



What to expect in a Mindfulness Course or Workshop

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment. Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them—without believing, for instance, that there’s a “right” or “wrong” way to think or feel in a given moment. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we’re sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future.

WHAT IS A MINDFULNESS COURSE OR WORKSHOP?

Our courses and workshops are for adults who would like to reduce their stress and/or improve their mental health and wellbeing. Our teachers have extensive training in teaching mindfulness and applying it to improve health, mental health and wellbeing. In a course, sessions of 2.5 hours (2 hrs if online) are held weekly for 8 weeks. Workshops deliver the same program, but taught over 3 days (6 hours each day and usually not consecutive to allow time for participants to practice the skills taught).

We have specifically trained teachers to guide, instruct and support you.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE SESSIONS?

Courses and workshops are based on the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program which is run all over the world and includes information sessions about why we think and feel the way we do, the relationship between our mind and body, how to stop worrying or ruminating, deal with difficult emotions, increase focus and attention and adapt to living with chronic pain or health conditions or stressors. Courses are experiential and practical – we put into practice the skills and “apply” them. Mindfulness is the main exercise that we do together to make this happen. You won’t be put on the spot or singled out (except to introduce yourself at the beginning!) and you don’t need to be able to do anything in particular, even read or write well.

IS IT THE SAME AS MEDITATION?

There are different types of meditation (ways to quiet the mind and open the heart) and our programs teach Insight Meditation, training our attention to see how and why we react the ways we do, more clearly. The focus is on training our attention to be more stable, to regulate our nervous system to be less reactive and learn to be kinder to ourselves and others, all which impact on our health and wellbeing. Mindfulness training focuses on being present rather than living in the past or future which enables us to experience more pleasure, more control over what is going on “right now” and spend less time thinking and feeling about what has gone on before or what may or may not occur in the future or zoning out of life. Everyone’s mind wanders when they practice mindfulness and everyone will at some stage feel sleepy, agitated, bored or wonder if it’s for them. These responses are normal but part of the problem sometimes. So we learn about how to handle these issues and your teacher will support you and the group. Everyone is already mindful to some degree; we are simply strengthening the capacity so we can get the most out of life.

WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES?

Our programs follow an internationally-run course which is evidence-based for reducing stress, anxiety, depression, burnout in teachers and health professionals, distress associated with chronic pain and health conditions such as heart disease, and for increasing job satisfaction and quality of life. For more information regarding the science and evidence behind the course and other outcomes it can offer, go to <https://goamra.org/>

Our own survey of Tasmanians who completed a course with us in 2019 found that 87% of participants rated the course as effective or highly effective and the outcomes they reported were related to improvements in general wellbeing, in the capacity to be less reactive, to relate to difficult thoughts differently, to being able to better manage emotions and stress and in being more able to take time for self-care.



WHO ARE THE PROGRAMS SUITABLE FOR?

Courses and workshops are only available to adults living in Tasmania. They are intended for those who are experiencing a “mild to moderate” degree of psychological stress in their life, or who recognize the need to prevent distress as they have some risk factor in their life, such as a stressful job, a health condition, difficult relationships or who have been impacted by events such as the pandemic. They are useful for people who have in the past or currently experience anxiety or depression and want to learn more about themselves and how to feel better. Our programs are NOT suitable for people who are in the midst of a life crisis, who are unsafe at home, who struggle with serious mental health problems or who can't be in a group setting. If this is you, talk to your GP about 1:1 counselling until you are in the position to be able to attend a workshop or course.

This is NOT group therapy where you “tell your story” and go over your history and events in your life. This workshop is educational – we learn information and practice skills together to make a difference with how we are right now.

WHAT SHOULD I BRING?

Your teacher will provide you with written materials for the course and for going over things between sessions, or after the course if you like. You will also be given access to an app, or some CDs so that you can listen to the guided audio mindfulness tracks between the sessions (which is when the real work and change happens) and after the course has finished, to keep going with what you've learnt. We suggest wearing comfortable clothes, with layers for the room and season; bring a water bottle; a yoga or camping mat or blanket to sit or lie on, and; any cushions or supports you need for your body and any injuries or health problems you might have.

CAN I JUST TURN UP ON THE DAY?

Unfortunately no, you can't. We need to talk with each participant first (via phone), to check eligibility requirements and that the course is right for you. We also need to know numbers before a course begins, for venue and COVID requirements.

HOW DO I APPLY?

Applications are essential and can be made directly by you, online through our website www.mindfulnessaus.com.au or by calling us on 0488 064 228. You can register for a specific course or workshop; if there is not one currently planned for your area, select “waitlist in my area” and we’ll organize one as soon as we can. We will call you for a brief chat once we hear from you or receive your application.

WHAT DOES IT COST?

Courses and workshops are currently fully funded, so therefore FREE for people who meet the eligibility requirements (see ‘Who are the programs suitable for?’). Our programs are supported by the Commonwealth of Australia and Primary Health Tasmania.



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ABOUT US

Mindfulness Programs Australasia (MPA) is a Tasmanian based organization owned and managed by Christine Hiltner (Mindfulness Teacher, Social Worker and Yoga Teacher) and Miranda Stephens (Mindfulness Teacher and Clinical Psychologist). We employ trained Mindfulness Teachers who are passionate about our vision to “Make Tasmania a Mindful State” and deliver our programs in person and online across the state.

Please don't hesitate to be in touch via phone, email or through our webpage, and you can follow our social media pages for course updates and other relevant links.