



# What to expect in a Mindfulness Course

## 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. This helps with managing stress, anxiety and depression as well as chronic pain.

## WHAT IS A MINDFULNESS BASED STRESS REDUCTION COURSE (MBSR)?

Our MBSR courses are for adults who would like to learn mindfulness as a way to reduce stress and/or improve mental health and wellbeing. We learn how to “listen” to ourselves so we can pick up earlier what state (mood, level of stress etc) we are in, how to regulate and care for that, how to relate to ourselves and others in a kinder way (thus assisting our self-care and relationships) and how to work with our “triggers” for stress and be less “reactive” to them. These courses are held in-person in major towns and cities in Tasmania and online as well. Sessions run for 2 hours online or 2.5hrs in-person, for 8 weeks, and there is an extra Day of Mindfulness as part of the course, like a mini-retreat.

## WHAT IS A MINDFULNESS BASED COGNITIVE THERAPY COURSE (MBCT)?

An MBCT course is similar to the MBSR, but targets depression in particular, by focusing on ‘patterns of mind’ that can keep us stuck in overwhelm and unhappiness. MBCT offers a gentle, systematic way to address the tendency to overthink or ruminate, and the tendency to avoid or suppress emotions. It provides another way to experience yourself and life without harsh self-judgement. Research suggests this approach can be as effective for depression as antidepressant medication. These courses are also held in-person in major towns and cities in Tasmania and online as well; sessions run for 2 hours online or 2.5hrs in-person, for 8 weeks. There is also an extra Day of Mindfulness as part of the course, like a mini-retreat.

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

## WHAT HAPPENS IN THE SESSIONS?

Both MBSR and MBCT courses 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 if need be and how to increase openness to positive experiences. Courses are experiential and practical – we put into practice the skills and we “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, or have experience in mindfulness.

## IS IT THE SAME AS MEDITATION?

There are different types of meditation 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 is already mindful to some degree; we are simply strengthening this capacity so we can get the most out of life. When we are not mindful, we are in automatic pilot and that is the state associated with stress, anxiety and depression.



## WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES?

Our programs follow an international course which is evidence-based for reducing stress, anxiety, depression, burnout in teachers and health professionals, distress associated with persistent pain and health conditions such as heart disease, and for increasing job satisfaction and quality of life. For more information on the science and evidence behind the course, go to [www.goamra.org](http://www.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.



## WHAT ABOUT A MIND YOUR SELF COURSE (MYS)?

Mind Your Self is a short course (4 weeks) providing practical information on how to manage stress and enhance wellbeing. We discuss topics such as emotions, how minds work and how to best manage the stress response. The course builds emotional literacy and provides practical opportunities to learn or strengthen emotional regulation skills. MYS courses are for people who may be experiencing stress, with short 1-hour sessions covering a different topic each week: (1) how stress shows up in the body and ways of calming it; (2) why emotions are important and how to handle them; (3) the nature of the mind and techniques for managing difficult thoughts; and (4) how to focus on and grow the important things in life including our connections with others and the things that make us happy.

## WHO ARE THESE PROGRAMS SUITABLE FOR?

Courses 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, or difficult relationships. They are useful for people who currently experience or have in the past experienced anxiety or depression and want to learn more about themselves and how to feel better. Our programs are NOT suitable for people amid 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 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?

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. If you register for an online course, you will need the internet and a camera and microphone. We use zoom and can help you navigate it. Your teacher will provide you with written materials for the course, as well as access to an app, or audio links so that you can practice between sessions (which is when the real work and change happens) and afterwards.

## HOW DO I APPLY?

Applications are essential and we give everyone a call to check eligibility requirements and that the course is right for you. If our programs are not right for you, we can help find something that is. You can apply online through our website [www.mindfulnessaus.com.au](http://www.mindfulnessaus.com.au) or by calling us on 0488 064 228. You can apply for a specific course or if there is not one available nearby, select the 'waitlist' option and we'll contact you when one is available.

## WHAT DOES IT COST?

Our mindfulness courses are FREE for people who meet the eligibility requirements outlined above in 'Who are these programs suitable for'. This is made possible by Primary Health Tasmania under the Australian Government's Primary Health Network Program.



Mindfulness Programs Australasia (MPA) is Tasmanian based organization owned and directed by Christine Hiltner (Mindfulness Teacher, Social Worker and Yoga Teacher) and Miranda Stephens (Mindfulness Teacher and Clinical Psychologist) and supported by Anna McNeill (Program Manager). 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.

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