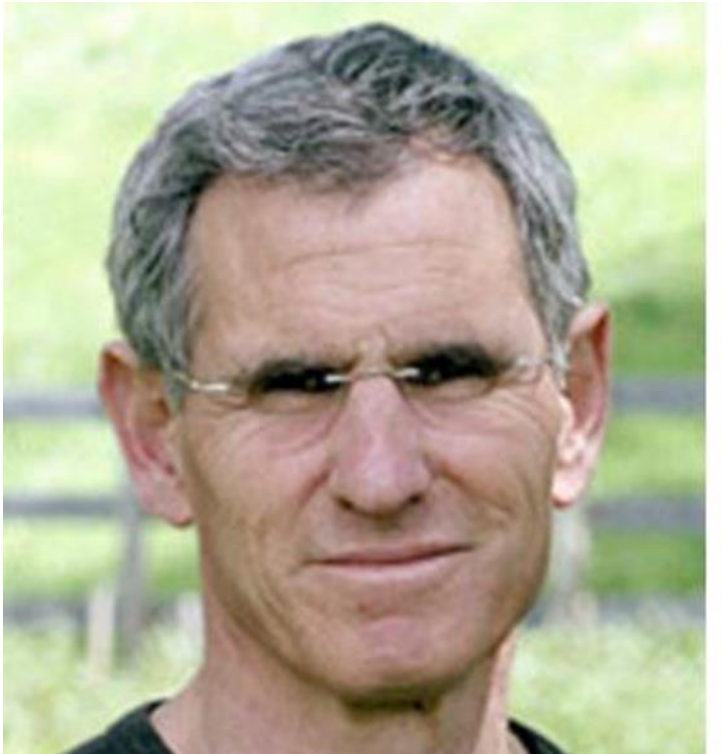
# Why not try a different approach?



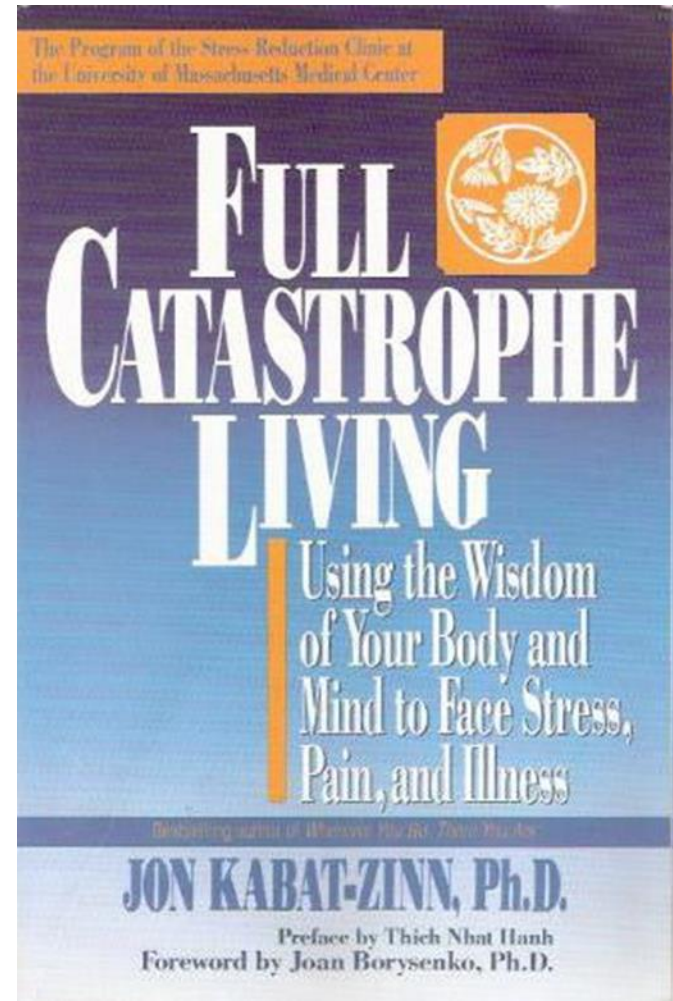


**How did it all start?**





Jon Kabat-Zinn





Learning through mindfulness practice to  
approach our experience in new ways

Moment by moment non-judgmental awareness  
of body sensations, thoughts and emotions

- **Formal practice** - bodyscan, mindful movement, sitting practice
- **Informal practice** - awareness of present moment experience during daily life

- 
- **Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction**  
(MBSR, Kabat-Zinn et al., 1990)
  - **Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy** (MBCT, Segal et al., 2002)

# MBSR & MBCT

- Aim to systematically develop skill of being present with internal and external experiences
- 8 weekly sessions of 2-2.5 hours
- Similar formal mindfulness practices
- Request formal daily home practice (45mins)



Taster

# Benefits of mindfulness

- **Physical health conditions:**
  - Chronic pain (Morone et al., 2008)
  - Breast cancer, prostate cancer (Foley et al., 2010)
  - Fibromyalgia
  - Irritable bowel syndrome
  - Rheumatoid arthritis
- **Mental health difficulties:**
  - Depression (Ma & Teasdale, 2004)
  - Anxiety (Koszycki et al, 2007)
  - Personality disorders
  - Eating disorders
  - Psychosis



# Benefits of mindfulness

- **Wellbeing:**
  - Greater enjoyment and appreciation of everyday life
  - Greater self-awareness
  - More acceptance of emotion
  - Increased empathy for others

Three important parts of your brain help you think and react to everything that happens around you: the prefrontal cortex, the amygdala, and the hippocampus. Learn how to help these parts work together to become a happier, healthier, brighter you!

## Prefrontal Cortex

(pree FRUN tuhl KOR teks)

The prefrontal cortex (PFC, for short) uses important information to focus, decide, compute, analyze, and reason. Here's the catch: the PFC gets information only when the amygdala is calm. Then it passes on to the hippocampus any info worth remembering.

## Amygdala

(uh MIG duh luh)

Feeling frightened? Upset? Your amygdala is on alert! It regulates and blocks information from going to your prefrontal cortex (PFC), so you can react in a flash. When you feel safe and happy, the amygdala will pass information on to the PFC so you can think.

## Hippocampus

(hih puh KAM puh)

The hippocampus creates, stores, and processes all important facts and memories the PFC passes on to it — such as birthdays, your friends' e-mail addresses, and the brisk, salty smell of the ocean.

## Breathing

Anytime you're stressed out, breathing can come to the rescue. Deep, full breathing calms your amygdala and helps you think and remember clearly.



**“Neurons that fire together wire together”**

## After 8 weeks of mindfulness practice, brain changes visible in.....

- Cerebral cortex in areas associated with attention and emotional integration.
- In grey-matter density in the hippocampus, important for learning and memory
- Decreased grey-matter density in the amygdala, associated with anxiety and stress.





How can we use mindfulness in our  
personal and professional lives?

# Individual level personal

Attend  
MBSR or  
MBCT  
course

Engage in  
mindfulness  
practice

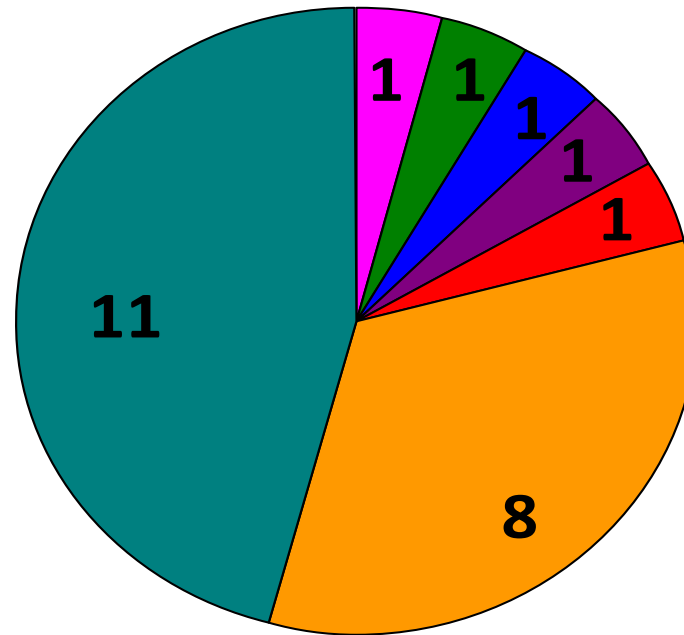
Use  
mindfulness  
apps



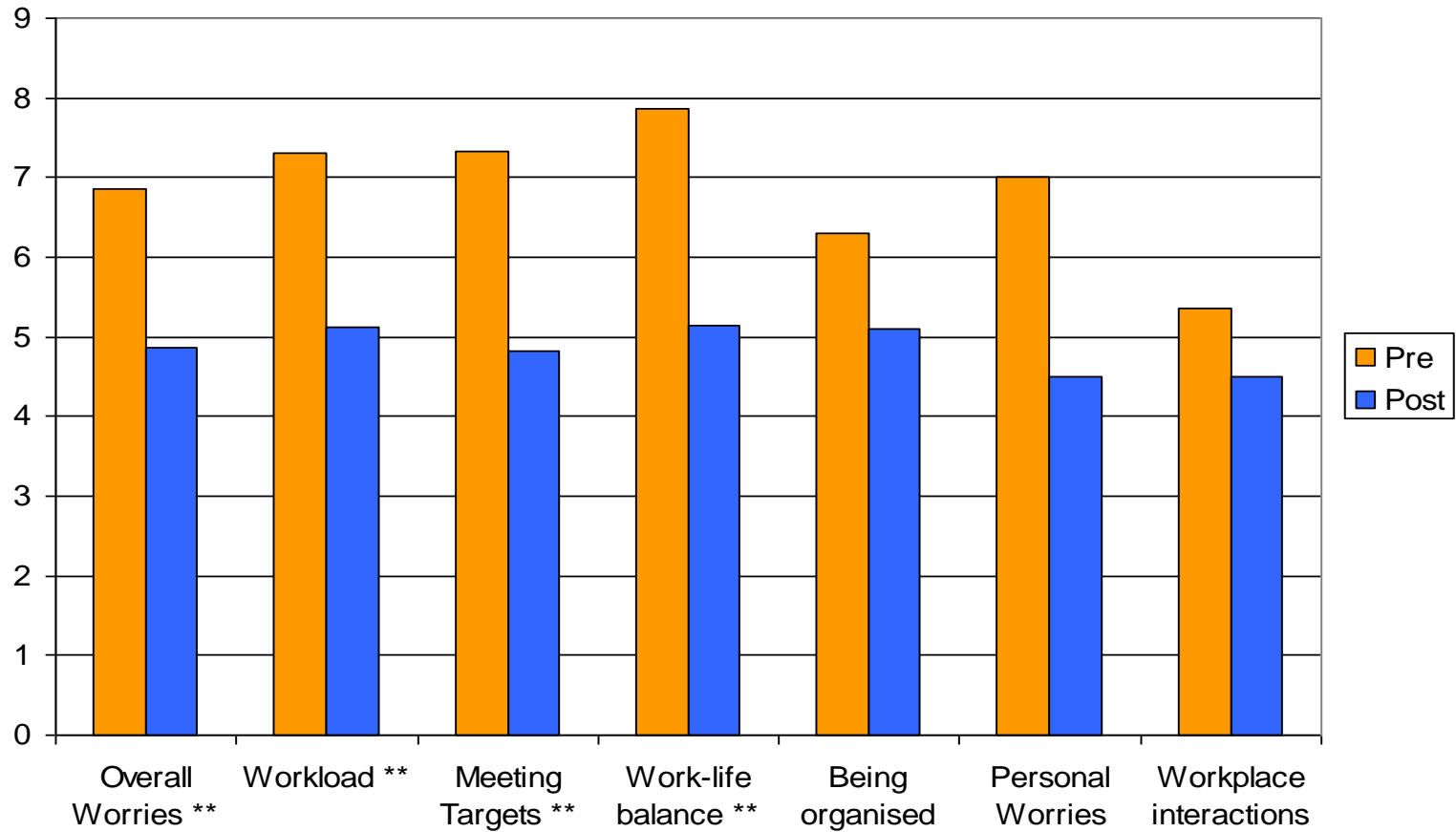
# Mindfulness with staff

- Aim to provide an introduction to developing skill of being present with internal and external experiences
- 8 weekly sessions of 1 hour
- Request formal daily home practice

# Job Roles



# Worries



\*\* significant at  $p < 0.05$  level

# Feedback from staff

*“How to deal with stress/ accept things will happen to respond instead of react”*


*“To recognise early anger/ stress signs and deal with it”*

*“Taking a breather before an observation”*



*“staying with pain“*

*“I have learnt to be grateful and while having dinner, reduced my portion because I ...eat mindfully..”*



*“Focus on one thing at a time rather than doing  
lots of jobs at once”*

*“Sleeping much better and managing pain e.g.  
headaches and muscular pain effectively”*

# Individual level- work

Punch holes  
in the day

Learn to  
refresh and  
reboot  
strategically  
through the  
day

Respond  
not react  
  
Take a  
breath

Stay present  
and be  
aware

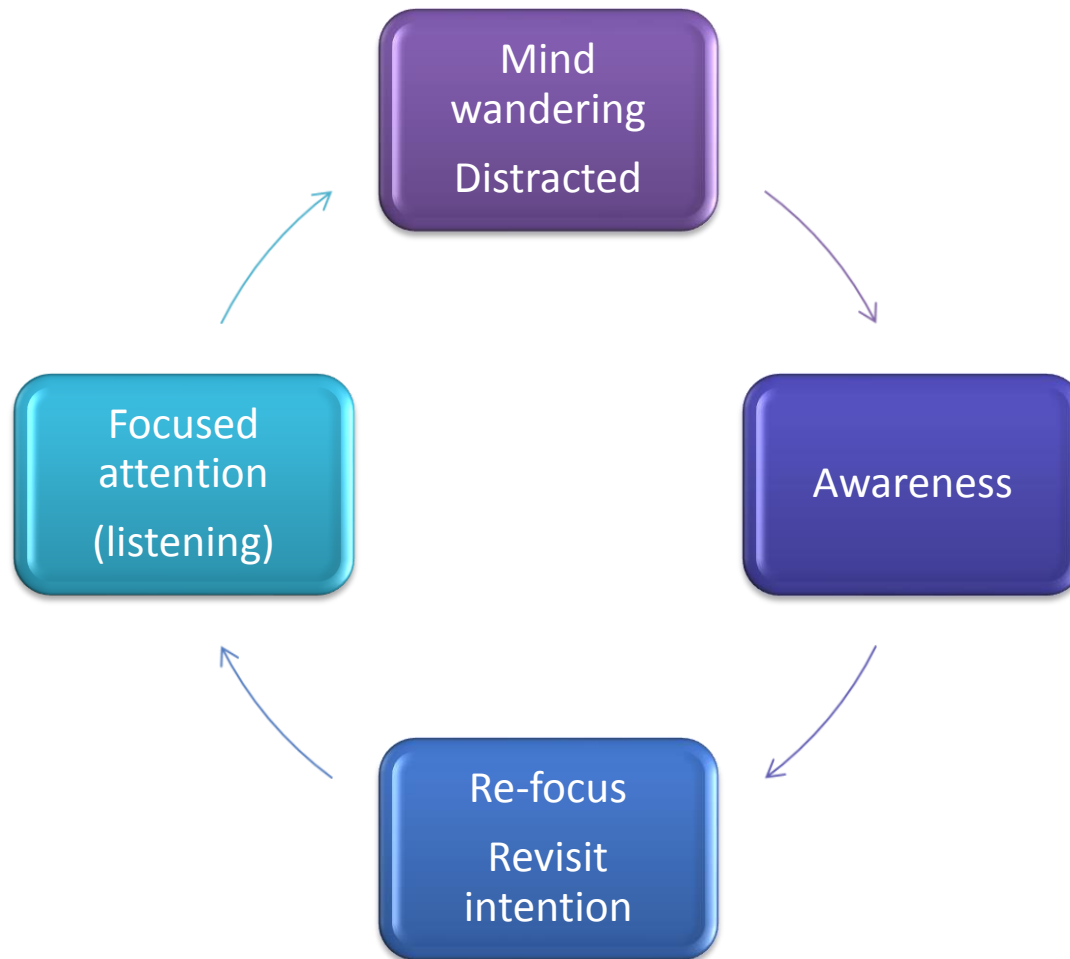
Refocus  
your  
intention

# Mindful Teams

**Increase in workload sharing** (McKinney et al 2005), **respect and active listening** (Singh et al 2006), **job satisfaction and performance** (Reb et al 2014). **Decrease in emotional exhaustion** (Reb et al 2014) and **negative judgement of others** (Bechman et al 2012)



# Managing meetings mindfully



# Team level

Mindfulness  
practice  
together- start  
of meetings?

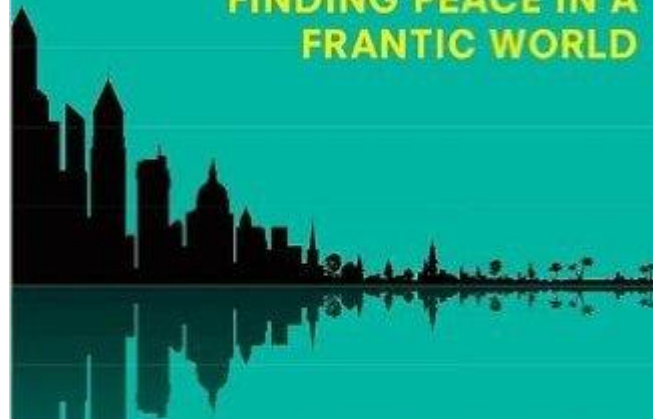
Respecting  
and  
supporting  
the need for  
others to  
have' a  
moment'

Have  
embedded in  
team  
language

INCLUDES FREE CD OF GUIDED MEDITATIONS

# Mindfulness

a practical guide to  
**FINDING PEACE IN A  
FRANTIC WORLD**



'If you want to free yourself from  
anxiety and stress, then read this book'

**RUBY WAX**

The  
life-changing  
bestseller

and **MARK WILLIAMS**  
**DANNY PENMAN**

Foreword by Jon Kabat-Zinn

# Bringing mindfulness to schools



The Mindfulness in Schools Project  
[www.mindfulnessinschools.org](http://www.mindfulnessinschools.org)



# First steps

- If anyone is interested in pursuing this further, please get in contact.
- [wpatel@primarybehaviourservice.co.uk](mailto:wpatel@primarybehaviourservice.co.uk)

# Why use mindfulness in the classroom?

It gives children an opportunity to self reflect within the classroom

To address the difficulties in children being ready to learn after break times

Techniques can be used as a cooling down tool for the children to use in the 'Cooling down' area

It teaches children how to use meditation and mindfulness in their everyday life outside the classroom

# Benefits of mindfulness for children:

- Focus
- Concentration
- Memory
- Creativity



# Aims of using mindfulness in schools

- For children to have an opportunity to be 'still' and become self aware in order for them to engage fully in their learning after break times
- To help children be mindful in all aspects of their lives
- To use the techniques to help adults and hope that all staff try mindful activities in their personal time
- To support a calmer and more peaceful environment for both staff and pupils in the school



# Mindful techniques for schools

Listening

Tasting

Visual

Breathing

# Drawing music

Listening

- **Time for exercise:** under 15 minutes
- **Equipment required:** pencils, crayons, paint or felt tip pens, paper A4 or larger
- **Instruction:** Ask the children to think about the music being played and draw what they think the music looks like. There is no right or wrong drawing.
- **Group discussion:** Invite the children to reflect on what they noticed about the music. If using two songs, the differences between the music and how it made them feel. Why their drawings are different. If there was anything they notice when listening for the second time.

# Chocolate tasting

Tasting

- **Time for exercise:** under 5 minutes
- **Equipment required:** chocolate (could also be fruit or a sweet)
- **Instruction:** Ask the children to think about the chocolate they have been given, considering the packaging, the feel of the chocolate, the smell and the taste. Follow the series of questions (see handout)
- **Group discussion:** Invite the children to reflect on their experience of the exercise, what they noticed and how they felt about eating chocolate in this way. (see handout)

# Monkey business

Visual

- **Time for exercise:** under 10 minutes
- **Equipment required:** The monkey business video
- **Instruction:** Ask the children to concentrate very hard. It is important that they accurately count the number of passes between each player in the ball game. Answers will be taken at the end.
- **Group discussion:** Ask if anyone noticed the gorilla in the video. Play the video again and discuss with the class why they think they may not have noticed the gorilla

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK\\_zfY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK_zfY)

# Meditation

Breathing

- **Time for exercise:** under 5 minutes
- **Equipment required:** Calming music or a bell
- **Instruction:** Ensure the children are sat comfortably on the floor or a chair. When the music starts or the bell sounds, ask them to take a deep breath in through their nose and a long breath out through their mouth. Invite them to close their eyes and repeat the breaths to the count of four. Repeat again and stop when you end the music or when the bell stops ringing. (see meditation guidance)
- **Group discussion:** Invite the children to reflect on their experience of the exercise. How they felt when breathing and how they feel now



## BUBBLES

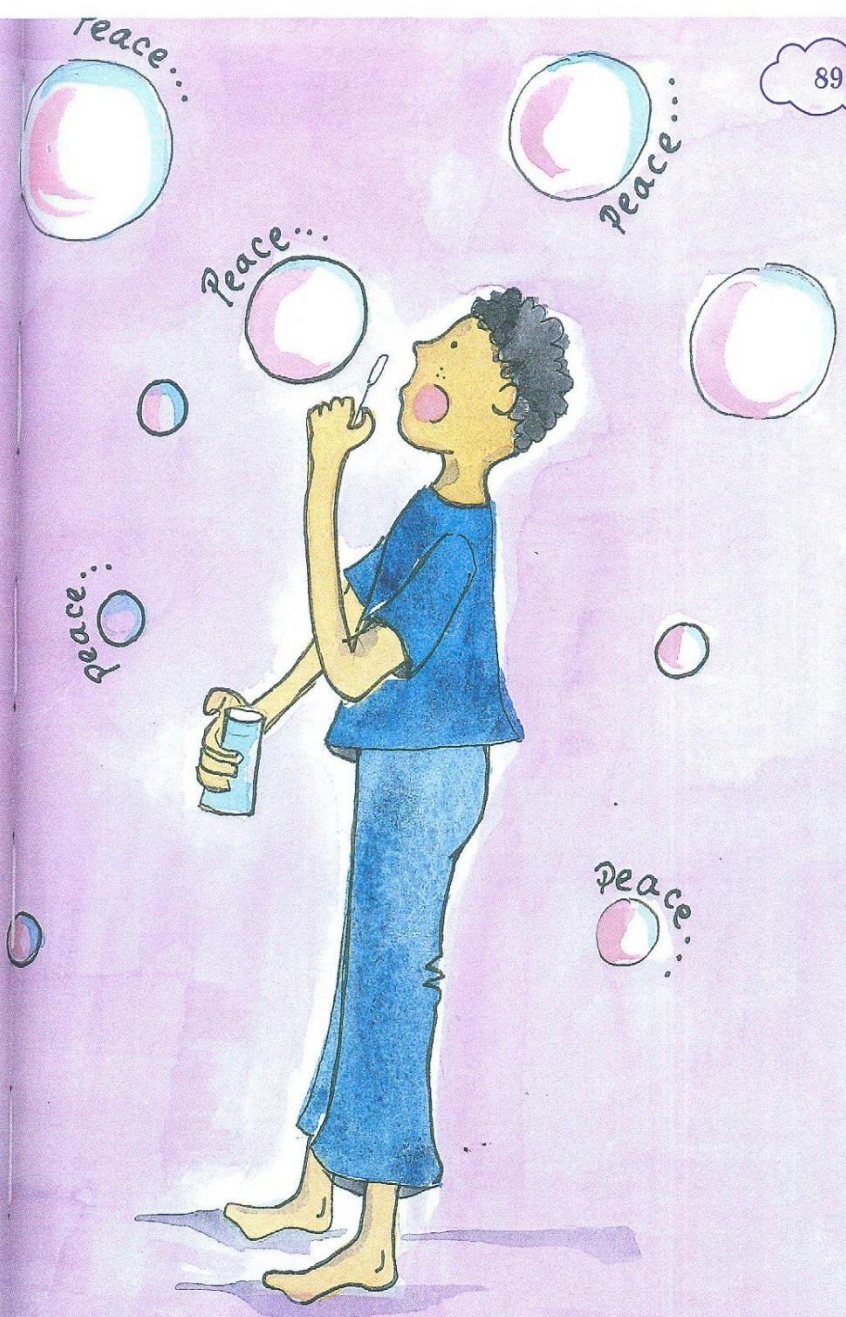
Close your eyes, be very still and imagine you are holding a huge bottle of bubble liquid. You are going to blow some bubbles. These are special peace bubbles that will drift through the world, spreading peace everywhere. First, become very peaceful. Take a deep breath: as you breathe in, feel as if you are breathing in deep peace. Imagine that you are breathing peace into your lungs and whole body. Now breathe out peace into the atmosphere.

Now take your bubble wand, breathe in peace, and, as you blow out, blow as many bubbles as you can.

Imagine you are filling each bubble with peace. Breathe in peace again and blow out peace into the bubbles. Now watch the bubbles drift upwards into the sky and move along. Where in the world would you like to send them to? Just have a thought, and the peace bubbles will obey and softly land in the place where you sent them. The bubbles will spread thoughts and feelings of peace to that place. Breathe in peace again and blow some more bubbles. Watch as the delicate shiny bubbles of rainbow light drift softly through the air. They are carrying all your thoughts of peace to places in the world that need peace. It feels so good to be sending peace into the world. Blow your bubbles of peace for as long as you wish. Breathe in peace, breathe out peace. Breathe in peace, breathe out peace.

And now, when you are ready, wiggle your fingers and toes, have a big stretch and open your eyes.

I SEND PEACE INTO THE WORLD,  
I SEND PEACE INTO THE WORLD





# Tips for using mindfulness in the classroom

- Meet with SLT to ensure that there is a whole school approach to introducing mindful techniques into the classroom. This is a more effective way of teaching mindfulness at school.
- Ensure staff have a good understanding of mindfulness and feel confident in using the techniques in their classroom. Complete further reading on mindfulness and consider training.
- Ensure that the mindful activity is done consistently on a daily basis to ensure children fall into a routine.
- Be aware and fully engaged in the activity when you are teaching mindfulness.
- Decide when to introduce the mindful technique , e.g after breaks to address the challenges of children being ready to learn after playtime. See hand out for ideas of introducing mindfulness to the class for the first time.

# Resources

**Mindspace**

[meditationinschools.org/  
resources](https://www.meditationinschools.org/resources)

**SmilingMind**

[www.smilingmind.com.au](http://www.smilingmind.com.au)

**Mindful Schools**

[www.mindfulschools.org/  
resources](http://www.mindfulschools.org/resources)

**Pawsb:  
Mindfulness in  
Schools Project**

[www.mindfulnessinschools.org/  
g/](http://www.mindfulnessinschools.org/)

**YoungMinds**

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

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

**Mindup**

[www.mindup.org](http://www.mindup.org)

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