

MENTAL HEALTH AND MINDFULNESS



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MENTAL HEALTH

A useful definition of mental health is that used by the World Health Organisation: "Mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."

In 1997, The Health Education Authority defined mental health as "the emotional and spiritual resilience which enables us to survive pain, disappointment and sadness. It is a fundamental belief in our own and others' dignity and worth".

Mental health problems are common and widely misunderstood. It is said that at any one time, one adult in six suffers from mental health problems of varying severity. Other research suggests that one person in four will experience some kind of mental health problem in the course of a year.

A survey of children and young people's (aged 5 - 15) mental health found that the proportion of children and adolescents with any mental disorder was greater among boys than girls across the age range: 11% compared with 8%.

The cost of mental illness in England adds up to £77.4 billion. This equates to:

- £12.5 billion for care provided by the NHS, local authorities, privately funded services, family and friends;
- £23.1 billion in lost output in the economy caused by people being unable to work (paid and unpaid);
- £41.8 billion in the human costs of reduced quality of life, and loss of life, amongst those experiencing a mental health problem.

Mental health is a contested concept which is defined in a number of different ways. There is the deficit model of mental health i.e. the absence of objectively diagnosable disease and a positive holistic model of mental health, as a state of physical, social and mental well-being. This is multifaceted with six dimensions: affective, behavioural, cognitive, socio-political, spiritual and psychological.

The Mental Health Foundation has defined a mentally healthy individual as one who can:

- Develop emotionally, creatively, intellectually and spiritually;
- Initiate, develop and sustain mutually satisfying personal relationships;
- Face problems, resolve them and learn from them;
- Be confident and assertive;
- Be aware of others and empathise with them;
- Use and enjoy solitude;
- Play and have fun;

- Laugh, both at themselves and at the world.

These differing models and definitions of mental health illustrate an array of individual and environmental risk and protective factors. The interaction between discrete factors and mental health outcomes is however not clearly delineated. Why a particular risk factor should result in poor mental health outcomes for one individual and not another is as yet unknown. What all these models of mental health acknowledge however is the extent to which mental health is entrenched within social relationships.

MINDFULNESS

"Mindfulness is the development of the ability to pay deliberate attention to our experience from moment to moment, to what is going on in our mind, body and day to day life and doing this without judgement."



Health Care Professionals from LILAC (Living is Life After Cancer) in Coalisland, Northern Ireland become CBRT Practitioners.

Section Heading

On 5th January 2010, "The Daily Mail" carried a report that "Patients with depression should be routinely given £300 meditation courses on the NHS, doctors' claim".

The article said that Mindfulness techniques used by Buddhist monks could produce 'massive savings' by halving the risk of depression coming back and that "only one in 20 family doctors are prescribing such treatment", according to a report by the Mental Health Foundation charity.

More than 100 studies have shown that areas of the brain linked to controlling emotion are bigger in those who have meditated regularly for five years. This means they have a greater volume of grey matter to process information.

The report then quoted Dr Andrew McCulloch, the Mental Health Foundation's chief executive, as saying that 'mindfulness' therapies were much cheaper than treating the condition with drugs. 'This would have huge knock-on benefits both socially and economically, making it a sensible treatment to be making available, even at a time when money is short within the NHS,' he added. 'Our report found that three-quarters of GPs have prescribed medication to people with long-term depression believing another treatment would have been more appropriate.' He said NHS guidelines already recommend eight-week meditation-style courses which cost £300 for recurrent depression, but provision is patchy and should be extended.

Mindfulness-based approaches are intended to:

- Teach people practical skills that can help with daily and ongoing life challenges and physical and psychological health problems;
- Bring about an awareness of the benefits of correct breathing;
- Teaches us a way in which we can get "back in touch" with the experience of being alive;
- Help to halt the escalation of these negative thoughts and teaches us to focus on the present moment, rather than reliving the past or pre-living the future;
- Mindfulness practice helps us to see more clearly the patterns of the mind;

and to learn how recognise when our mood is beginning to go down and deal with issues much earlier than before;

- Help us develop our willingness to experience emotions and our capacity to be open to even painful emotions;
- Help people discover that even difficult and unwanted thoughts and feelings can be held in awareness, and even seen from a completely different perspective, which enables hope and empathy to the suffering we are experiencing.

Relaxation Techniques support Mindfulness and Mental Health programmes. Numerous studies have shown that using relaxation techniques regularly can:

- Decrease the likelihood of heart attack and stroke, and can significantly reduce the incidence of a second heart attack;
- Protect you from mental health problems;
- Improves your immune system function;
- Aid memory, concentration levels and learning;
- Improve your coping skills and makes you feel better.

There has been so much research carried out into the benefits of relaxation, that it's impossible to do more than skim the surface here. The main points are:

- Because stress hormones suppress the immune response, relaxation allows the immune system to recover and so function more effectively;
- Relaxation lowers blood pressure in many people and so decreases the likelihood of stroke and heart attack;
- Relaxation gives a 'break' from things and lowers activity within the limbic system of the brain, the emotional centre;
- The brain has a regular need for more pronounced right-hemispheric activity. Relaxation helps meet this need.

Jon Kabat Zinn developed the Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) eight-week programme in the US in 1979 at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. Research shows that MBSR is enormously empowering for patients with chronic pain, hypertension, heart disease, cancer, and gastrointestinal disorders, as well as for psychological

problems such as anxiety and panic. Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy grew from this work. Zindel Segal, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale adapted the MBSR program so it could be used especially for people who had suffered repeated bouts of depression in their lives.

The UK National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) has recently endorsed MBCT as an effective treatment for prevention of relapse. Research has shown that people who have been clinically depressed 3 or more times (sometimes for twenty years or more) find that taking the program and learning these skills helps to reduce considerably their chances that depression will return.

CBRT

In 2010, the Colour Breathing Relaxation Technique (CBRT™) is going to be made available to GP surgeries, PCTs and Healthcare Trusts as "Train the Trainer" training packages nationally for the first time. Developed in the UK since 1997, this effective and low cost Mindfulness system includes a two-day Practitioner Training Programme and enough CBRT products to be able to offer relaxation classes for Health Promotion Clinics. This Mindfulness Technique is based on the use of a patented system comprising of seven "Colour Breathing Disks®", in an Easel Kit format. Colour Breathing is appropriate for all ages; adults and children enjoy using it. Training Programmes are now being organised locally, across the UK. Training can even be undertaken onsite, saving additional time, travel and overnight expenses.

The CBRT training programme schedule being prepared for national launch will allow GP surgeries to send their staff to locally organised training programmes, where we shall use local facilities and training rooms, thereby reducing staffs travel and overnight stay requirements, expenses and time. Following the training programme the newly trained CBRT Practitioner is required to complete a 30 question Assessment Paper based on the training programme and provide case studies from using CBRT with individuals and group relaxation classes, (20 CPD points), before offering CBRT clinics to their patients. Having Mindfulness relaxation classes "in-house" provides a useful resource and skill set for your Practice Nurses, Community Nursing Teams, and AHPs. ■