

Mindfulness as a way to cope with long term conditions

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Mindfulness as a way to cope with long term neurological conditions

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Overview



- Introductions
- What is mindfulness?
- The Community Neurology Mindfulness Group (CNMG)
- Previous group evaluations
- Questions

Living on autopilot...

Examples of the challenge:

‘What did I come upstairs for?’

‘Did I lock the door?’

‘How did I get here!’

Our minds wander off – where do they go?



The wandering mind....

It's natural for our mind to wander, this is what the mind does, however if we are not aware this is happening, we can end up feeling stressed, overwhelmed, or low in mood...



Often, before you know it, one thought leads to another, and you're somewhere you wish you weren't...



Our thoughts naturally stray off into the past and the future...



...even though we only exist in the here and now

Mindfulness
can be defined
as...



‘paying attention in a particular way:
on purpose, in the present moment
and non-judgmentally’

Jon Kabat Zinn (2004, p. 7)

Benefits of mindfulness



- Mindfulness can reduce pain and the emotional reaction to it
- Mindfulness improves working memory, creativity, attention span, and reaction speeds
- Mindfulness reduces psychological distress (e.g. anxiety, stress & depression)
- Trials indicate mindfulness is at least as good as drugs or counselling for the treatment of clinical level depression
- Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy, a mindfulness based programme is recommended in NICE guidelines to help reduce relapses in recurrent depression and for fatigue in Multiple Sclerosis (MS)
- Mindfulness enhances brain function, particularly areas of the brain associated with self awareness, empathy, self control and attention

- Mindfulness can soothe the parts of the brain that produce stress hormones
- It builds the areas of the brain that lift mood and promote learning
- It reduces some of the thinning of certain areas of the brain that naturally occurs with ageing
- Mindfulness has also been shown to improve the immune system
- Regular meditators are admitted to hospital far less often for cancer, heart disease and numerous infectious diseases
- The three main research studies on using mindfulness based interventions with people with MS indicated mindfulness can improve health-related quality of life, fatigue, pain, balance and depression

CNMG: Our mindfulness group



The aim of the group...

To help people with long term neurological conditions learn skills to aid their adjustment to their diagnosis as well as help them cope with the unpredictable symptoms and the associated distress

The history...

- The service was previously run in the MS service but it was transferred into the Community Neurology Service in May 2015 to include all neurological conditions

Current group...

- It is an 8-week course with each session lasting 2 hours
- There are 10-12 people with various long term neurological conditions in each group
- The group involves practicing mindfulness in the sessions and at home
- It requires patience, commitment and having an open mind
- We also offer a carer session
- It is currently only available to city patients.

Group Evaluations



- Last year we presented the initial group evaluation results, we have since evaluated the impact of the 8 week course on a few MS patients' (n=7) quality of life 12 months post group. Qualitative interview data indicated:

- A transition from resisting diagnosis to accepting diagnosis and symptoms had been maintained. Lifestyle adjustments were maintained

- Patients developed a positive mind-set and increased self-compassion as well as improvements in symptoms such as mood, fatigue and balance

- Meeting others with MS helped improve participants QoL by reducing isolation and creating new social networks which were maintained 12 months post group

- All participants continued to employ the principles of mindfulness and all but one continued to practice

Living with MS Information Day Nottingham