

# the future of mindfulness & education

FULL  
CATASTROPHE  
LIVING

JON KABAT-ZINN

Ruby  
Wax

“I can’t break a lot of my habits—maybe in another ten years – but you really get a bird’s eye view of the landscape of how your mind works. I don’t get why everybody doesn’t find that interesting.”

THE FUTURE OF  
DIGITAL MINDFULNESS

ROHAN GUNATILLAKE

WHAT DOES THE  
EVIDENCE TELL US?

KATHERINE WEARE

10  
YEARS ON

Leading figures  
from the worlds of  
mindfulness and  
education talk  
about their  
hopes and fears

MiSP CONFERENCE 2018  
MINDFULNESS IN SCHOOLS PROJECT



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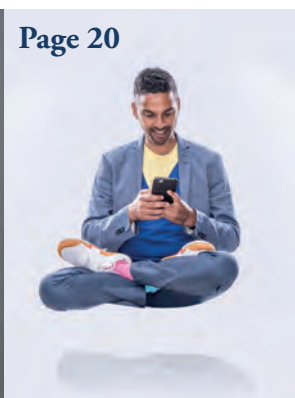
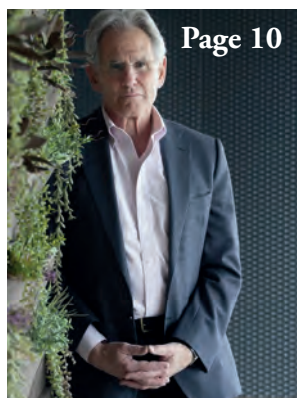
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# the schedule

09:30	WELCOME	
09:40	<b>Mindfulness In Education - Where Are We Now?</b> .....	Jon Kabat-Zinn
10:20	<b>Voice Of Experience #1: The Manchester Bombing</b> .....	Emily & Jo
10:30	<b>Mindfulness, Values and Moral Vision</b> .....	Jamie Bristow
10:45	<b>A Policy Perspective</b> .....	Chris Ruane MP
11:00	<b>Voice Of Experience #2: Playgrounds &amp; Petals</b> .....	Chris Alekkou & Maya
11:10	<b>The Challenge Facing Academies</b> .....	Cathie Paine
11:30	<b>What Do We Actually Know?</b> .....	Katherine Weare
12:00	<b>Voice of Experience #3: Biting The Day To The Core</b> .....	Adam & Enaya
12:10	<b>Being Alive and Knowing It: An Animation</b>	
12:15	<b>The Voice of .b Animations</b> .....	Niamh Bruce
12:30	LUNCH	
13:30	<b>Voice of Experience #4: A Mother, a Teacher and Mental Health</b> .....	Emma Naisbett & Jess
13:40	<b>The Future Of Digital Mindfulness</b> .....	Rohan Gunatillake
14:10	<b>The Voice of Experience #5: Students Take The Lead</b> .....	Sarah Gotting & Jake
14:20	<b>Reconstructing 'Education' Through Mindful Attention</b> .....	Oren Ergas
14:40	<b>The Voice of Experience #6: Primary Perspectives</b> .....	Julie Berentsen & Year 4
14:50	<b>The Role of Retreats for Young People</b> .....	Jessica Morey, Bo & Matt
15:10	<b>What Does Whole School Mindfulness Look Like?</b> .....	Doug Worthen
15:20	<b>Assistant Head - Award-Winner of Best Teacher</b> .....	Luisa Martin-Thomas
15:30	<b>Q&amp;A</b> .....	Jon Kabat-Zinn & Students & Teachers
16:00	<b>The Future of Mindfulness in Education</b> .....	Jon Kabat-Zinn

# welcome

## to the future of mindfulness & education



**We are at a tipping point. Will mindfulness burn brightly here and there, but end up as a victim of poor implementation, fizzling out as little more than another teaching fad?**

### Welcome to our 2018 conference.

Ten years ago, relatively few people in the West had heard of mindfulness; today it seems to be everywhere. When MiSP began, our priority was to drum up interest and inspire schools to have a go; nowadays it can feel like we need to slow things down for fear of poorly trained teachers delivering silver-bullet McMindfulness that may undermine the field's integrity. Almost every presentation we give contains an image of the tortoise and the hare.

We are at a tipping point. Will mindfulness burn brightly here and there, but end up as a victim of poor implementation, fizzling out as little more than another teaching fad? Or will the common-sense benefits of mindfulness advocated by the pupils and teachers you will hear today prevail? Will this 'WD40 of education', as Katherine Weare likes to call it, win the day and become as elementary to a child's education as counting, reading and writing?

The answer, I imagine, is somewhere between the two. I hope that today's inspirational line-up of speakers will give you a sense of the forces that will shape the future of mindfulness in education. On the pages that follow is also a fascinating range of responses from these and other experts when we asked for their reflections on mindfulness' past and future. Most importantly, enjoy the stories you'll hear from those who matter most today: the children and teachers themselves.

And finally, thank you for being here. These events support our work on mindfulness in schools and help us to reach teachers and children who could not otherwise afford it.

**Richard Burnett**  
Co-Founder & Director



an amazing  
array of experts  
from the  
education &  
mindfulness  
worlds...



## our speakers



### Rohan Gunatillake

Rohan Gunatillake, author of **Modern Mindfulness (This is Happening)**, studied at Oxford before beginning a career as a management consultant. One day he realised the hustle and bustle of his morning commute could actually enhance his meditation rather than prevent it and his concept of mindfulness everywhere was born. Rohan combines twelve years' experience of working in technology and innovation with an equally extensive background in mindfulness and through his company **Mindfulness Everywhere**, makes a range of creative and human-centred products which combine meditation, technology and design including **buddhify**, which has been a best-selling app in over forty countries. He is a trustee of the British Council and in 2012 Wired magazine named him in their Smart List of 50 people who will change the world.

### Katherine Weare

Katherine Weare, PhD, is Honorary Professor at the University of Exeter and Emeritus Professor at the University of Southampton. She is known internationally for her work on mental health, well-being, social and emotional learning and mindfulness in education, and has published widely in the field, reviewing the evidence base, advising policy makers and governments, and developing practical strategies across Europe.

Her recent book, co-written with Thich Nhat Hanh, 'Happy Teachers Change The World' (2017) is helping to cultivate a more holistic and less instrumental approach to mindfulness in educational contexts. She has recently taken on a role as principal investigator for the new Mind and Life Europe initiative developing a 'Community of Contemplative Education' across Europe that aims to bring people together.



## our speakers

### Dr. Oren Ergas

Oren Ergas is a Senior Lecturer at Beit Berl College, a former professional musician and author of the outstanding “Reconstructing 'Education' through Mindful Attention”.

Oren’s work fundamentally challenges the way we ‘do’ education. He positions the mind at the centre of curriculum and pedagogy, suggesting that in the classroom we should pay at least as much attention to how the child is experiencing the lesson ‘in here’ – in the mind and body – as to teaching them about the world ‘out there’. As one critic wrote “This is the provocative idea at the heart of Dr. Ergas’ new book, and it challenges all interested in contemplation, education, ethics and the future of our planet to think anew about what curriculum and pedagogy \*ought to be\* in the pluralistic, fast-moving, globalized, and troubled world of the 21st century”.



### Jessica Morey

Jessica Morey, MA is the Executive Director of Inward Bound Mindfulness Education (iBme) and is a founding board member and lead teacher for iBme teen retreats.

Before joining iBme, Jessica worked in clean energy and climate policy and finance. She holds a BA in Environmental Engineering from Dartmouth and Masters degrees in Sustainable Development and International Affairs.

Her experience of bringing mindfulness into her work and life was described in a 2012 article ‘Dharma 2.0.’ More recently she wrote an article in the February 2014 Mindful Magazine, ‘Finding My Way,’ about her experience learning and benefiting from mindfulness throughout her young adult years.



## our speakers



### Chris Ruane MP

Chris Ruane, a former teacher and Member of Parliament since 1997, is a driving force behind mindfulness in the UK. He set up free mindfulness classes in the UK Parliament in 2013 and since then more than 150 MPs and Peers have received mindfulness training, along with 250 members of their staff.

Chris was instrumental in setting up the Mindfulness All Party Parliamentary Group (MAPPG), a cross party group dedicated to developing public policy on mindfulness in health, education, criminal justice and the workplace.

Chris also has a strong interest in developing international links and is currently working with mindfulness advocates in over 40 different countries who wish to take mindfulness to their legislatures.

### Jamie Bristow

Jamie Bristow is director of The Mindfulness Initiative, the world's first policy institute about mindfulness, which grew out of a programme of mindfulness teaching in the British Parliament.

The Mindfulness Initiative provides the secretariat to the UK Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group and helped politicians to publish the seminal Mindful Nation UK policy report. Jamie now works with politicians around the world to help them make capacities of heart and mind serious considerations of public policy.

Jamie has discussed the benefits and challenges of mindfulness practice on national TV and radio, including BBC Breakfast, Sky News and Channel 5 News. He has contributed to conferences across the world including in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Spain, the UAE, UK and USA.



Photo Credit: PulseJk

## our speakers

### Doug Worthen

Doug Worthen is Director of Mindfulness Programs at Middlesex School in Massachusetts and very active in the burgeoning movement to bring mindfulness practices into the American school system. Middlesex is a pioneering school in the US and implementing mindfulness at unprecedented levels.

What began as an introductory talk before an all-school assembly in 2009 has grown through small steps into a fully formed mindfulness program that touches all aspects of community life on the Middlesex campus.

An accomplished sportsman himself (All-New England in football and lacrosse) Doug has integrated mindfulness into the athletics faculty.

Other developments at Middlesex include expanding the program to include parents, supporting other local schools and enabling peer-to-peer support.



### Cathie Paine

Appointed in 1998 to her first headship in a large and socially deprived school in 'special measures', Cathie was at the time the youngest headteacher in England and led the school to become 'Good' in just four terms. Shaped by this, Cathie retains her passion for enabling children to flourish in an environment of outstanding practice.

Until February 2013 Cathie was Executive Headteacher of three primary schools including Mount Street Academy that became Lincolnshire's first Teaching School in 2012.

Cathie is now Deputy CEO of REAch2, the largest primary-only academy trust in the country. It is a growing charitable organisation currently supporting some 60 primary academies across England.



## our speakers



### Niamh Bruce

Niamh Bruce has been at the forefront of mindfulness developments in Ireland since 2005, initially at Dublin's Sanctuary, founded by Sister Stanislaus Kennedy ('Sister Stan') and now a haven for young people. Niamh helped to create and develop the Sanctuary for Young People's Programme (S4YP) and the Mindfulness Approach to Technology (MAT) programme. She was also pivotal in developing the Sanctuary's teacher training resources 'I Can Feel My Toes Breathe' and 'Stillness in the Classroom'.

Niamh facilitates workshops for the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), the Sanctuary Warrior Programme for young people and the CPD Programme for the Irish Association of Social Workers and many others. As well as being a highly trained MBSR teacher, Niamh was selected to narrate the highly-acclaimed .b animations; her voice has accompanied many a troubled teen on their mindfulness journey!

### Luisa Martin-Thomas

Luisa Martin-Thomas is a teacher with a burning passion to improve the lives of all of the young people she encounters in school.

To ensure that the wellbeing of staff and students is supported effectively she has been the driving force behind developing a 'Mindfulness' hub at her school, Tonypandy Community College. It has been a resounding success and supported numerous students through difficult periods.

Luisa's positive outlook, drive and energy resulted in her winning the award for Teacher of the Year in a Secondary School at the 2017 Pearson Teaching Awards.

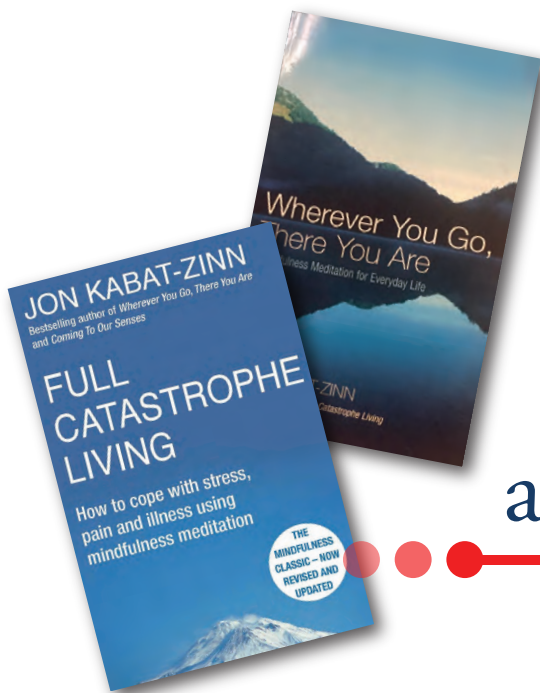




I am very much looking forward to this conference about the future of mindfulness in education. It is a field that has grown considerably in the past 10 years yet in so many respects it feels like this is just the beginning. It will be intriguing to hear different perspectives on the challenges that lie ahead.

# A full (catastrophe) life





## all about Jon Kabat-Zinn

RICHARD BURNETT

**We are delighted that Jon Kabat-Zinn is opening our conference here at the Friends House in London.**

Jon is one of the founding fathers of contemporary mindfulness. Emeritus Professor of Medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, it was Jon's pioneering work at the renowned Stress Reduction Clinic that set the wheels in motion for what became Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). Jon has been teaching MBSR for decades around the world.

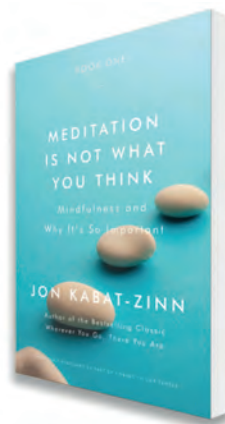
In the UK it was MBSR that sowed the seeds for what became Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), a mindfulness course now recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence as a treatment for depression. MiSP's secondary school curriculum **.b** adapts and reframes the insights and practices from MBCT to help young people with the roller-coaster of adolescence. Our primary curriculum - Paws **b** - then makes these available to children up to 11.

Jon's Ph.D. in molecular biology from MIT in 1971 set the tone for a lifetime spent not just teaching mindfulness but collaborating in ground-breaking research. Jon's particular interests include clinical applications of mindfulness and its effects on the brain, the immune system, emotional expression as well as the application of MBSR for prison inmates and staff; in multicultural settings; and on stress in various corporate settings and work environments. Jon has written many papers and bestselling books on mindfulness and its application. These include his ground-breaking "Full Catastrophe Living: How to Cope with Stress, Pain and Illness Using Mindfulness Meditation" (1990, 1996,

2013) and "Wherever You Go, There You Are" (1994, 2004).

At MiSP we often refer to "Full Catastrophe Living" as a phrase that captures a key aspect of mindfulness. From the movie of Nikos Kazantzakis's novel Zorba the Greek, Jon chose this as his title because he felt that Zorba's words embodied "a supreme appreciation for the richness of life and the inevitability of all its dilemmas, sorrows, tragedies and ironies". He writes that "ever since I first heard it, I have felt that the phrase 'the full catastrophe' captures something positive about the human spirit's ability to come to grips with what is most difficult in life and to find within it room to grow in strength and wisdom. For me, facing the full catastrophe means finding and coming to terms with what is most human in ourselves".

There is a common misconception that mindfulness is about being 'calm' or being 'happy'. It is not. It is about living fully, something we hope that all children and young people have the opportunity to do.



Jon's recently published book "Meditation Is Not What You Think: Mindfulness And Why It Is So Important" is available now.

## about MiSP

**Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) is a UK charity for children and young people. Our aim is to equip those at school with a toolkit to help them manage difficulties and flourish, whatever their circumstances. In short, it is to teach them mindfulness as a life-skill that will last a lifetime.**

MiSP is the UK's foremost provider of high quality, face-to-face classroom curricula, including .b for secondary schools and Paws b for primary schools. Our programmes have succeeded with young people in educational contexts as diverse as maintained schools, academy chains, independent schools, pupil referral units, hospital schools, and sports and youth clubs.

**Within the next five years we want to reach one million UK schoolchildren.**

We would not pretend to provide a panacea for every mental health issue, but we do aspire at a national level to contribute to a generation of children and young people with stronger foundations in mental health. What we teach is a skill-set that enables young people of all abilities and backgrounds to benefit in their own way – whether academically, socially or emotionally.

Some may use mindfulness to manage their anxiety and finally get to sleep; for others it might mean learning to concentrate when their life seems impossibly chaotic; for some it is being able to walk confidently onto the

**Our aim is to equip those at school with a toolkit to help them manage difficulties and flourish, whatever their circumstances.**

stage or sports pitch, or into the exam hall – and perform better as a result; and, as some young people have movingly told us, it can be life-changing, meaning they are able to cope when confronted with appalling adversity.

A not-for-profit organisation from October 2009, MiSP gained formal charitable status from the Charity Commission in England and Wales on 1 September 2016. A driving force behind our strategy is to make the highest quality of mindfulness training available to children and young people in maintained schools in ways that are affordable and sustainable.

A core part of MiSP's philosophy is that teachers cannot teach mindfulness to children unless they understand and practise it themselves. To this end we also have .b Foundations for school staff and our new online introductory programme .begin.

We also recognise the need for a growing body of high quality research evidence around mindfulness and young people. To that end, MiSP supports research wherever possible.



Please contact us at [enquiries@mindfulnessinschools.org](mailto:enquiries@mindfulnessinschools.org) if you would like to know more about these courses.



# MiSP: the future

Over the next five years,  
MiSP's vision is to  
reach one million  
children in schools.

**Over the next 5 years, MiSP's vision is to reach one million children in schools with high-quality, face-to-face mindfulness teaching.**

As I hope you will hear today, the benefits of mindfulness for young people are tangible and real – from supporting mental health and resilience to children living their lives more fully - but this will only be possible if we directly address the elephant in the room: cost.

We know how stretched finances are in the vast majority of UK schools. In speaking to teachers and headteachers up and down the country, it is clear that managing budget cuts whilst maintaining a high quality of education for pupils is their most pressing priority. Many state schools are having to make difficult and unpopular decisions about cutting staff and subjects, so it is not surprising that anything beyond the core curriculum is even more at risk.

Because of this, a driving force behind our strategy as a registered charity, is to remove cost as a barrier to maintained schools accessing the highest standards of training and materials. We want children to learn

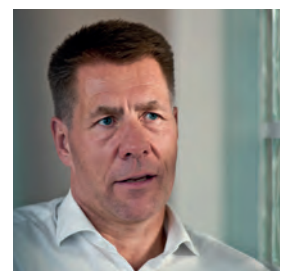
mindfulness and receive this life-long toolkit from teachers who understand and embody it, not ones who pay lip service and press 'play' on a video whilst doing their marking.

How is this possible? More fundraising events like this one; working with local and national businesses; connecting independent schools with maintained ones; applying for grants. But also, with your support. Please put us in touch with any individuals or organisations you know who are as passionate about mindfulness as we are.

And if you are a teacher or senior leader in a school and want to begin your own mindfulness journey, look for our '.begin' course so that you can learn in a way that is not only inspiring, but affordable ...



**David Long**  
CEO



## The stronger our roots the more support there is for our hopes.

**Apart from its growth, what do you think has been the most significant change in mindfulness over the last 10 years?**

Two important things have happened in recent years: the first is that, in terms of research, mindfulness is entering a more critical phase in its development, which I see as very healthy. I am referring to a discourse that educates the public in being more realistic about what mindfulness can or cannot offer and what it takes to get benefits from the practice. Being human often comes with the wishful thinking of finding quick fixes, and the media can help give the impression that finally mindfulness will provide that. This recent critical approach is important for grounding the discourse in what is more valid and real.

## Mindfulness is as extraordinary as studying maths.

The second significant change is a broader perspective that is also connected with the first point: Mindfulness is becoming a more commonplace activity. It is a special practice, but the more it is thought of as something extraordinary, the less likely it will be to find people meditating in the workplace or students and teachers stopping a lesson just to re-orientate themselves in regards to "why we are doing whatever it is we are doing?" Broadly, I think that in some places we are beginning to see hints of this. Putting it in terms of schools - mindfulness is as extraordinary or unextraordinary as studying maths or history. The essential aim of all of these is to become kinder and wiser human beings, experience more meaning in our lives and seek to help others experience the same. Finding more mindfulness in education depends on seeing that these are not two distinct human activities but, rather, one.

## grounding the discourse

OREN ERGAS

**What is/are your greatest hope(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

My hope is that more people will enter into the circle of daily rigorous practice, based on their experience of the sanity that the practice brings to our lives. I realize that this is a relatively modest hope, but I take a very practice-oriented perspective on this. Human beings are dreamers and there is a good side to that, but our dreams and hopes need to rely on bodies that are rooted in a grounding practice to support them. The stronger our roots the more support there is for our hopes. Daily practice is the growing of embodied roots, the dissipation of fear, and the liberation of the mind toward goodness, connection and love in this world. My hope is thus deepened practice leading to its fruits in day-to-day living.

**What is/are your greatest fear(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

My greatest fear is broad, top-down initiatives that are not supported from the ground. I am speaking of countries/governments who will promote mindfulness without having a deep understanding of what it takes and what this means. Broadly, I think the only valid way for mindfulness to grow in a relatively healthy way is to count on individuals and small organizations (such as MiSP) that establish themselves through a strong practice and spread it to the world from there. Spreading mindfulness through broad policy-making, I fear, will bring us to a point in which we will have nice policies, but not enough practice-based people able to bring them about. We have to be careful with this and pace the growth of mindfulness to match our growth in rigorous practice.



# maintaining integrity

DOUGLAS  
WORTHEN

**Apart from its growth, what do you think has been the most significant change in mindfulness over the last 10 years?**

I think the most significant change is that mindfulness is less associated with Buddhism.

**What is/are your greatest hope(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

I hope mindfulness becomes an engrained part of education systems all over the world. I also hope that

more secular mindfulness retreat centers are built and attending mindfulness retreats becomes more common.

**What is/are your greatest fear(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

My greatest fear is that it becomes associated with prayer/religion and not allowed in schools. Also, I fear that somehow the word mindfulness loses its integrity because it becomes an umbrella term for so many different things.

# space to be

NIAMH BRUCE

**Apart from its growth, what do you think has been the most significant change in mindfulness over the last 10 years?**

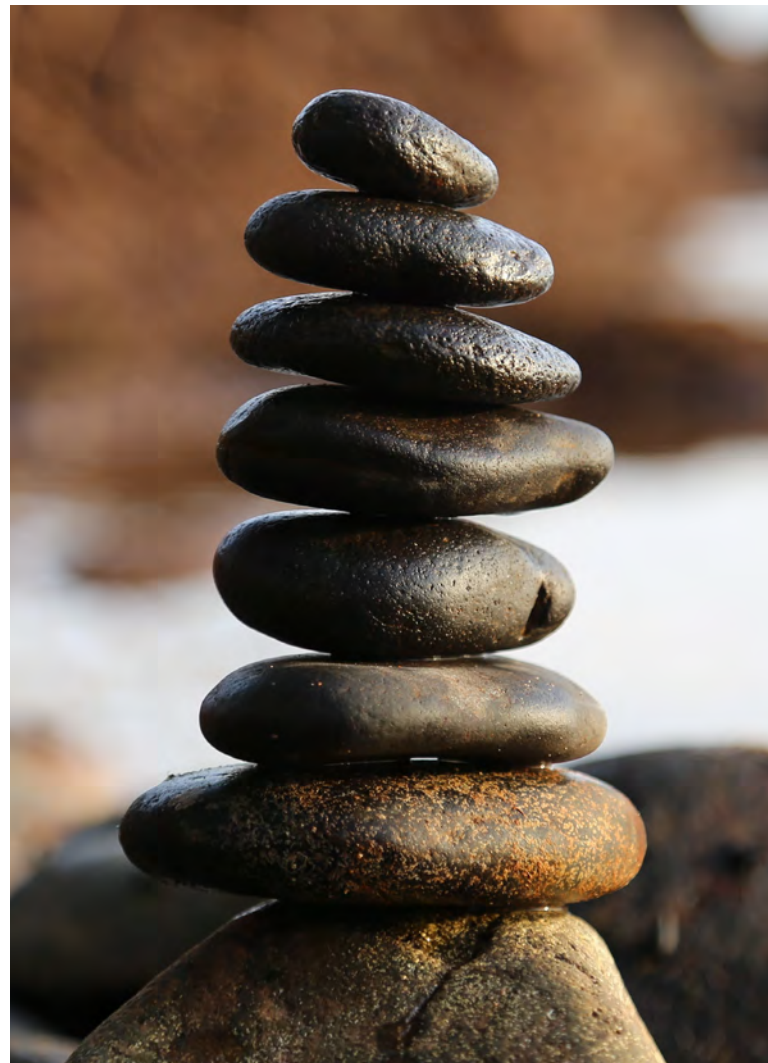
It's found in a variety of settings and people are understanding its relevance more and more in everyday life. From hospitals to schools to organizations and on playing fields and concert halls but most of all our schools. Above all there are so many passionate people wanting to hand over this gift to our young people.

**What is/are your greatest hope(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

That we don't oversell mindfulness and see the true strength and beauty in what it does provide. A tool to create space. Space to feel, space to rest, space to be, space between the stimulus and response. Space to choose. What a powerful and wonderful thing to provide that space.

**What is/are your greatest fear(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

That it becomes over commodified and we try to dress it up as something it's not; a quick fix, a cure all; a magic wand.



# Ruby -tinted spectacles

in conversation with Ruby Wax

RICHARD BURNETT

**What do you think has changed most about mindfulness in the last 10 years?**

Well, I used to get squeamish, and when I went to Oxford I didn't even tell people what I was studying! I said 'psychology', but that was squeamish too, so then I said 'neuroscience', but now you can say 'mindfulness'. It doesn't matter whether it's to a high up business guy or somebody in politics. They kind of nod their head. It's very rare for people to say "well isn't that just a fad thing?" because you just hold up the science research card and it is pretty well known. Now it is less about people saying "Is that the new age thing?". You know, yoga was a joke too and now look where it is. The things that stick stick because of some reason, they don't just come and go, so people take it seriously.

**What about your personal experience of mindfulness? How has that changed?**

It's difficult because how can I tell? When you start going to the gym how do you know when you start getting definition? One day somebody says "Hey you know your t-shirt bulges" and you had no idea 'cos your image of yourself remains the same. I notice things more now. I'm more aware of the garbage in life even; now I know it's not the real thing, whereas before it was sort of a jungle. Now I know when things are getting too shallow and when I have to get out and focus. There is a lot more driving the car rather than being driven. You do get that metacognition. All of this is true; I didn't just write about it.

**Have you noticed any change in your own mental health, as you've spoken very courageously about how that has been in the past?**

I haven't had a depression as I'm pretty tuned into when I'm in trouble. Whereas before I would have worked harder to snap out of it, even if now it is to say "I gotta put the medication up again". There is a greater awareness of things; I know what's pulling me. I can't break a lot of my habits—maybe in another 10 years – but you really get a bird's eye view of the landscape of how your mind works. I don't get why everybody doesn't find that interesting – not my mind – but figuring out their own.

**So you've not had a depression since you were practising?**

I haven't had a really big one. They used to last ages and I'd say "well, this will go away if I just take on eight more jobs". But now I know what to do. You become your own therapist. I mean it still comes – you can't wish depression away – but I won't get depressed about depression, about shame. It's more like I know I just happen to have a glitch, even if it's a big one.

**What are your greatest hopes about mindfulness in the future?**

If it did catch on with a bigger population there would be a groundswell of change. I'm not political and I won't go on and on about Trump. We know he is insane already. How much do you want to pick the scab? Every



There's always a group of teachers who come up when I'm signing books and they say "we teach .b". I mean it's everywhere. Every city, every town, there are always some.

time you do you are enlarging the puss - you're publicising the guy. Nothing will change until we say "wait a minute, our mind set has to change, not the guys in charge". Then maybe **they** would start to think with more awareness and, once in a while, visit the present; the repercussions on the political scene would be tremendous.

**You said "If it catches on". Do you think we in the mindfulness field are exaggerating the extent to which it has caught on?**

I think it's hitting those in the know, or those who have a little bit more time on their hands or are more middle class. It has to reach minorities. It would have to reach redneck America and I'm smiling because in my mind it never will.

**Interesting. Why don't you think it will?**

Because I think you need a mind to do mindfulness

and I'm not from the world of saying each man is created equal. They're not. You know, I teach mindfulness in the townships and people there take it in, but if you're not educated and your life is an emergency and life is tough then I can see them saying "why would this make my life better?". And maybe some people really shouldn't look into it too much because their life is a mess. I'd like to say "look in" but it's too daunting for some people because they're just trying to get food in their mouth.

**So do you think those two things are incompatible? Do you think you can help somebody with mindfulness at the same time as helping them put food in their mouth?**

I wish you could but I don't know how. I remember I was with little girls in the townships and I taught one class of mindfulness to their mentors and they all got it. It was great. And then the little girls came in who'd

been abused and I just went – you're trying to keep them away from looking at their minds, right? So I said "You guys want me to do your make up?" and everybody cheered. The next day I came with makeup and I touched them on their faces and you knew that they hadn't been touched on their faces in a way that was compassionate, and so they kind of melted and they became present - their breathing slowed down and they were with me. But I'm not going to say "and you can train yourself in this". It was just enough that they let me near them and that compassion was passed. I would not have attempted to teach these girls mindfulness techniques. I mean I'm not equipped; I wouldn't even know where to start.

### **What do you think about this in the context of education, as that is obviously our focus in the conference?**

Well that is the only way in. To me that is the answer.

### **But how do we connect with more severely disadvantaged children or children in schools where child poverty is rife. Do you think there is room for mindfulness in those schools?**

Yes, but the kids wouldn't know it's mindfulness. It's what you do in .b. You take the words out of it and the exercises are really fun and kids would feel that certain things suit them. So it's not like "I've got no time now. I'm not adding mindfulness to all the other things I'm doing". They would just assume this was play, but meanwhile they're training their brain.

### **So it's not that mindfulness is not accessible to them, it is how you present it to them and what you do with them?**

Yes, so it's a way to self-soothe, but they don't call it mindfulness.

### **Okay. So they might not be ready to have periods of silence where they look inside themselves but they might be ready just to enjoy playing, sensing, touching, tasting and feeling in ways that are keeping them present?**

Yes, and then in school you get more points or gold stars because you were kinder than you normally were. The whole teaching thing starts to switch and the reward system changes. If the really smart kid is helpful to the other kid and mentors him, then the kid starts experiencing the pleasure in it. Then you don't have to teach them 'mindfulness'. They'll know before an exam that they do better when they feel their feet on the floor and their bum on the chair. They know what an

amygdala hijack feels like; they know what it feels like when they're getting a cortisol overdrive; they know how to breathe. Then the kid has, you know, mastery over himself. That's going to feel great.

### **So what you are talking about is turning down the volume on mindful introspection and turn up the volume on mindful awareness?**

Exactly. As long as it is fun, and they get the benefit, even if it's gold stars.

### **What are your fears for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

That journalists use it as a punching bag and it's all, you know, flaky. I keep saying "they teach it at Oxford University, you know, they aren't teaching witchcraft!". Then there is suddenly an article that they haven't done enough research on mindfulness, and I say hang on a minute there's 2000 new pieces every 10 minutes, or something, and they weren't written by people from new age shops. You know the mentally ill people are those who stigmatise the most as they don't want to know anything about themselves. They are going to go for it and they're quite powerful. It could get knocked out of the arena. I don't think so though. It's gone pretty far.

### **Why don't you think it'll get knocked out of the arena?**

As long as people like you are around. I mean I tour the UK and everybody talks about .b. Everybody, whether I'm in Wales or whether I'm here [in London]. There's always a group of teachers who come up when I'm signing books and they say "we teach .b". I mean it's everywhere. Every city, every town, there is always some. And others say "what is this thing?" and I say – and I'm not making this up - I'll say "who are the teachers here that do .b" and they raise their hands, and I'll say "well, see them afterwards".

They say "I don't know how to do this with kids" and I say "but there are people who know how to teach your kids". It's like a dating service in those theatres. It's true, I'm not imagining this. You invented it and it's there for the taking; we don't have to imagine it.

If you would like to find out more about MiSP's Paws b and .b curricula mentioned in this article, please contact [enquiries@mindfulnessinschools.org](mailto:enquiries@mindfulnessinschools.org), or visit [www.mindfulnessinschools.org](http://www.mindfulnessinschools.org)



# wiser & saner

BECCA CRANE

**Apart from its growth, what do you think has been the most significant change in mindfulness over the last 10 years?**

From being a fringe activity on the margins, mindfulness has become an accepted aspect of mainstream life.

**What is/are your greatest hope(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

My aspiration is that these understandings about the human mind become a more integrated part of ordinary people's understanding of themselves and each other. Through this it will become a priority at a collective and individual level to invest in a range of processes, including mindfulness, which support us to better

understand ourselves and better navigate the tender and challenging aspects of being human. We will become a wiser, saner more compassionate society which understands the implications of our actions now, and in the longer term, and acts accordingly.

**What is/are your greatest fear(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

I am concerned that mindfulness gets blurred in its meaning so that it is understood more as a way to learn to take 'brain breaks', to 'smell the roses' etc rather than as a radical reorientation of our relationship with suffering, with ourselves, with each other, and with the wider world.



Rebecca Crane is Director of one of UK's most significant mindfulness hubs: the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice at Bangor University. She worked within the NHS mental health services for 15 years and co-authored Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy with People at Risk of Suicide in 2017. Becca played a central role in developing Bangor, Exeter and Oxford Universities' MBI-TAC, the Mindfulness-Based Interventions Teaching Assessment Criteria, an important framework for safeguarding the quality and integrity of mindfulness teaching both in the UK and abroad. She teaches and trains internationally in both MBCT and MBSR.

# mindfulness, values & moral vision

JAMIE BRISTOW

**Apart from its growth, what do you think has been the most significant change in mindfulness over the last 10 years?**

The most significant changes have been to the wider context within which mindfulness training sits. A great shift has occurred in how people perceive the importance of good mental health and emotional intelligence and, for instance, in the threats to our wellbeing represented by digital technology and social isolation. These changing values and emerging challenges have helped to make mindfulness training seem less of an isolated interest and more of a foundational capacity.

**What is/are your greatest hope(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

I hope that the evidence base behind mindfulness becomes strong enough to justify greater public spending, so that less well-off individuals, organisations, schools and hospitals get easier access to training.

**What is/are your greatest fear(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

I fear that without the on-going inspiration and support from communities of practice and regular input from experienced secular teachers, only a few people will realise the most transformative potential of a life-long mindfulness practice. If we don't find ways to create an eco-system of deepening practice, this emerging fruit could wither on the vine.

# the future of digital mindfulness

ROHAN GUNATILLAKE

**If experienced teachers don't become more active in the design and making of products then the mindfulness world as a whole may well lose its heart.**

**Apart from its growth, what do you think has been the most significant change in mindfulness over the last 10 years?**

It has to be the rise of apps. Whether you are an advocate or cynic when it comes to digital-first mindfulness products, the fact is that they have led to people having an initial experience of mindfulness on a scale never seen before in its history.

**What is/are your greatest hope(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

My greatest hope, and indeed my expectation, is that mindfulness will change radically in the next ten years thanks to its meeting more diverse audiences. As more young people, more BAME communities and more people in non-English speaking countries deepen their experience, mindfulness itself will no doubt change as they start to express their own unique versions of the practice. The history of mindfulness has always been

one of evolution, changing and shifting as it moves into new cultures. There was a time when things we take for granted such as meditation retreats, guided meditations and MBSR/MBCT were themselves innovations so I can't wait to see what new forms of mindfulness come our way since it is only through that changing that the practice stays relevant in a changing culture.

**What is/are your greatest fear(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

As mindfulness becomes increasingly and inevitably commoditised, my fear is that traditional experts lose their place and become positioned as 'content creators' rather than the wise humans and insightful teachers that they are. Too many commercial mindfulness ventures are entrepreneur-led rather than led by the people with deep practice experience. So if experienced teachers and researchers don't become more active in the design and making of products - and soon - then the mindfulness world as a whole may well lose its heart.



**When it comes to digital-first mindfulness products, the fact is that apps have led to people having an initial experience of mindfulness at a scale never seen before in its history.**



# effectiveness & depth

CHRIS CULLEN

**Apart from its growth, what do you think has been the most significant change in mindfulness over the last 10 years?**

The way in which practising mindfulness is being increasingly accepted as "nothing other than common sense" by a growing number of people and in a widening range of contexts across mainstream society. Also a growing understanding of what constitutes effective and adequate mindfulness teacher training, and appropriate ethical and professional standards for teachers to follow as articulated in the 'Good Practice Guidelines for Mindfulness teachers in the UK.'

**What is/are your greatest hope(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

That access to high-quality mindfulness training will become a public amenity available in schools, workplaces, health centres and other community settings, and that this access will be genuinely inclusive, multi-cultural and available at low cost or no cost where needed, funded by local and central government as well as businesses and community organisations as a potent investment in public mental health.

**What is/are your greatest fear(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

That the term will become increasingly 'hold-all' and therefore bland and diluted as connections with high-quality curriculum materials, and rigorous, evidence-based teacher-training programmes is lost.

One way of helping to ensure the integrity, effectiveness and depth of the field might be to ensure that trainee mindfulness teachers learn from the models of suffering and its alleviation found in Buddhist psychology that inform secular mindfulness-based approaches.

**Practising mindfulness is being increasingly accepted as "nothing other than common sense".**



Chris Cullen is one of the most accomplished and respected adult mindfulness teachers in the UK and internationally, both in Buddhist and secular contexts. A former school

teacher, Chris was co-founder of **Mindfulness in Schools Project** in 2007 and co-creator of **the .b curriculum**. An MBCT Teacher and Trainer at the **Oxford Mindfulness Centre**, Chris runs masterclasses for mindfulness teachers. Over the last five years, he has worked closely with Prof. Mark Williams, Chris Ruane MP and others to teach mindfulness courses and classes to over 170 MPs and Peers in Parliament.



# the bigger picture

ED HALLIWELL

My hope is that mindfulness curricula can be developed to deepen understanding of, and help us work wisely with, our impermanence, interconnectedness, social responsibility and economic stress.

**Apart from its growth, what do you think has been the most significant change in mindfulness over the last 10 years?**

The normalising of meditation in mainstream life. It's easy to forget how alternative it seemed to be a meditator only a decade ago. The idea that it would be openly and widely spoken about, encouraged and even provided by employers, health professionals and schools was still quite fanciful. As for groups of politicians from different parties meditating together and looking to mindfulness for policy initiatives - virtually unthinkable.

**What is/are your greatest hope(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

That the research comes to focus more on the effects of long-term practice, and looks at outcomes such as the development of equanimity in the face of difficulties, rather than just reduced difficulties.

That ever-stronger communities to support practice are developed, where people can meet together and support one another after the completion of an initial course. And that mindfulness curricula can be developed to deepen understanding of, and help us work wisely with, some of the greatest realities and challenges of life - eg our impermanence, interconnectedness, social responsibility and economic stress.

That we come to see mindfulness not just as a practice for individual well-being, but also to create healthier, more caring societies (these two of course being interdependent). This could be urgent work, especially in the current volatile political and environmental climate.

**What is/are your greatest fear(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

I have no fears for mindfulness, which has weathered the changing waves of fortune for several thousand years.

However, it would be unfortunate if this current opportunity to plant seeds for a healthier world were lost amidst the tendency towards cynicism, short-termism, and individualisation which can sometimes characterise the approach to mindfulness in the very mainstream institutions which could benefit from it the most.

While a bit more awareness and stress reduction in such places is a good thing, the deeper potential for mindfulness is revolutionary, if we are willing to look deeply into ourselves and the world around us. It is also therefore quite threatening to the status quo, and so kickback is to be expected.



# mindfulness & contemplative science

KATHERINE WEARE

**Science is helping us understand the evolutionary origins of many of the darker human traits ... and the role of mindfulness in actively helping us to cultivate our better side.**

**Apart from its growth, what has been the most significant change in mindfulness over the last 10 years?**

One significant change has been in the diversity of applications : secular mindfulness is now in so many fields, not only its original applications in the field of health and therapy, but also in education, as we see here, occupational wellbeing, leadership, parenting, the criminal justice system - the list is endless and ever growing. The research base necessarily lags behind the practice, which has to be the case in any innovative field, but we have also seen a growth not only in the numbers but in the quality of the research papers published, to produce steadily a more solid convincing quantitative evidence base.

There is a growth in activity around secular mindfulness in other parts of the world than the US, which is bringing a welcome diversity to the emphasis on individualism, progress and achievement as mindfulness begins to reflect different cultures and ways of being.

Although Buddhism by no means has the monopoly, nevertheless its influence is strong and we are seeing a growing 'out' ness of the Buddhist roots – there's no longer a feeling that they need to be so hidden. Plus, at the same time, there is a helpful recognition that wisdom traditions of many kinds use meditation and

contemplation practice, as well as sharing similar values such as compassion, altruism, social responsibility, are bringing about a higher profile for spirituality (which is not the same as religion) as a vital part of human experience. We are seeing a stronger concern with compassion focused approaches and the integration of them with mindfulness practice.

Evolutionary science is helping us understand the evolutionary origins of many of the darker human traits which were part of our survival strategies and hard wired into our reactions. The role of mindfulness is to actively help us cultivate our better side, which will not just happen without work on our part to understand, reflect, recognize, face and deal with how we actually are.

There is a developing awareness of the limits of mindfulness, and particularly meditation, awareness that it was intended in its Buddhist origins to be part of a wider 'path' of wholesome, sensible ways of conducting our lives, and not a magic bullet or trick to solve all human suffering. We are gathering that mindfulness is not the only response to difficulty; many other approaches have their place. Mindfulness can add to their effectiveness sometimes, but it is not for everyone at all times. We are realizing that we need to do more to look out for adverse effects; maybe we think there are only a few because we have not looked hard enough.



**I hope that mindfulness moves on from individual learners in individual classrooms, to impact on teachers, classroom ethos, the whole school and eventually on the whole purpose of education.**

**What is/are your greatest hope(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

That mindfulness in education moves on from a concern only with individual learners in individual classrooms, to impact on the hearts and minds of teachers and their abilities to be fully present for their students, on classroom ethos, on the way the whole school conducts and conceives of itself, and eventually on the whole purpose of education in the 21st century.

I hope that mindfulness helps us achieve a solid ethical base based on true human needs, not commercially driven interests. I hope that it starts to help challenge the dominant ethic of individual self interest, 'growth', living for tomorrow, consumption, materialism and waste. I hope it helps give rise to a more compassionate and caring society that might actually keep our planet alive by encouraging us to get a hold of our greed and impatience, and slow down and cultivate what actually matters, before it's too late.

I hope mindfulness helps all of us - especially the young - cultivate the personal, social and critical tools to address the grave dangers to humanity posed by the unchecked growth of the digital revolution and life in the fabricated world of 'virtual' space - instead of solid, nature based, human reality. Society is slowly becoming aware of the massive impact of the IT revolution and its dangers as well as its advantages. For example, right now addiction to social media and especially phones is deliberately being created and

manipulated by commercial interests to hijack our precious attention, bringing about not only mental confusion, but an attendant sense of anonymity, callousness and non caring. The young are being overwhelmed by the world of unreal perfectionism, fake emotion (the OMG generation), celebrity driven trivia, commercialism and fake news. They are less engaged in any real social space, involvement or action. Mindfulness with its embodied sense of present reality could really help address this massive threat to the sanity and wellbeing of humanity and use technology for good.

I hope that mindfulness and contemplative science come together. At the moment mindfulness in schools is driven by mainly health and therapeutic models and crude views of the purpose of education (achievement, grades, employability). MFN in schools could well look at what is happening in some universities under the heading of 'contemplative education' and consider how mindfulness might address deeper educational needs (e.g. reflection, creativity, innovation, transformation, meaningfulness, purpose, ethics, values, social responsibility).

I hope the coming together of objective science (neuroscience and experimental models of social science) and subjective enquiry (qualitative research, inner experience, phenomenology) gives a more rounded view of the human experience and how mindfulness can contribute to the transformation of the whole person. At present the whole field is too dominated by the western model where the randomised control trial is king.

**What is/are your greatest fear(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

I am worried about 'mindfulness lite' - cheap government sponsored resources given to schools which allow untrained teachers to press the button to show bored kids a few animations in tutorial time - and call it mindfulness. There is nothing so certain to put them off a potentially life saving practice that they will need in later life, if not now.

I fear that it turns out to be just another western consumerism led 'fad' that is used to bolster up the success of selfish individuals for a while - before another fad replaces it. Thankfully none of these is here, at this conference, today, but I am worried we may be seeing the creation of a 'spiritual jet set' of mindfulness 'experts' and 'gurus' who claim to be into mindfulness and make their careers, reputations and bolster their own egos smugly giving tips on how to live to others while remaining actually greedy, selfish and uncaring themselves. (Or maybe that's just me... :-)?

Vidyamala Burch is founder and co-Director of Breathworks, an organisation offering mindfulness - based and compassion - based approaches to living well with chronic pain, illness and stress. This is based on her own experience of living with severe chronic back pain for most of her adult life following a spinal injury in her teens that resulted in partial paraplegia. In 1985 she started to meditate and is now an experienced meditation teacher who works internationally. She offers wise and practical guidance on how to bring mindfulness and kindness to experience - including difficulties such as pain and illness - so one can 'live well' with a free and relaxed mind, whatever the circumstances.

**Apart from its growth, what do you think has been the most significant change in mindfulness over the last 10 years?**

I think the most significant change in mindfulness over the last 10 years has been its arrival in the mainstream. I've been involved in mindfulness training since 2000. At that point very few people had heard of mindfulness and very few people practised it outside of traditional Buddhist contexts. Meditation still lived at the very fringes of our mainstream culture. I like to do the 'taxi driver' test whenever I need to get a lift somewhere. They often ask me what I do for a living and I say I'm a mindfulness teacher and always ask if they've heard of mindfulness. For many years they'd look at me blankly and say "No". But increasingly they've certainly heard of it and sometimes practise it. It's become much more accepted as a thoroughly good thing to engage in.

My sense is that mindfulness has made it into the mainstream largely because of the burgeoning evidence-base and developments in neuroscience. This has proven its benefit using methods our culture understands. I feel deeply grateful to leading scientists and researchers who have been willing to think big and look beyond the boundaries of their professions to study contemplative methods that have been so effective in other cultures for millennia. This kind of big, creative thinking has opened new frontiers as we begin to embrace the vast potential of 'mind training' as a foundation for a happier, wiser, kinder society. I sense and hope we might be reaching a kind of 'tipping point' where more and more people are ready to embrace awareness and compassion for self and others as a way to bring about a better world.

# making mindfulness the norm

VIDYAMALA BURCH

**What is/are your greatest hope(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

I'd love to see mindfulness and meditation completely embedded in our society where people consider looking after the mind as every bit as important as looking after the body. 50 years ago nobody went to the gym and now there are gyms in most suburbs and city centres. 30 years ago hardly anyone practised yoga (I know this as I was an 'early adopter' in the 80's and it was very much a minority interest!). Now yoga classes are in community and sports centres, rural villages and city centres. 50 years ago no one had heard of the importance of five pieces of fruit and vegetables a day for health; now it is a well-established public and personal health goal thanks to very successful Public Health campaigns.

Imagine if training the mind and fulfilling the extraordinary potential of human consciousness was considered as normal in our culture as cleaning your teeth, exercising and eating well? Imagine if it was standard practice to call in at your local mindfulness class to get your thoughts and emotions in order, to de-stress and to find some peace and calm? Imagine if we all considered 'mind training' an essential part of being human; and that having a handle on our thoughts, emotions, and how we respond to physical sensations was all part of being a wise, engaged member of our culture? Imagine if all children and young people were taught mindfulness as part of standard education. This is what I dream of and I believe it is very attainable given the emerging zeitgeist around mindfulness.

I'd also love to see mindfulness available to everyone, free at the point of access – or certainly very cheap – regardless of economic status, ethnicity, gender identity, physical ability, age etc. This is an area we need to prioritise as we look to the future if the gifts of mindfulness are to truly transform our world. I know many of us working in the field are actively and creatively seeking ways to achieve this goal of increased access to a more diverse demographic and I find this enormously heartening.



**What is/are your greatest fear(s) for mindfulness in the next 10 years?**

My greatest fear around the 'mindfulness scene' is that it gets so diluted and dispersed as to become almost meaningless. We'll look back on the enthusiasms of the early decades of the 21st century with the disappointing knowledge that it was just another fad. We'll regret how the profound opportunity to use our minds well and develop the extraordinary potential of human consciousness had been wasted and buried in a tsunami of information overload, short attention spans, jumpy minds and consumerism. The word 'mindfulness' will have lost any connection with its original meaning and will be just another word tacked onto almost anything because it has commercial currency and we like the sound of it. But the rigorous training aspect of mental and emotional discipline will have got lost and mindfulness will have become a consumer product rather than a gateway to a profound shift in consciousness that can change the world for the better.

I'm glad to say I feel much more optimistic than that. I think mindfulness is here to stay as a genuine shift in human consciousness and there is enough of a critical mass of sincere and genuine practitioners to ensure it survives and thrives. Sure there may well be increasing commercialisation and consumerism around it, perhaps that's inevitable with success. But it is the job of those of us who sincerely practise to dig deep, hold our nerve and continually find new ways to reach out far and wide into the world and offer the extraordinary gifts of mindfulness training in continuously innovative ways. I believe we can and will do this. It is exciting to bring something new into a culture. It feels like we are the custodians of a rare and precious gift and it is our duty not to squander the opportunity.

**Imagine if training the mind and fulfilling the extraordinary potential of human consciousness was considered as normal in our culture as cleaning your teeth, exercising and eating well?**



## case study #1

# nurturing emotional wellbeing at Solihull

**My only thought when I first learned about the Paws b programme was not how, but when I would be able to introduce it into the Junior School. Whilst the decision to do so was not without its challenges, on reflection it has proved more worthwhile than I could ever have imagined.**

The first step in the process is developing an appreciation of what mindfulness can offer young children. Look it up! The potential benefits are as profound as they are far-reaching. The second step involves choosing how well you want mindfulness to be done. In that sense, I know of no better means of introducing the benefits of mindfulness into schools than the MiSP programmes. Step three - if you reach the conclusion I did - is deciding whether you want to buy in Paws b trained deliverers indefinitely or whether your ambitions are to develop a team of in-house trained colleagues.

I opted for the latter in the hope that we could build a sustainable and organic model that would allow us to introduce mindfulness through Paws b lessons into our timetable, so that all children could benefit.

For that to happen it was important to make it as easy as possible for staff to meet the first prerequisite of applying to train with MiSP – to complete an 8 hour introductory course in mindfulness with a recognised provider. Over the last 3 years we have offered 2 such courses to staff, and most recently the online course, and over 45 colleagues have completed the course. 8 of those, myself included, went on to complete our Paws b training; one of whom received a distinction for her MA Thesis on the benefits of Paws b lessons. 5 more have completed their .b training. This now allows us to deliver the lessons to all of our Year 5 & Year 6 pupils each year, six half hour lessons in Yr 5 over six weeks &

the second six lessons again in Yr 6. It also means that we can deliver the .b course to our entire Yr 7 cohort from September.

Mighty oaks from little acorns grow, and so it's proved to be at Solihull School. The momentum of interest in the emotional wellbeing of pupils and the resolve of my colleagues to do all they can to help children to thrive has taken me, very pleasantly, by surprise – sparked in no small measure by so many staff having a deeper understanding of how mindfulness can be of great benefit to them professionally and personally.

That same momentum explains why five colleagues were hugely energised after completing Penn Resiliency training and over 65 colleagues to date, across the Junior and Senior School, have voluntarily completed the Mental Health Youth First Aid course this year.

Whilst I too share the concerns about the mental health problems besieging our young children and bemoan the fact that the industry of cure is exponentially larger than the industry of prevention, mindfulness is, I believe, every bit as much about learning how to live in the present moment in order to cultivate the personal space to thrive; as it is a clinically proven means of dealing with deficit.



**SOLIHULL**



“You can’t stop the waves but you can learn to surf,” Jon Kabat-Zinn sagely opined, nor by extension should we expect a young child to learn how to surf by chucking them into a great big wave. Ideally, we’d start on land and progress to mild mannered waters before expecting them to straddle choppy seas. Why therefore do educators and health professionals find themselves at the crisis end of the equation far too often, deploying flotation devices in the hope that children will cling on until a big wave runs its course?

Because, in my view, the opportunity to boost the emotional immunity of young children is too often overlooked. To achieve this, I believe, we need to teach children how to think, not what to think.

This is why, for me, the Paws b programme offers so much more than you might expect beyond age appropriate meditative practice. It is a hugely well resourced and well thought out series of lessons for 7-11 year olds, that complements greatly the valuable lessons positive psychology has learned about how we can help young people to thrive.

If you are already discussing the differences between fixed mindsets and growth mindsets with your pupils, learning about parts of the brain and their functions through Paws b lessons reinforces what they need to know about neuroplasticity. When they learn how to manage their amygdali and how to ground themselves after a wobble, they address the genesis of the resilience training we have introduced into our curriculum. And when, in the final lesson they learn about how to grow happiness, they tick many of the boxes that positive

**The momentum of interest in the emotional wellbeing of pupils and the resolve of my colleagues to do all they can to help children to thrive has taken me by surprise.**



**Mark Penney - Solihull Junior School**

psychologists such as Martin Seligman advocate for human beings to flourish, which we also teach the children about in our curriculum wellbeing lessons.

We now invite parents to join us for a mindfulness seminar each year, to familiarise themselves with the nature of mindfulness and the content of the Paws b programme and a colleague runs a co-curricular Mindfulness Club for pupils each week. The reception of pupils, parents and colleagues has been very positive. Even for many of those pupils who don’t practise meditation as part of their daily routines, often offer the caveat that they don’t - just yet.

My sincere hope is that should any of our pupils reach the point of ‘yet’, that they will have had a very valuable experience of mindfulness to fall back on. Furthermore, I hope that those in our community who have already embraced it, are more mindfully happy than they would otherwise have been.

## case study #2: mindfulness: opening the doors to mental health and wellbeing

**Jo Price, Director of Corporate Services, University of Kent Academies Trust (UKAT) explains her conversion to mindfulness and its value to staff, students and the community**

Always vigilant for personal development opportunities, I had frequently read and heard about the benefits, indeed wonders, of mindfulness and how meditation was like going to the gym, but working out the brain instead of your biceps.

I signed up to an eight-week course (two hours every Sunday evening) at my local Quakers community hall. Alongside nine other adults I discovered yoga mats, Teapigs liquorice and peppermint tea and the benefits of regular meditation. I confess: I never found nirvana, I can't say that my mind didn't wander throughout the various practices. But I can say that I found something very special that had been missing in my life: kindness and compassion and a real sense of being ok – what some might call inner peace.

### **New perspective on challenges & successes**

Truthfully this course really did change my life. It gave a new perspective on my challenges and successes. Ultimately it gave me a very new way to live and be, that's the crux of mindfulness, learning to just 'be' with whatever life brings your way. I was genuinely amazed by the shift in my thinking and perspective. What was really impressive was that this shift was shared by the group: my mindfulness counterparts had similar stories

of finding a new sense of wellbeing at work, at home, with family and friends. The changes were really significant for everyone that attended.

I was really taken aback that such a course could create this much positive change, across a diverse section of everyday people attending for two hours on a Sunday evening! How was it possible that over a period of only eight weeks, we really could change our perspective on life? Our mental health had improved, and most importantly, we were enjoying our daily life with a sense of fulfilment.

I quickly realised that this really was a gift, a gift that deserved sharing. So I took on my next exciting challenge – to bring mindfulness to my place of work, to offer students and staff the tools to live a happier, more balanced and easier way of life. Maybe this was my nirvana moment, I wanted to bring mindfulness to our schools ASAP – in the present moment.

Inspired, enthused and mindfully proactive, I met with the Executive Principal of UKAT, Judy Rider and shared my enlightenment (without my yoga mat and new love for Teapigs liquorice and peppermint tea) and managed to convey my thoughts with clarity and vision. This was that mindfulness could be a great investment for Brompton Academy students, staff and the wider community. Gifted with an executive principal who was innovative and not afraid to think outside the box, I was given the go-ahead to grow my idea and was tasked to make it happen.



With a little research, mainly using the wonders of the internet, I was led quickly to Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP), a non-profit organisation teaching secular mindfulness to students, teachers, parents and carers using the .b (dot-be) courses. They are an established organisation and they know their beans when it comes to offering mindfulness in schools.

Through MiSP I was able to locate a qualified and experienced tutor and we started with our first mindfulness .b course on a Wednesday after school. It was a success, students really enjoyed the course (particularly tasting and eating chocolate mindfully). I could see the benefits quickly as students warmed to the easy mindful techniques of FOFBOC (feet on floor, bum on chair) and 7/11 (relaxation breathing) and were receptive to the excellent teaching materials with easy watchable animations.

I offered several 20-minute presentations to staff to introduce the concept of mindfulness. We quickly had our first cohort of 13 staff signed up ready for their eight-week course in October 2016. The tutor, Lorraine Millard, was a real find, a qualified psychotherapist and mindfulness practitioner who also happened to be employed by our lead sponsor, the University of Kent. Lorraine knew how to pitch the course to a group of enthusiastic teachers and support staff. She was compassionate, sensitive, flexible and extremely humorous. She made it clear that if you didn't do your home practice, you could still come along to the next session and it would be ok.

### **Mindfulness changes the dynamic**

We now have approximately 70 staff who have completed the eight-week course. The general vibe is that introducing mindfulness was a good decision and there is a different feeling among those mindful participants. I have noticed that relationships have improved between colleagues. There is more understanding and a shared collective that we all still work tirelessly, daily, in busy demanding jobs, but we have time to connect through a few words or just a smile. I can see the difference, we have changed the dynamic of our academy.

Since those early days in 2016, I have qualified as a MiSP .b mindfulness practitioner and now deliver the .b courses to students at the academy. Mindfulness is built into the curriculum. All of our year 7 students have one hour every Thursday in which I teach them

## **Young people find a toolkit to calm down, to focus, to concentrate, to understand what stress is. And they are learning to be ok when it's not ok.**

how to be more mindful, more resilient, more balanced and ultimately to be a bit more in touch with the beautiful world that we live in.

It's working. Young people can quickly find a toolkit to calm down, to focus, to concentrate, to understand what stress is. And they are learning to be ok when it's not ok.

I also run the .b course with students that have been identified as vulnerable: maybe they are having a difficult time at home, maybe they are exhibiting signs of anxiety, stress or depression and they are not coping. These groups are working really well and the young people are learning that they cannot always change their circumstances but they can change how they respond.

Sometimes, I am accompanied by my dog Monty, who is a professional mindfulness hound. He is known for his epic moments of relaxation and 'meditation' (sleep) and the young people adore him. I use him to demonstrate focus and concentration: as he is very ball focused, he also knows a trick or two. Monty's addition to teaching .b has been truly magnificent. Whoever said never work with children and animals is missing out.

To date, mindfulness at UKAT is built into our curriculum, on offer to staff during training and development schedules and made available to students who need it most. Mindfulness is also delivered in the evenings to our parents/carers and the local community. We are developing a hub of healthy mindsets and opening the doors to mental health and wellbeing.

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# thank you from the MiSP conference team

We hope that when you leave the conference today you will feel better equipped to take mindfulness back into your own lives and communities, and of course your schools.



Special thanks must first go to the teachers, parents and young people who have joined us at the conference, and whose voices have added so much richness to today's event. If you work in mindfulness and education then we hope, like us, this will have inspired and redoubled your commitment. Thank you to MiSP's Claire Kelly for bringing them all together from across the UK.

Thank you then to our speakers, many of whom have come from abroad. It is a privilege to have so many leaders in the field come together on this day to inform, enthuse and challenge us all, from those who have been working in the field for decades to the many who are just setting out on their journey.

We would like to thank the Friends' House for hosting us here and being so cooperative and helpful in our preparation for today. The renovation of this space since we held our 2013 conference here has made it an even more outstanding venue.

We would also like to thank Alison Donald. Whilst at

MiSP, Alison was instrumental in turning us into the more professional organisation that has hosted this event today, and crucially, become a fully registered charity.

Thanks must also go to all those MiSP'ers working 'back of house' who have made sure the day has run smoothly, especially to all our lead trainers who volunteered so selflessly to assist us. Thanks in particular to Naomi Griggs for organising the logistics, to Emma Goddard, Lisa Williamson and Caroline Fish for helping to field queries and navigate ticket sales; to Lindsay Morgan for keeping us on budget; to Jane Woodford for her tireless work across the board; and to Matt Wilks for the time and care that he has put into promoting this event and crafting this brochure.

Finally, we would like to thank you, the delegates. Without you, this event would not have been possible. We hope that when you leave the conference today you will feel better equipped to take mindfulness back into your own lives and communities, and of course your schools.



# useful information

## food and drink

The Friend's House has an onsite café for purchase of lunch and snacks. There are also numerous eating establishments including Nando's, Itsu, Upper Crust and Burger King located within Euston station which is opposite the conference venue.

## access

There is an entrance to The Light directly from Euston Road which has six steps. Step-free access is available via the lift directly from Euston Road to The Light or via the garden entrance, which is also on Euston Road. There are accessible toilets on all floors of the building.

The Light has a built-in hearing loop.

The Light and Friend's House are no smoking venues.

## emergencies

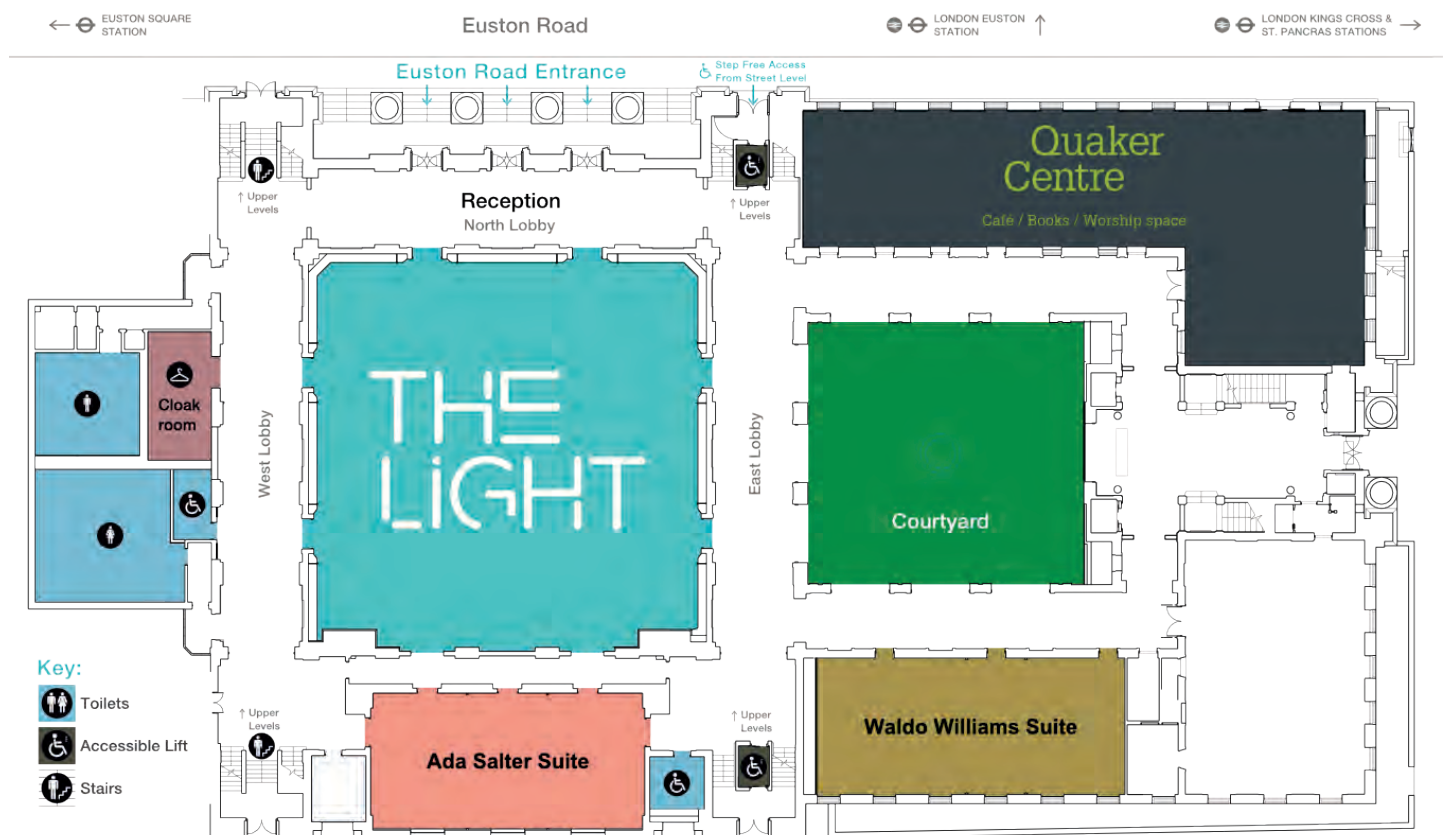
In the event of an emergency, please follow the instructions of the venue staff.

## local area map



google maps

## venue plan





MiSP is a Registered Charity, no. 1168992

**Bringing mindfulness to young people and those who care for them since 2007**