

## **Mindfulness and compassionate mind training workshop for General Practitioners**

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Mindfulness is very much the buzzword of the day with an explosion of articles, blogs, books, apps and courses offering mindfulness. Mindfulness meditation is practised in a number of workplaces from silicone valley to the Houses of Parliament. Evidence of mental health benefits abound - from peer reviewed journals to narratives of healing from celebrities such as Ruby Wax.

But what do we mean by mindfulness? One definition is from Jon Kabat Zinn:

“Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally”

Mindfulness can also be defined as a set of meditation and reflection practices with three strands:

**Attention.** Being fully present & aware.

**Intention.** Clarity & purpose.

**Attitude.** Open, accepting, curious yet discerning.

I have been practising mindfulness meditation since 2008 and have guided and supported colleagues and patients in learning mindfulness methods. I have also trained in cognitive behavioural therapy and compassion focused therapy and have found that positive reappraisal, mindfulness and compassionate mind training have been transformational on a personal level, allowing me to be more self- and other-aware, more present for my patients and coachees, more serene, positive and focused. I find that it provides a 'resting place' and stillness in a frantic fast moving environment, helps me to live in the present moment and to develop a wise 'Observant Self', as well as to experience more joy and wonder. It has also been therapeutically valuable to many of my patients and coachees.

There is, however, a recognition that mindfulness meditation may not be helpful or attractive to everyone and that it can be too much 'in the head'. It has been framed (wrongly in my view) as a 'quick fix' or technique that allows you to 'perform' better without making any real changes to yourself or to your environment. More focus on body awareness, somatic meditation, yoga, Tai Chi and other such practices may be more beneficial to many individuals. I have also found that 'front-loading' self-compassion may be crucial to reducing distress and crippling self-criticism. Mounting evidence shows that self-compassion is key to resilience and enables one to be more compassionate to others – a term I call 'compassionate resilience'.

I will be introducing both mindfulness and compassionate mind training methods in this experiential workshop and offer a list of useful resources.