



CMRP Friends of Bangor Alumni Group
CYYYO Grŵp Alumni Cyfeillion Bangor
NEWSLETTER

Time to Connect = Time to Transition

Amser i Gysylltu = Amser i Drawsnwïd

Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year

Nadôlig Llawen
a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda

In connection with
Mewn cysylltiad gyda

FoB Newsletter Issue 8
December 2020



PRIFYSGOL
BANGOR
UNIVERSITY



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Welcome Croeso



Dear Friends of Bangor Members,

Welcome to the Winter 2020 Edition of the Friends of Bangor Newsletter! We are closing the year with feelings of great sadness for how the pandemic has affected our world, mixed with admiration for the strength and resilience of the mindfulness community. I am truly humbled by how individuals and organisations have embraced technology and moved their offerings swiftly online, making them more accessible and affordable in the process. This shift is truly remarkable and will have a lasting effect on how we approach the delivery of mindfulness teachings.

I am very proud of how quickly Friends of Bangor has responded, and in this newsletter, you will find how the Mindfulness Network has adapted to continue delivering its mission. This issue contains a real variety of topics, which we hope you will enjoy. If you would like to give feedback to any of the contributors, we will be happy to pass it on via info@friendsofbangor.org.



mindfulness and stroke

A Personal Story
of Managing Brain Injury



Jody Martula

With a neuroscience commentary by
Frances L. Vaughan

Staying MINDFUL

How to happen, how to experience the benefits
and address your life



Anna Griffiths





Warmest thanks/Diellch cyhysef to all our 2020 Facilitators...

Gemma Griffith, Trish Barley, Helen Stephenson, Judtta Ben David, Vanessa Hope,
Victoria Door, Euned Gold, Caran Saunders, Rebecca Crane and Abi Lambie

This year we hosted 14 main events, 24 online lunchtime meditations and two newsletters. And we now have close to 400 members. These are incredible numbers, and I would like to give a deep bow of gratitude to the organising committee and the facilitators for offering their time and sharing their experience so generously. In particular, many thanks to Helen Stephenson, Judtta Ben David, Caran Sanders and Victoria Door for four incredible events these past few months. I would also like to thank you, our members, for your support, your donations and your kind messages of appreciation. Do keep them coming, we are always grateful to hear about what we are doing well and what we can improve. We are here for you.

In the background, we are working hard on two main projects. The first one is our programme of events for next year, including support for our first special interest group: a mindfulness group for men. A first glimpse is included in this newsletter, and detailed information will be posted on the website. The second project is the move to the Mindfulness Network; we are planning for this to be as smooth as possible and will let you know as soon as we have reached a concrete way forward.

But for now, on behalf of the whole organising committee, I would like to wish you a very peaceful holiday season and happy reading.

Wishing you well/Gan dymuno'n dda i chi

Stephan Schoenig

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What is the FoB all about?



The FoB is a membership body of current and past students of the CMRP. It is open to any person who has attended or is attending any of the CMRP courses and events. The group was formed with the overarching mission to 'act as a vehicle for FoB members and the CMRP to engage in two way communication and to support mindfulness practitioners and advance field developments'.

It is a group run and managed by the members to support other members. Our vision is for the group to establish a mindfulness community with regular regional events and activities. To create a place where like-minded people can meet and practice together, exchange ideas and network. In short: **Time to Connect.**

FoB Objectives

- To represent the interests and views of mindfulness practitioners who engage with CMRP. Drawing on the wealth of experience, skills and capabilities represented by the mindfulness population for the benefit of the CMRP and for the benefit of its students
- To advise the CMRP of how it can best actively engage with the mindfulness 'grass roots' providing a vehicle for them to be an essential and knowledgeable resource to the CMRP
- To provide the membership with a clear voice and route to engage with CMRP
- To work in partnership with the CMRP to promote and support the strategy and objectives of building and developing an effective Alumni/Membership Group
- To expand and engage with the wider network of organisations involved in mindfulness practice and research
- To work with the CMRP to establish working groups co-produced by CMRP and FoB which can contribute to the strategy and objectives of CMRP

What are the benefits?

The FoB membership benefits

- Practice day with Rebecca Crane – held at Bangor or other event
- Annual Gathering and connection afternoon with Rebecca Crane and senior teachers
- Forum on Facebook to connect with the community, ask questions, share and support
- Regular Online meditation events
- Networking events, practice classes and gatherings
 - Connect and practice with like-minded people
- Newsletter
- Opportunity to share your events with other FoB members
- Discounts to FoB members from connected organisations
- Opportunity to volunteer and get involved in FoB – if you have ideas and enthusiasm, contact us to participate and make the community grow

What are the costs? Membership fee for 2020 is £25

How do I register? Via the FoB website www.friendsofbangor.org

Who is the FoB?

The FoB committee now consists of the following volunteer members



Stephan Schoenig - Chair

Stephan started his career as an IT professional and after having been diagnosed with a chronic health condition, was introduced to mindfulness as a skill to better handle life ups and downs. Excited by the changes that mindfulness brought to his life, Stephan joined the Masters programme at Bangor and now, in addition to his day job, he teaches mindfulness to professionals.



Carole Lacy

Carole worked for over twenty-five years in Mental Health, both as a Registered Mental Nurse and with a charity supporting working age people diagnosed with dementia and their carers. She is training to teach MBSR with the CMRP BU on the Teacher Training Pathway and has been teaching MBSR to the general public in the West Midlands area since January 2018. Carole has had a meditation practice for most of her adult life.



Victoria Door

Victoria's background is in Alexander Technique and Modern Foreign Language teaching. She is an Honorary Fellow at the Keele University where she worked in teacher education. Victoria is currently studying on the MSc in Mindfulness at Bangor University and is interested in synergies between Mindfulness and the Alexander Technique.



Catherine Fortin

Catherine is a clinician and a mindfulness teacher in London and in Lille. She has completed the Oxford Foundation course in MBCT, furthered her training in Sainte Anne's Psychiatric Hospital in Paris and attended residential and neuroscience modules in Bangor. She teaches MBCT and she has a background in General Practice, Mental health and Public health both in the UK, and in France.



Feryal Melville

Feryal is currently undertaking a MSc in Mindfulness degree at CMRP BU. She works as an independent mindfulness teacher with both the general public and school communities in the Cheshire area. She has been practising Vipassana meditation as taught by SN Goenka since 2009.



Sandrine Cranewick

Sandrine has been practicing meditation under the guidance of her Buddhist teacher since 1994. She has trained to teach MBSR with CMRP Bangor, PawsB with MSP and other programmes (Workplace, MBCT-L, Finding Peace, Taking it Further) with OMC. Sandrine has been teaching mindfulness for the general public (groups and One-to-one) in West Sussex since 2014 and implements mindfulness in schools and in the workplace. She is delighted to work on the newsletter with Kay for FoB.



Gill Johnson

Gill Johnson has been teaching mindfulness (MBSR/MBCT/MBCT-L and derivatives) in the community and in non-clinical settings in West Surrey, and bespoke sessions and courses in the workplace, healthcare and education in Surrey and London since 2009. Gill has trained with CMRP Bangor and the Oxford Mindfulness Centre.



Dorothy Dimer

Dorothy is currently working as a Civil Servant in the Department for Work and Pensions and alongside her duties delivers information sessions on Mindfulness within the Civil Service. Dorothy is currently undertaking a Masters Degree in Mindfulness Approaches at Bangor University.



Kay Bruce

Initially a teacher (M.Ed./trainer) in languages for business & medicine, Kay became a manager of teachers and training programmes then for 25 years ran a training company providing management & intercultural communication to companies, some of them Global 500. A lifestyle change, as a coach in Positive Psychology she came to Mindfulness through MB Strengths Practice. MBSR with Bangor in 2013; continuing Mindfulness practice and learning, she now offers MBI in France where she lives.



Marianna Baschiera

Marianna, originally from South Africa and now living in the UK, has worked in schools as a teacher for 5 years and has spent most of her academic career studying psychology in some form or other. Her particular interests are in relationship dynamics and neuroscience. Having been introduced to mindfulness practice through yoga in her teens, she embarked on a deeper exploration of mindfulness at Bangor University and is now halfway through her Masters.



Naomi Buseman

Naomi lives in Cambridge and her background lies in language teaching and assessment. In 2015, she completed a Master's in Applied Linguistics and Communication, during which she explored mindfulness and intercultural communication. She has trained to teach MBSR and MBCT with Bangor University, and is currently working towards accreditation as a Breathworks teacher. Her practice is also informed by Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness, Focusing and Insight Dialogue.

Interview with Rebecca Crane

(by Kay Bruce for the Friends of Bangor Newsletter)

The MBI:TAC and MBI:TLC, the Teaching and Learning Companion



Rebecca Crane

ESSENTIAL RESOURCES FOR MINDFULNESS TEACHERS

Edited by Rebecca S. Crane, Katherine, and Geneva M. G. B. B.



FoB. The MBI:TAC brought structure, rigour, thoughtfulness, guidelines and more to formal assessment, and is the gold standard in organisations that assess teacher competence. Online networking and working with a wider reach are part of our new normal, and mindfulness practitioners may be outside a formal teaching training context yet involved in continuous improvement. Can we look at the MBI:TAC both as a formal assessment tool, and also one that supports self-development?

Rebecca Crane: We developed the MBITAC for a very specific purpose which was to conduct assessments within the context of our Master's programme, the first time worldwide that teacher training had been embedded into a post-graduate programme. We had to think about questions such as, what are the skills that we are training, what's the best methodology to train those skills, and how do we know when our students have gained these skills. In the early years of our Master's programme we saw that our criteria for assessing teaching practice were not robust enough and the MBITAC came out of our reflection, initially within the context of Bangor then through collaborating with Oxford and Exeter. So it really did evolve as a specific niche need.

We made the tool and the research freely available and it soon became clear that this work was touching a pulse that was of interest globally at a time of rapid expansion in the field and real concern about the possible dilution of integrity. There was a sense that the tool could offer a unifying language around what we see as being the core skills.

How much cross-fertilisation was there with other fields or disciplines which share common ground?

There was a fair bit as when we established the Master's programme at Bangor we were in the School of Education so the whole process of validation was rigorous with a lot of input from colleagues. When developing the tool we were drawing on the whole literature around intervention integrity and fidelity, and competence rating tools in education and psychotherapy. This development was part of my Ph.D. so I did a trawl through the relevant literature, so the MBI-TAC does integrate a lot of thinking from related fields, which was really important.

Interview with Rebecca Crane

One of our core aims was to create a competence framework that would help the process of mainstreaming mindfulness. As in the therapy or education or medical worlds there are systems for recognizing the skill of the practitioner and those systems are part of what enables a profession to establish itself as a wild and rigorous and robust profession. We wanted that for the Mindfulness field. It supports the process of embedding Mindfulness in the health service, in the education system and in other contexts.

It straddles other fields and at the same time it has to go beyond traditional frameworks of teacher training because it is unique. Things have to be able to emerge, which is why the domain of embodiment is so important.

That's the key and that was the challenge. I had quite a lot of doubt about how feasible it was to create a competence framework and to honour the intangible, implicit way of being that we know is absolutely central to teaching Mindfulness so that was a key question for me; can we honour what's unique and what's distinctive whilst straddling other fields? finding very specific words about definitions means we have the language but within that there's a lot which is intuitive and that part which is intuitive has got its full place within a structured framework.

We did not want to create an idea of what a Mindfulness teacher should look like. It doesn't aim to say that a certain style of teaching is a preferred style. My aspiration was for the MBETAC to support diversity and a range of expression and cultural nuances. That is particularly important in the embodiment domain. This is part of the fidelity to the actual approach, that we're responsive to what's in front of us; this group, in this context, in this particular moment.

There's a kind of momentum and it's snowballing. It's helping to recognize and fill many needs

in many ways it took on a life of its own! Which I celebrate! Training organisations and individual teachers started using it both as an assessment tool but even more so as a reflective tool. For example, supervisors began to ask trainees to reflect on their own teaching practice in a particular domain by referring to the description of the domain in the MBETAC.

However, it was structured as a tool for assessment not reflection and the word 'assessment' was in the title and that can cause some anxiety. So Gemma Griffith led the development of a version of the tool that is tailor-made for reflection. This has been piloted, tested and refined and has become the MBETLC (the TLC for short – the Teaching and Learning Companion). This will be published as part of a book in early 2021 and it will also then be available as a free download.

Whereas people might have had assessment anxiety, here they've actually got a companion. It sounds like a very friendly approach.

That's what we hope. It is still structured around the 6 domains but now includes reflective questions to consider, for example, where am I at in a particular skill area; what are my strengths; and what are my learning needs? I think it will help each practitioner to step back and reflect. I think it will be really helpful for individual practitioners and also within a supervision context, both for supervisees preparing for supervision and for supervisors in finding language to help with the supervision process.

Another use is practicing with peers as one of the major tools we use in training is the art of giving peer-to-peer feedback. The act of giving feedback is so strengthening for your own skills because you have to be really clear about what it is you're feeding back on. The TLC will help the process of peer-to-peer reflection. And within the Mindfulness Network, Sophie Samson runs the SITT groups (supporting integrity in teaching and training) which are all online, and are designed as peer reflection groups and the TLC will be helpful there too.

Thank you so much Rebecca.

Interview with Rebecca Crane

'Essential Resources for Mindfulness Teachers'

published by Routledge, collectively written by the CMRP team drawing from the Centre's 20-year history and co-edited by Rebecca Crane, Kanavira and Gemma Griffith. Planned release date, May 1, 2021.

The book includes information on how to teach the explicit and implicit curriculum, and how to resource oneself as an MBP teacher. This book will surely become the go-to book for people training to be a mindfulness-based teacher, and an ongoing reference for established teachers.

<https://www.routledge.com/Essential-Resources-for-Mindfulness-Teachers/Crane-Kanavira-Griffith/p/book/9780367330798>

What leaders in the field are saying about the book:

"For the field of mindfulness to realize its potential, we need to take great care in training the next generation of mindfulness teachers. They need to develop clarity of intention, theoretical understanding, knowledge of the key research and proficiency as teachers. They need to consistently examine their embodiment and integrity and be open to a lifelong process of learning.

This is not just a book. It is an extraordinary collection of resources developed over decades of training many hundreds of mindfulness teachers. It timely and will be widely welcomed.

At one level it is a practical, well-structured, skilfully curated set of training resources. At another level it provides inspiration, a compass, as well as a road map for trainees at every stage of their learning. The authors are generously committing to writing what they know through their extensive training experience helps trainee mindfulness teachers. The list of authors represents some of the leading trainers in the world.

This edited collection is timely in resourcing both trainees and trainers in mindfulness-based interventions. I can easily see this being a contribution that will evolve through many editions in decades to come."

Willem Kuyken, Ritbat Professor of Mindfulness and Psychological Science, University of Oxford

"This is an outstanding book. As mindfulness-based programs enter the sphere of evidence-based medicine, it is imperative that teacher training programs are consistent with the randomized controlled trials that built the evidence. This book is a rich guide that invites us to travel the high road in teacher training so that we skilfully serve learners, while fitting within healthcare delivery systems."

Eric Loucks, Associate Professor and Director, Mindfulness Center at Brown University

"Mindfulness-based programs ask much of teachers who, in turn, are posed to deliver much to program participants. This book will ably guide, support and nourish teachers in linking the implicit knowledge embedded in their curricula with skilful, explicit means for conveying it. It should be required reading for anyone in our field"

Zindel Segal, Distinguished Professor of Psychology in Mood Disorders, University of Toronto

Papers relating to the practical uses of the MBI:TAC:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2164956120923975>

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2164956120964733?icid=int.sj-full-text-similar-articles.1>

Crane, R.S., Hecht, F.M., Brewer, J., Griffith, G.M., Hartaganis, W., Koebel, L., Moran, P., Sansom, S., Yangou, A., Kuyken, W. (2020)

Can We Agree What Skilled Mindfulness-Based Teaching Looks Like? Lessons From Studying the MBI:TAC. *Global Advances in Health and Medicine*, 0: 1–11, doi.org/10.1177/2164956120964733

Crane, R.S., Koebel, L., Sansom, S., Yangou, A. (2020)

Assessing Mindfulness-Based Teaching Competence: Good Practice Guidance. *Global advances in Health and Medicine*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2164956120973627>

Griffith GM, Crane RS, Fernandez E, Gommi F, Heibette G, Koebel L. (in press)

Implementing the mindfulness-based interventions: teaching assessment criteria (MBI:TAC) in mindfulness teacher training programs. *Glob Adv Mental Health*.

Evans A, Griffiths GM, Sansom S, Crane RS. (in press) Using the mindfulness-based interventions: teaching assessment criteria (MBI:TAC) in supervision. *Glob Adv Mental Health*.

Mindfulness (and mindfulness teaching) as a Practice of the Heart

"They teach about the mind to touch the heart. Are humble. They don't talk about their own realization, and they don't brag about 'how long' they have practiced. Good teachers don't need or want to elevate their own experience."

Huff Post, 3 April 2014
Blog by Deborah Schoeberlein Davis

These words were part of a blog in Huff Post in 2014 in response to the question: What do you want in a mindfulness teacher? It was a time when mindfulness was high profile and "all the rage", when the availability of authentic teachers could not keep up with the demand for mindfulness training. And yet, it is as relevant now as it was then.

For me, the first sentence is the one that resonates the most: "they teach about the mind to touch the heart". I think this is the core of the 'good practice' that we, as mindfulness teachers, have been entrusted with: if we can remember that mindfulness is not merely about 'aiming and sustaining attention', or 'to increase relaxation', or 'to de-stress', 'quieten thoughts', 'increase productivity' or any of the myriad of other claims that mindfulness is sold by, we can disseminate the true heart of mindfulness. We can endeavour to share good practice, rooted in being of service to our experience and our communities. "Sticking-plaster"-mindfulness used to fix problems runs the risk of reducing mindfulness to a mere "technique". This undermines the potential for deep insights into the full range of human experience and for increasing our capacity for compassion for ourselves, others and our environment. As Ritchie Davidson has noted, mindfulness is a way of taking responsibility for your own mind.

Teaching and learning this skill are indelibly intertwined. As Jon Kabat-Zinn has urged since the early days of MBSR, mindfulness demands deep commitment to engage in "the slow, disciplined work of digging the trenches ... the work of moments and the work of a lifetime, all wrapped up in one" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 111). This slow, disciplined work requires us to reflect deeply on our own experiences and responses to life with wisdom and compassion. To this end, intentions are important. For me, 'good practice' of mindfulness will honour ethical integrity, the intention to be of service to others and a deep appreciation for the sacredness of life. What three things would 'good practice' mean to you?

If you are just starting to learn mindfulness, you might recognise that it would be skilful to look for teachers who act within this ethical framework. Don't be afraid to ask your potential teachers how they see their practice and their relationship to the wider world. In the same spirit, I offer the free guide *How to Find a Mindfulness Practice that Works for You* that I wrote with Prof Willem Kuylen for *Psyche.co* as a resource to support you as you begin your exploration into mindfulness.



Gill Johnson
mindfulelephant.com

References:

Kabat-Zinn, J (1994) *Wherever You Go There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*. New York:Hyperion

'Symbols', a powerful tool in mindfulness practice and teaching

By *Sandrine Cranswick*

'Symbols' such as poetry, images, stories and metaphors bring a different form of language and can help the participant to experience the topic in question (Saunders, 2019).

In this experience, I witnessed how a symbol gave rise to the attitude of curiosity. A few months ago I attended an online retreat day which took place the day after a major life crisis. At one point during the retreat, one tutor encouraged us to bring 'curiosity' into our experience. I thought 'this would be very nice' but I felt very far from the potential of being curious while drowning in the raw sensations of grief, shock and fear. Yet I was willing to open to the possibility of being curious, even though at this point in time, it did not happen.

Later in the day, the tutor told us the Zen 'strawberry' tale*. I already knew this story through my own teaching, but this time, it was very relevant to my own story. I felt I was hanging on a thin thread, between the devastating situation of the present and the fear of an unknown future. Although the suggestion of bringing curiosity to one's experience was not available to me earlier on in the day, when I heard this story and felt such a resonance with it, I sensed my body softening and this allowed me to drop this question in my mind: where is the 'strawberry' right now, in this moment? With a hint of curiosity, I started to look around the room, sitting in front of a computer with 30 people and my beloved dog beside me. I felt grateful. From the moment I felt grateful, I sensed a further softening of my whole body. I discovered that I was grateful for so many things in this moment. I noticed that appreciation gave rise to joy and contentment; there was even a bit of warmth in my heart among the dark ball of pain.

As the days and weeks went on I continued to look for the 'strawberry' in each day and discovered that there were many more pleasant events than I thought.

Two months after the retreat day, despite the rise in appreciation and contentment, I was still struggling with feeling an attitude of curiosity towards the difficult.

I then attended an online five-day silent retreat with Barbara Hussong and Chantel McNeillage. Barbara said that the word 'crisis' in Japan means both 'danger' and 'opportunity' and then read the poem 'For a New Beginning' by John O'Donohue. At this point, I started to feel interested in the possibility that this painful life transition could have some opportunities and new beginnings. I started to wonder about this unfolding in a way that gave birth to curiosity, beginner's mind and trust. As soon as these attitudinal foundations (Kabat-Zinn, 2013) emerged between my situation and my way of approaching it, I felt a big weight dropping off my whole body. During one of the sitting meditations, I felt joy arising like the sun shining after two months of rain. I dropped into deep stillness and just listened. The inner space was big enough to hold in kindness all the broken pieces. The fear, the anger, the grief, all of these guests crying for help were at last held with such warmth and acceptance that they quietened their voices. Then there was just silence and space, an empty vehicle, slowly inviting love, gratitude and curiosity to fill the space.

I feel ever so grateful to the power of 'symbols' in mindfulness practice and teaching.

* The Wild Strawberry – a Zen tale

There was once a man who was being chased by a ferocious tiger. At the edge of the field there was a cliff. In order to escape the jaws of the tiger, the man caught hold of a vine and swung himself over the edge of the cliff. Dangling down, he saw, there were more tigers on the ground below him! And, furthermore, two little mice were gnawing on the vine to which he clung. He knew that at any moment he would fall to certain death.

That's when he noticed a wild strawberry growing on the cliff wall. Clutching the vine with one hand, he plucked the strawberry with the other and put it in his mouth.

He never before realized how sweet a strawberry could taste.



Sandrine Cranswick
www.mindfulness-midhurst.co.uk



JOIN US ONLINE.

Moving The Mindfulness Network Online – What To Expect

By Alison Evans



"An inquiry workshop using zoom? 22 participants?? Can't be done???
The Mindfulness Network can do it – wonderful!!"

Feedback from an online participant

Roll back to March 2020 – a shocking time for all of us when our life 'as usual' got turned upside down. In the Mindfulness Network, we had been having preliminary conversations about creating more online learning environments for some time but hovered and hesitated around the "can't be done". By the end of March, we could see it had to be done, and reminded ourselves that we have been a virtual organisation for many years and our team of supervisors have worked remotely since 2012. By the end of our first online training event the first week in April we could see "the Mindfulness Network can do it".

Without a doubt this has been a steep learning curve and we continue to develop and refine our online training and retreats. But now we find – based on our experience as trainers, retreat leads, supervisors and staff – that online is not only a viable option but has some benefits over and above in-person. It continues to be the safest way for us to continue in our endeavours to bring mindfulness-based practices into the world with integrity and care.

Our surprise at how effective online events are is mirrored by the feedback we are receiving. Who would have thought that an intensive online training could receive the comment "wonderful!!"?

What can you expect from an online event with the Mindfulness Network?

You can expect to be taught by our same teams of specialist trainers, who are all part of the CMRP at Bangor University or our experienced retreat leads/compassion teachers/supervisors:

Fantastic! Really high-quality input from experienced practitioners.
Good balance of content, skilfully done in this new online environment.

We are keeping numbers small on events so you can continue to feel a sense of connection and intimacy:

Powerful peer experience, practical and profound input.

People are enjoying meeting others from around the world, which has become easier without the need for travel:

Attending sessions with The Mindfulness Network is a joy. This because of the organisation, content, the teachers; and most of all because of the people on courses. I have met so many some wonderful, soulful individuals and I'm very grateful for that.

We aim to balance the learning of skills alongside and reflective spaces and opportunity for dialogue:

We covered a great deal of material in a relative short space of time, and yet it felt spacious. Loved connecting to people all over the world. I think this added another dimension to understanding cultural differences. I came away inspired to reflect on my own teaching and its impact.

We will bring as much ease as we can, setting up supportive conditions that allow you to move the body and maintain energy and enthusiasm. A large part of our inquiry as a team has been how to continue to teach in an embodied way and to assist you in engaging in this way:

Exceptional teaching made for effortless learning. Could have happily stayed and learned for many days more.

We acknowledge it is not the case for all but for some online offers an increased accessibility. Increasing inclusion and diversity is at the heart of our vision.

We are looking ahead to resuming in-person events next year, but also plan for online to be a continuous part of what we offer, not just as a response to the pandemic or a second-best option.

Online Retreats In The Time Of COVID: Bringing It Home

Written by
Bridgette O'Neill,
Retreat Lead for the
Mindfulness Network



'It was a blessing to be able to access such quality teaching within a supportive group from the comfort of my own home.'

Feedback from an online retreat participant

Since last March when the need for lockdown and social distancing became evident in the UK, the Mindfulness Network has offered five online retreats. Back in March this would have been unimaginable, and we have certainly needed to stretch and expand our usual ways of thinking.

Fortunately, several of our retreat leaders had prior experience of offering online intensive practice opportunities and we have also learned (and are still learning) a huge amount from the experience of offering online retreats and from participants' feedback. Many of the comments we've received express surprise at how well the online format worked and this was also my experience when I participated in our first online retreat led by Martine Batchelor and supported by Jenny Wilks. I was keen to experience Martine's teachings but had low expectations of how much the online format would enable that connection with sustained practice which the retreat experience generally offers, especially as I had school-age children at home. It was wonderful to discover that moving between silent practice and coming into connection with loved-ones was very reminiscent of family retreats - where the same mix of intensive practice and domestic bustle expands my understanding of practice as an orientation to life rather than something I do on a meditation cushion.





Online Retreats In The Time Of COVID: Bringing It Home

Another aspect of the online retreat experience that has been unexpected is the sense of community and mutual support that can develop online. And, as teachers, we have wondered about how the online environment may impact on our quality of presence given that we are no longer able to sense one another in the same way. However, participant comments suggest that while the online environment is certainly different from being in one another's physical presence, the potency of the teachers and the presence of other participants can still be felt.

While the power of online retreats has been a genuine surprise to us, we have drawn on our deep knowledge of retreat practice from across a range of contexts including self-organised, family and solitary retreats. This is very much a work in progress. What is evident is that we should establish supportive conditions; pre-planning and clear intentions are central to enable the simplicity and space for intensive and sustained practice, along with flexibility that accommodates the broader household situation.

What is possible will depend on each person's particular situation so individually tailored plans are needed. Discussion in supervision could be helpful here, before the retreat begins. Some examples of practical preparations for participants include planning a menu for the week and pre-buying ingredients, creating a practice space (some people have arranged separate accommodation such as a rented venue away from their family), making agreements with other household members about your availability, planning and including in your schedule to what extent and when you will engage in domestic tasks, having clear intentions for offline time and communicating these to the people around you.

At the Mindfulness Network, we are delighted to have been able to continue to offer retreat opportunities during these challenging months. We look forward to being able to offer face-to-face retreats once again and we have also found that online retreats do offer particular benefits and increase accessibility for some. The challenges of this pandemic have opened our minds to new possibilities and we will keep our minds open to the place of online retreat in our offerings as we move forward.



Training Online with the Mindfulness Network: Behind My Own Front Door

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The windswept Dorset coast for a week with the sound of the storm waves throughout every morning sitting practice, or maybe the comfort of a hotel in beautiful Roman and Tudor-styled Chester and, of course, there is always a retreat or course in North Wales with slate, waterfalls, mountains and a sedate, majestic and deep brown lake for company. For the first half of my TTP training I have learnt and practised at these locations. But now such travel luxury is not permitted and I sit with my favourite mug at a desk in my own house, looking out on the cul-de-sac and my unkempt garden instead.

My mindfulness teacher training has moved to Zoom.

Starting any course with twenty strangers is a bit of an anxious time. I am sure I have not been alone in the past worrying "Will there be anyone like me?" as I arrived in the room for the first time. Logging onto Zoom, all those faces on the screen can cause my eyes to glaze. But equally, I am terrible at names and every face has one tagged to it. I do like that. Being online has an advantage straight away!

All the trainers leading CMRP Mindfulness Network courses I have attended have overcome such early tension quite easily and online courses have been no different in this regard. Irish Bertley asked us how many 8-week courses we had each run and then collected in the replies so skillfully that all of us were swiftly held together; certainly, for me from then on, I felt a resonance with the other participants. So we were smartly away; sharing and learning and experiencing together. In the breakout rooms everyone was always (and I mean always) allowed to comment and be listened to. Away from the larger classroom, we could turn over ideas and come up with something more insightful and broader than the sum of our individual thoughts.

Breaks are completely different with an online course. You walk away from the screen for 30 or 60 minutes and turn around to remember that you are at home; the laundry is still drying at the top of the stairs, you have to brew your own tea or cook your own lunch, and there is no one on the course to talk to. This last feature means that online courses do lack the social side of a face-to-face meet up.

However, a morning's studying and reflecting on mindfulness and mindfulness teaching positions you back in your home with fresh beginner's eyes. I hadn't spent ten peaceful minutes staring out of my bedroom window over the neighbourhood, simply watching the birds fly past, since I first moved in here over a year ago. Sometimes, going away to practice or learn mindfulness can make you think that the mindfulness is only properly available to you in certain locations.

I realised that I don't have to go somewhere to be on a 'bit of a retreat'. I can do it behind my own front door. The mountains and lake and waterfalls are inspiring and supportive in their own way and I certainly hope to go back there in the future.

I now realise that there are quality opportunities to practice and learn about mindfulness online. Doing so at home also illustrates that mindfulness is not just to be attained under special circumstances. The internet is a real blessing in these COVID times and going on a course or a retreat is one way we can use it skilfully.

Philip Anderson teaches mindfulness in the Salisbury area and can be found at
www.facebook.com/trustingmind.co.uk and www.trustingmind.co.uk

The coming together

My experience of co-teaching mindfulness-based interventions.



Catherine Fortin

Here we are in a room, we don't know each other but we have one thing in common: a shared purpose. A good start. What next? Meeting other participants, sharing views. I hear myself saying, "Would you like to start co-teaching with me?" Here we are again, setting an action plan. To do what? To start a weekly 1-hour sitting group.

Who for?

We decide to invite people we know.

How are we going to practice together?

We agree to run sessions in turn, alternating sitting and standing meditations. We prepare together, debrief after each session, and set up supervision.

And the structure of the sessions?

We decide on an introductory meditation, time for sharing experience, a closing meditation.

And for how long?

Everything has to fit within one hour.

Fees?

We agree on the cost per participant.

Ready, steady, go. Experiential learning, we adjust our choice of practices to the group and to ourselves.

The first teacher gives information on safety and confidentiality.

We enjoy our sessions together. We decide to run an eight-week course together along the same principles: safety, confidentiality, equally sharing the practices and exercises.

Lockdown starts when we have just completed the eight-week course in person.

Let's move our sitting group online, suggests my colleague.

Back to basics. We need a platform. I get a zoom account and training in using it.

So far we have been practicing in French, our mother tongue.

Some English-speaking friends are interested in an online, drop-in group. Fine, let's start.

Two colleagues accept my invitation to attend the first session. I invite one of them to guide the closing meditation. She accepts – and this the beginning of a new team. Another colleague joins in, the team is complete.

The coming together

My experience of co-teaching
mindfulness-based interventions.

How are we going to work together?

- We establish a rota that gives us a week off on a regular basis.
- Participants are invited to join the group by the teachers.
- We meet online at a set time every week to prepare our sessions and feedback on the previous one.

This is our safety net. Online we do not know what may happen. And we cannot provide the same support as during in-person sessions.

Nine months later the groups are ongoing. There are no set fees, donations are welcome.

What did I learn?

- Know what you are doing. Rehearse and rehearse well; then practices are easier to guide.
- Know your platform. Time spent learning the ropes is definitely worthwhile.
- Practice in a safe environment. Hosting the Friends of Bangor online group has been a great asset and I recommend it to anyone who wants to practice online. This is a non-threatening environment in which we learn through experience.
- Go at your own pace. Some of us may feel comfortable guiding 8-week courses from the start, others don't. Be yourself, acknowledge your limits, set goals within your comfort zone to begin with and gradually expand the spectrum of your interventions.
- Team up with colleagues. It is reassuring to know that someone else can step in and notice things you may miss when you are guiding. It opens doors to sharing experiences, reflection, feedback.
- Get supervision. This in my opinion is a key point. Whatever the size of the group, the duration of the sessions or their content.

I personally enjoy co-teaching with people I know a little and gradually build up the teams. This is great learning experience. Even if it is initially non-income generating, it is an opportunity to keep our skills up-to-date and to accept other opportunities as they arise.

<https://zoom.us/resources>



Marketing Tips

By Marianna Baschiera

Part of being a professional in today's society is finding a balance between humility and self-promotion, mysticism and pragmatism, i.e. making a sustainable living from teaching Mindfulness to others. I've attended a few trainings on creating an online presence for yourself. Below I will summarise some of the reasons why an online presence is important as well as some of the ways to create this presence.

The importance of having an online presence:

- TRUST TRUST TRUST – people become familiar with you when they regularly see your branding, your message and your personality. Trust is key to successfully gaining clients.
- You become more visible - you increase the chance of more people seeing you, and increased exposure means increased opportunities for connection.
- Statistics show that having even a simple, but professional, looking website makes a big difference to how much prospective clients trust your business.
- It's an opportunity to create a community and dialogue, which builds clients' confidence in you and your service.
- It can be a lot of fun and this is engaging for your community!

Some key tips for promoting yourself online:

- Promote benefits more than features: 'This is the problem we can solve' rather than 'here is a list of 56 things you'll get if you sign up'.
- Identify client pains and talk to them: what is troubling your prospective clients? How can you communicate to that problem in a clear but authentic way?
- Identify resistance and talk to that: what is holding your client back and how can you reassure them?
- Social media: keep repeating the benefits and mechanisms of your approach.





HOW TO WIN YOUR CLIENTS OVER: LIKE, KNOW, TRUST

LIKE: Make it user friendly - keep descriptions simple rather than clever and use your audience's language.

KNOW: Repeat, repeat, repeat! Familiarity is as powerful as novelty. Do you know the song 'All I want for Christmas? Do you remember the tune? The lyrics? - whether you like it or not, chances are your brain quickly recalls the song and you're possibly already singing it to yourself right now! That's because it's familiar, because you've been exposed to it every Christmas for the past 20 years, often against your will. 'Talk badly about me, talk well about me, but talk about me.' - no publicity is bad publicity!

TRUST: Provide some free samples for people to try. Show your face - do videos, post pictures, let people hear your voice. People relate to people, not to products.

Promote your USPI

Your Unique Selling Point (USP) is the quality or characteristic of your service or product that makes it unique. It often is either a completely unique product (such as the Apple iPod when it first came out) or it is your unique style and personality that you bring to the service or experience. Identify it, embrace it and let it imbue your entire service!

Where do I start?!

There is so much to think about and so many ways to do it - it can feel overwhelming to begin!

- Start small: find out how to start an Instagram or Facebook page and get to know the basics
- Be consistent: choose 3-4 themes you want to promote or educate people on and share information on them. Post regularly.
- Respond to new followers and reach out to members of the online community
- Put aside some time every week or month to plan your content for the month ahead.
- It makes it MUCH easier to create aesthetics and content that meets your values and message when you bulk plan.

This is really the tip of the iceberg, but start somewhere, start small and as you keep exploring you'll find more and more ways to promote yourself, connect with others and have a good time while you're at it!

I hope you've found this helpful - if you want to chat or see this in action please have a look at the resources below and come say hi on my Instagram accounts: @Mindful_Mari.B or @retreat_yourself_boxes

Resources:

FutureLearn: Free online courses: <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/digital-skills-digital-marketing>



@prforgirlbosses
@jenay.rose
@hospitable_mind

Minding the Mind Child

This playpen made of breath.
Can it hold the mind child
with its chewy blanket, squawky
box and raggy monkey?

Let me just sense breathing's come and go
begin to feel the body's story
the one that just sensation knows

Before the child breaks out,
demands the floppy book.
It wants to hear its tale
again, again, again

But not forever. Breath and kindness
do your work. Hold the child
with patience, time, and stillness.

John Skrine

Dance to the Silence

The mind can be lost, dashing through never ending, dark and treacherous places.

Life is not lost. Now, we are here. The body can lie still, and find its way home.

Mind connects to body, and body becomes me. This is not change, this is just be.

No longer striving, be patient, what will be, will be. No longer judging, acceptance, letting go, forgiving, not only for you, but for me.

A mind full of gratefulness for all that we have, and all that we share.

Let's practice together, I will meet you there.

It lays still beneath the stormy sea, lay down your anchor, breathe, and you shall see.

The tree sways and dances to the silence. The dark clouds and rain embrace the light, and smile a rainbow.

Now, We are here. This is it – Alive. We are still, yet we breathe, and the body and mind, dance to the silence. The wondrous wandering mind takes us near, past, and far. Watch with admiration as it tends to our delights. Forever solving problems, chasing dreams, and managing fights, flights, and freeze. It's not there to harm us, it's there for whatever we please.

Breath and body movement, mind and heart plays its part. Let it go. Let it be. For this is freedom.

See me smile. No longer lost. Hand on heart. Peace is in me.

So here we are, find your way. I invite you to dance to the silence.

Jason Steele

T1 M.A Student Bangor University

2020.



Mindfulness from grief

by Nick Hammond

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I am fairly new to this game. It was only in the summer of 2018, at 50+ years, and after I had suffered a very close and painful bereavement that I felt I desperately needed something to assist, both with the grieving process and to help me to live in a way that would feel bearable.

Two years later, I meditate most days. I have completed a distance learning course with The Mindfulness Network, attended both secular and Buddhist retreats and visited Buddhist temples in cities around the world.

I'd like to share a 'letter to myself', that I wrote at the end of a retreat in February this year. It went down as a stream of consciousness and I shared it, with a great deal of trepidation, amongst the group at the end of the weekend. I include it here as a summary of the benefits that mindfulness can bring —

Well Done, Well Done. It's not indulgent.

Look at where you are, what you have done. How you fit in and why it doesn't matter.

How you can be still and quiet. How you feel it is the best thing ever.

You can do it, and you used to think that it was impossible.

*You said it had to change, something good had to come from the terrible.
You're starting to do that, to feel it. You need to learn to hold it and carry it.*

Whatever the past, there is no profit, for anyone, of living there.

Look around, move forward and lift up.

Nick Hammond, 21 April 2020.

In memory of my son, Rory Elliot Hammond, who would have been 22 years old today.

Maelstrom

by Kay Bruce

A world in turmoil

My world

Whirling frenzy of things turning upside down inside out

No sense.

I stepped off a pavement

And into another world.

On that icy autumn morning it was frozen,

A skeleton in ice, every vein, every detail preserved,

Perfection.

It stopped me

Dead in my tracks.

And suspended time.

Privileged witness to how it was right then and right there,

I felt it.

A leaf in a gutter,

A glimpse of eternity.

The maelstrom,

A puff of smoke.



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Inclusivity or exclusivity, that is the question

By Carmelo

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Two years ago I found myself in a special one-day event organised by the Friends of Bangor, in which of the 60 participants only four were males (two of which members of the FoB committee).

This disproportion in the ratio of women to men I had witnessed before in various drop-in sessions or events, but the contrast had never been as stark and evident as on that day. Possibly this palpable imbalance between the sexes prompted in me feelings of unease, of being out of place (and possibly one of four women in a 60 men-strong group would have felt the same?). So I started thinking about the possibility of a group for men, which is ironic considering that in a different setting I had considered a separate group for women to be divisive and exclusive and now I was looking at a possible mindfulness group for men as a way of guaranteeing inclusion. It goes to show how limited our view of things is most of the time, almost as if we had blinkers on and were not able to see the world in its entirety but just a fraction of it - the one that's closer to us, that serves our own interests better.

Hopefully, the idea of a mindfulness group for men run by the Friends of Bangor can continue to spark a discussion around diversity and inclusion within the Network, in an attempt to address any oversights or gaps in provision, if it needs be. It wouldn't be a matter of taking away anything, but rather of adding to it, thus contributing to a more varied offer. The advent and popularity of Zoom in recent times has showed in no uncertain terms how technology, which usually gets a bad press, has been a force for good. An online mindfulness session or retreat appears to be more democratic in more ways than one, allowing a wider spectrum of people to participate and benefit from it - it's less onerous in terms of costs and time commitment, and it mitigates the effects of sight, hearing and mobility impairments, especially when all these aspects combine in intersectional ways (think for example about the case of a disabled person who also happens to be economically disadvantaged). Online mindfulness is kinder to us all and kinder to the environment too.

As a currently unemployed gay man living with HIV, a recurrent cancer and tinnitus, I welcome a discussion around disabilities, marginalised groups and minorities, and the advent of cheaper, when not completely free, online mindfulness sessions. I'm also reassured by the co-existence on the scene of different interventions and initiatives, for example an LGBT+ meditation group in Brighton (<https://home.mindfulness-network.org/an-inside-view-of-lgbtq-inclusion-by-shella-roche/>) or an LGBT+ retreat which took place last year in Sheffield (<https://home.mindfulness-network.org/tag/lgbtq/>), not to mention a study currently conducted by Victoria Fontana at Bangor University on "Equality, Diversity & Inclusion in Mindfulness Teachers' Training Programs".

I hope that the organisation continues to lend a compassionate ear to the needs and aspirations of all the members who comprise its diverse community. Meanwhile if all goes well, the first meeting of the "Mindfulness Group for Men" will take place in January, wish us well and do join us!

Our first meeting will be between 11am and 12pm on Saturday 16th of January 2021 via Zoom.

You will only need to register in advance once, for the whole series, using this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/zoom/joiner/12/ApouCtqz4sEtxZILZs7CTDy6RQREPWqR>



Workshop: 10 keys to unlocking your digital teaching business

When: Jan 26, 2021 7:30pm

Where: Online Event

Tutor: Darren Cockburn

Book:

https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZ0rf-GurTsiHNyV-UpZb6_kfzh0Eeq7aY78

During the pandemic, many of us have had little option but to move our teaching online. As far as our participants go the world is now our oyster - or so we're told! But how do we reach them?

In this workshop, Darren will be sharing his 10 keys to unlock digital teaching businesses. He'll also be sharing some of the current trends in the digital teaching market. There will be plenty of opportunities to get answers to questions about your teaching business.



Workshop: Working the 'hard' and 'softer edges' in Chi Kung based Mindful Movement

When: Feb 13, 2021 2:00pm

Where: Online Event

Tutor: Karunavira

Book:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZAod0mtrTwsH9WISd6mwVh3daFkszEod3gc>

Mindful movement forms an important part of the teaching in Mindfulness Based courses. It helps people to recognise the 'edges' of experience, whether physical or emotional and how to relate to these. This workshop-based session will show us how to engage with these edges in Chi Kung based mindful movement. The event is for Mindfulness Teachers and those in training.



Workshop: Safeguarding

When: 13 Apr 2021 – 20 Apr 2021

Where: Online Event

Tutor: Sarah Millband

Book:

<https://booking.mindfulness-network.org/course-information/?id=810>



Safeguarding is all about protecting children and adults from harm, abuse or neglect and educating those around them to recognise the signs and dangers. A key aspect of Good Practice in Safeguarding is attending training every three years, so that whether we're teaching, training or supervising, we can ensure that our skills and knowledge in Safeguarding are up to date.

As part of our commitment to creating a culture within our organisation that prioritises safety for everyone, the Mindfulness Network has designed a Safeguarding Workshop which is being offered in April 2021, as part of our CPD programme. This Workshop has been designed especially to meet the learning needs of mindfulness-based teachers, trainers and supervisors in order to raise awareness of our legal responsibilities to ensure that in offering mindfulness-based courses, we're attending comprehensively to the safety of the people we are working with. You can find out more and apply here:

<https://booking.mindfulness-network.org/course-information/?id=810>

Book a Mindfulness Network event

<https://booking.mindfulness-network.org/>

Choose a supervisor from a wide range of specialisms

<https://supervision.mindfulness-network.org/choose-a-supervisor/>

Explore our free practice offerings

<https://home.mindfulness-network.org/practice-mindfulness/>

Meet the Mindfulness Network Team

<http://home.mindfulness-network.org/meet-the-team/>

Read our Blog

<https://home.mindfulness-network.org/blog>

See the Mindfulness Network website for training events and retreats in 2020 and 2021 – the calendar is constantly being updated as we respond to conditions to keep us all safe during the pandemic: <https://www.teach-mindfulness.org/calendar/>

Online Guided Practice Sessions – every Friday morning 8-15am GMT.

<http://home.mindfulness-network.org/practice-mindfulness/free-online-sessions/>

Join us via Zoom. There is no need to register. Each month an experienced mindfulness teacher will lead the sessions, loosely based around a theme:

December 2020 – Gwerin: "Water Ground" (NB: No session on Friday 25th)

January 2021 – Rosalee: "No Part Left Out: Opening to the way things are"

February 2021 – Zoe: "Radical Acceptance: finding strength in letting be"

March 2021 – Chantek: "What Arises in the Moment"

These sessions are completely free and open to all. However, if you would like to donate to the Mindfulness Network, any amount would be gratefully received via our website: <https://home.mindfulness-network.org/donate/>

See the Mindfulness network website for training events and retreats in 2021:

<https://booking.mindfulness-network.org/>

Retreat: Mindfulness and Self-Compassion

When: 19 Jan 2021 – 23 Jan 2021

Where: Online Event

Tutor: Colette Power, Zoe Stobbrook-Fisher

Book: <https://booking.mindfulness-network.org/course-information/?id=809>

Workshop: Inquiry

When: 21 Jan 2021 – 22 Jan 2021

Where: Online Event

Tutors: Karanavira

Book: <https://booking.mindfulness-network.org/course-information/?id=757>

Teacher Training Online Level 1

When: 31 Jan 2021 – 26 Feb 2021

Where: Online Event

Tutor: Christine Shennar, David Shannon

Book: <https://booking.mindfulness-network.org/course-information/?id=795>

Compassion: MBCL Foundation Course

When: 6 Mar 2021 – 1 Apr 2021

Where: Online Event

Tutors: Bridgette O'Neill, Barbara Hussong

Dates: Sat 6th March (9 – 5pm), Thursdays 18th, 25th March and 1st April (10am – 1pm)

Book: <https://booking.mindfulness-network.org/course-information/?id=792>

Retreat: Staying Mindful

When: 22 Mar 2021 – 26 Mar 2021

Where: Online Event

Tutor: Anree Griffiths, Sarah Millard

Book: <https://booking.mindfulness-network.org/course-information/?id=791>

Retreat: Foundations of Mindfulness

When: 7 Apr 2021 – 11 Apr 2021

Where: Online Event

Tutors: Karanavira, Jola Waldorf

Book: <https://booking.mindfulness-network.org/course-information/?id=808>

Workshop: Learning to use the MBITAC

When: 13 Apr 2021 – 11 May 2021

Where: Online Event

Tutor: Rebecca Crane

Book: <https://booking.mindfulness-network.org/course-information/?id=755>

Teacher Training: MBSR Specialist

When: 14 Apr 2021 – 23 Apr 2021

Where: Online Event

Tutors: Bethan Roberts, Bridgette O'Neill

Book: <https://booking.mindfulness-network.org/course-information/?id=796>

Teacher Training: MBCT Specialist

When: 23 Apr 2021 – 6 May 2021

Where: Online Event

Tutor: Alison Evans, Pamela Duckorin

Book: <https://booking.mindfulness-network.org/course-information/?id=797>

Retreat: Deepening and Extending the Foundations of Mindfulness

When: 26 Apr 2021 – 2 May 2021

Where: Online Event

Tutors: Frits Koster, Jolly Hoeyekamp

Book: <https://booking.mindfulness-network.org/course-information/?id=806>