

## **Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation**

Mindfulness, the non-judgemental awareness of our moment-by-moment experience can allow us to develop a very different relationship to our pain; one that can allow for wiser choices as to how best to care for ourselves, and to minimise the effects of pain and stress on our wellbeing.

There is scientific evidence that some people who regularly practice mindfulness meditation can also experience a reduction in pain over time. Other researched and documented health benefits include improved immune system function, happier and calmer moods and slower aging.

And unlike medication, mindfulness practice has no side-effects and is freely available to us at any time! All we have to do is tune-in gently to our inner world.

### **HOW TO START PRACTICING MINDFULNESS.**

We often start with sitting comfortably, in an upright supported posture, with eyes closed, and simply start to notice the movement of the breath within the body.

So we are paying attention to the in and out breath “just as it is” in this moment without feeling the need to change the rhythm of the breath in any way.

We just notice where the breath is most clearly felt for us in the body and when the mind wanders, we gently return our attention once again to the in and out breath.

In this way we use the breath as a way to “anchor” our attention in the here and now. Because the breath is always present it provides immediate access to the present moment and allows us to notice not only the breath, but the current state of bodily sensations moods and thoughts. So we notice these other states of mind and body, we acknowledge them and then over and over again we simply return to the breath. Initially we may have to do this many, many times as the mind will pull us away from the experience of the breath constantly. This is nothing at all to worry about, it’s just what our mind tends to do. (in mindfulness practice we often speak of “monkey mind”, jumping here, there and everywhere!)

In mindfulness practice we are not aiming for a “blank mind”, more accurately we are methodically training the mind to be less scattered; to be more aware of the “state” of our mind, and body so we can gain more mastery over these often unconscious patterns within ourselves that can all too often contribute to pain and stress. Start with 5-10 minutes a day and build up your practice gradually.