NIHR | School for Primary Care Research

MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

Development of a feasible and acceptable brief Mindfulness-Based Intervention to improve wellbeing

Kelly Birtwell

Kelly.birtwell@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Supervisors: Dr. Rebecca Morris, Prof. Chris Armitage

External supervisor: Prof. Harm van Marwijk

Session outline

- Background
- PhD research plan
- Preliminary findings
  - Online survey
  - “Course planning activity” study
- Next steps

Background

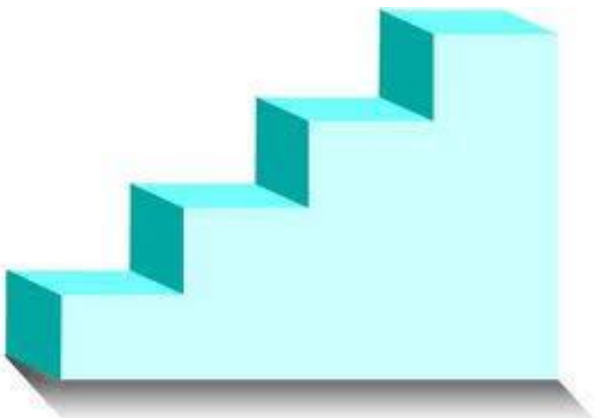
Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) are beneficial, but there are challenges:

- Time and energy
- Difficulties with practice
- Implementation
- Adverse effects

Solution

Mindfulness “stepped care”

High-intensity



Low-intensity

Demarzo et al. 2015

Low-intensity (brief) MBIs

- Preliminary evidence
- Interventions vary in content and structure
- Lack of clarity why some elements included and not others
- What elements should be included in a brief MBI?

PhD research plan: a theory-, evidence- and person-based approach

Stage 1: Planning

- Literature review, “course planning” activity, online survey

Stage 2: Design

- Guiding principles, prototype MBI, theoretical modelling

Stage 3: Development and evaluation of acceptability and feasibility

- Focus groups, refine intervention, evaluation

Stakeholder involvement throughout, including research design

Mindfulness to Meaning Theory (MMT)

(Garland, Farb, Goldin & Fredrickson, 2015)

Mindfulness broadens awareness, builds eudaimonic meaning, fosters flourishing

Eudaimonic wellbeing: sense of purpose, meaningful positive engagement with life (Garland et al 2015)
(related to psychological wellbeing- PWB)

Hedonic wellbeing: obtain pleasure, avoid pain
(related to subjective wellbeing- SWB)

Mindfulness to Meaning Theory (MMT)

(Garland, Farb, Goldin & Fredrickson, 2015)

Process model of positive emotion regulation

Key hypotheses:

Mindfulness generates meaning by promoting reappraisal and savouring

MMT: evidence

Garland, Hanley, Goldin & Gross 2017:

- RCT of MBSR vs CBT, N=107, 12 month follow-up
- Increases in broadened awareness predicted increases in reappraisal = greater positive affect at 12 months

Mindfulness-Oriented Recovery Enhancement:

- Increased positive reappraisal (Garland, Manusov et al. 2014)
- Mindful savouring reduces drug craving (Garland et al. 2015, 2014)

Six-year positive effects study (de Vibe et al 2018)

- Increased dispositional mindfulness (DM) associated with increased problem-focused coping (PFC), increases in DM & PFC associated with decreased avoidance-focused coping (AFC). Effect on PFC led to increased SWB.

Stage 1 research studies

- Online survey
- “Course planning” activity

Online survey: participants

- **Survey link reach:** - **230,961** social media followers
  - approx. **635** people on email lists

- **Participants:** 42, **mean age:** 50.8 years

26 (62%)

28 (90.5%)

Mindfulness practice experience:

Teachers **10.2 years** (range: 4-26)

Course participants **5.1 years** (range: <1-18)

22 (52.4%) mindfulness teachers

Survey findings: making adaptations

Early on in learning the method I think it is important to follow the curriculum exactly and deliver to the previously researched population but as you become more practiced amend it to the population needs.

Teacher factors

the curriculum is really important because it/ they have been developed by highly qualified professionals… and it has been subjected to research and outcome studies.

Credibility

Every group has different needs which ought to be accommodated

Participant factors

Survey findings: elements

- How important are specific elements to include in a brief course? (1-7)
  - Most elements rated >5
  - Informal mindfulness rated 6.8
- What is the minimum no. of sessions each element should feature in?
  - Range: 1.4 - 4.6 sessions
  - 4+ sessions: Inquiry, Informal Mindfulness, Focused Attention practice, Education & Knowledge sharing (psychoeducation)

Survey findings: elements

- Different opinions:
  - Informal mindfulness, Inquiry, Education & knowledge sharing (psychoeducation), practical exercises, poems
- Helpful and unhelpful elements (free text):
  - Body scan, mindful movement, mindful walking, meditating with difficulty, CBT exercises

Survey findings: course structure

- 4.97 sessions
- 78 minute sessions
- Weekly (79.5%)
- 5-17 participants
- 20 minutes daily home practice
- Monthly **reunion** sessions
- Importance of **face to face** delivery (1-7): 6.2 (mean)

Perceptions of brief mindfulness courses

Advantages

- Introduction / first step
- Develop new skills
- Positive outcomes
- Time
- Cost
- Accessibility

Disadvantages

- Too short
- Lacks practice and content
- Lacks impact and depth
- Forming a habitual practice
- Unrealistic expectations
- None

Brief courses: sample quotes

…just a basic understanding can lead to really positive outcomes

A 4 session course may not be long enough for some people to understand the concepts

Cheaper, easier for people to commit to, not so onerous in terms of home practice time, easier for some to discover if they can commit to a regular practice.

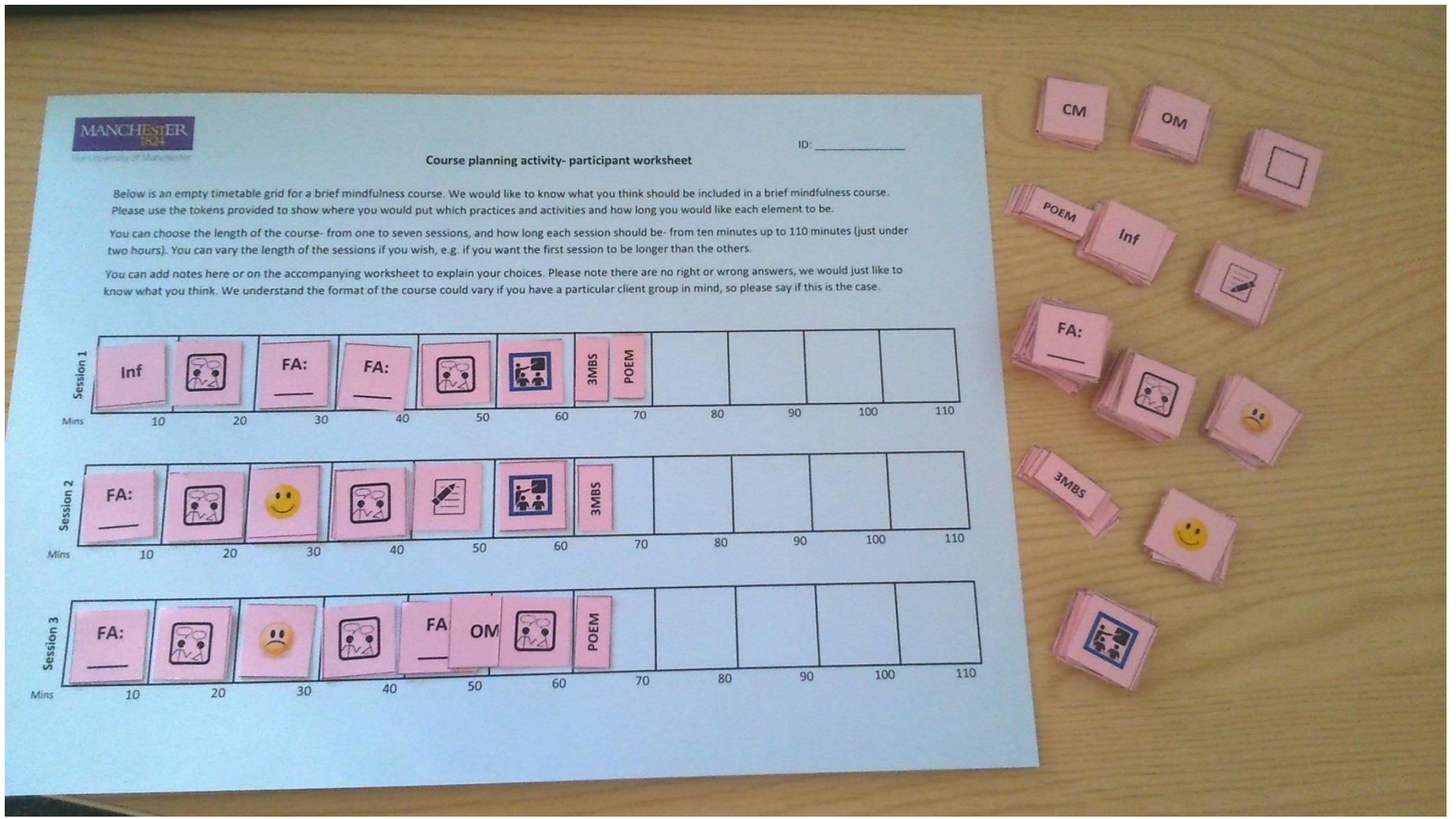
Brief courses: sample quotes

Don’t dilute what works. It would be outside the UK Mindfulness Network Guidelines… so please don’t do this.

Must be done by professionals under supervision and following best practice guidance

treat with care… takes a lot of skill to do well and I have much concern that it can be taught in a very shallow way

“Course planning” activity



Course elements

Focused Attention practice **FA**

Informal Mindfulness **Inf**

Compassion meditation practice **CM**

Open monitoring practice **OM**

Three-step breathing space practice **3MBS**

Inquiry

Course elements

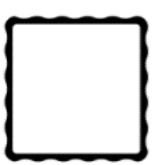
Education & knowledge sharing

Practical exercises

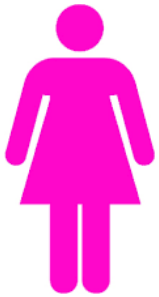
Practicing being with pleasant experiences

Practicing being with unpleasant experiences

Poem

Wild card 

Participants



15 (71.4%)

21 (100%)

Mindfulness practice experience:

Teachers: **10.3 years** (range: 1-34)

Course participants: **13.9 years** (range: 2-67)

13 (61.9%): teaching role

Course planning activity: findings

- 5.52 sessions
- 87 minute sessions
- 10-20 minute practices

Course planning activity: findings

Used in most courses:

Focused Attention practice

Education & knowledge sharing

Inquiry

3MBS

Mixed opinions:

Open Monitoring practice

Compassion Meditation

Being with unpleasant experiences

Sample course

- 4 sessions: one 40-minute practice, 1hr inquiry

  "For a general audience the meditation sessions should focus on simple focused attention (breathing, body scan or a mixture) plus some OM"

(OM= open monitoring practice)

Sample course

- 6 sessions: practices start “v. short” and move up to 5-10 minutes. Includes contracting and orientation.
- Omitted: compassion meditation (CM), being with unpleasant experiences

“Using external ‘safe’ anchors at the start e.g. creative doodling, small moments, taste, smell, holding object”

CM: “my experience is that this takes a lot of pre-work.”

Designing the intervention

Combine “activity” study and survey findings with theory and other evidence, e.g.:

- Mindfulness to Meaning Theory (Garland et al. 2015)
- Trauma-sensitive mindfulness (Treleaven 2018)
- Mindfulness as non-monotonic (Britton 2019)

  (*There can be too much of a good thing)*

Intervention design so far…

- 5 sessions of 1hr 30min.
- Include: FA, IM, 3MBS practices, inquiry, psychoeducation
- Start small, repetition, safety information
- Options: choice of anchors, duration of practices, choice of home practice
- Exploring pleasant and neutral experiences

Next steps

- Finalise the intervention design
- Discuss with focus groups – in July
- Refine the intervention and supporting materials
- Evaluate the intervention: feasibility study

Focus group:

Monday 8th July

5.30-7.30pm

University of Manchester

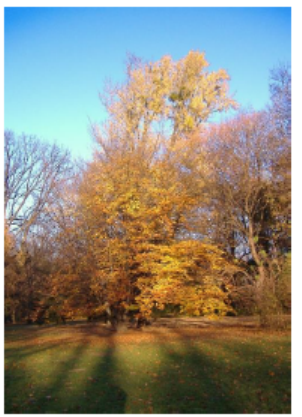
Contact:

Kelly.birtwell@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

Study flyer, version: 2 (13/04/18)

Research about mindfulness courses



Have you taken part in a mindfulness course?

Or do you teach or research mindfulness courses?

Would you like to take part in a group discussion about mindfulness courses?

The University of Manchester is conducting research about mindfulness courses.

We would like to know what elements people think are important in mindfulness courses, and if time were limited, what elements should be included in a brief mindfulness course.

We are looking for people to take part in a group discussion (called a focus group) about this.

The focus group will be held at the University of Manchester.

If you have any questions about this research, or if you are interested in taking part, please contact:

Kelly Birtwell
Tel: 0161 275 0758 Email: kelly.birtwell@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Or: mindfulness@manchester.ac.uk

Centre for Primary Care,
University of Manchester, Oxford Rd.,
Manchester, M13 9PL.

This project is funded by the National Institute for Health Research School for Primary Care Research

NHS
National Institute for Health Research

… any questions?

Kelly Birtwell

Kelly.Birtwell@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

This research is funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) School for Primary Care Research (Capacity Building Award 8). The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.