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email:
telephone:

Date

Dear Participant,

thank you for your interest in the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course at XXXX, on XXX from XXX to XXX from XX pm to XX pm. This letter is intended to provide you with some useful information before you join the course. Mindfulness is widely debated in the media, and by the end of the course you should have a more informed understanding and real experience of mindfulness practices. This is a course designed for beginners and for those wishing to further develop their meditation practice.

The course is delivered over eight sessions, and to benefit most you should aim to attend all of them. These sessions will provide tools, techniques and insights that can help people to be less reactive to life's challenges, to be more aware and responsive, and to have more choice in dealing with difficulties. The sessions will be experiential and use a range of awareness practices including simple movement practices. The aim is to become more in touch with thoughts, feelings and body sensations so we can respond with less stress to life's challenges. Mindfulness will be introduced from a secular perspective without any assumption of prior knowledge or practice.

MBSR originated from work by Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, and a variant of it, Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) is now recommended by the NHS for depression relapse prevention. MBSR is more widely adopted and adapted now for general populations. The curriculum we will follow is the one adopted by Bangor, Exeter and Oxford Universities (www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness) that is the basis of their teaching assessment criteria, and we will abide by the guidelines published by UK Network for Mindfulness-Based Teacher Training Organisations (www.mindfulnesssteachersuk.org.uk), drawing on the support of a supervisor from the Mindfulness Network CIC (www.mindfulness-network.org).

Rather like a physical fitness programme, mindfulness requires practice. To get the most out of the course, you should be aiming to do between 40 and 45 minutes a day of practice for six or seven days a week throughout the course. There will be guided practices available on a CD or online to help you. If that level of commitment is not possible for you, then you might like to discuss whether an introductory course is better first. It is also important to do the practices recommended at the particular stage of the course, so if you have your own practice and want to keep that up alongside this course please discuss that with me.

The course can be quite demanding in many ways. If you have had any serious or very stressful life events in the past year, or have a long term condition, we should discuss this before you embark on the course. Sometimes it is worth delaying or finding a different course. Therefore, we ask for a short 1-1 meeting with the tutor before the course. Attached is a short questionnaire that we would like you to complete before that meeting, and that we will keep for the duration of the course, in confidence. There will be an orientation meeting on 4th May at 6.30 pm at JBCL so that you can meet the tutor and familiarise yourself with the centre, and if you turn up for that then we could arrange a short interview at the end; someone will be at JBCL from 5.30 pm. Otherwise, please contact me to set up a meeting - email ken@kenlunn.com, mobile 07725 362825.

This is a group activity, and much of the learning will come from the group discussions. How much or how little you engage is up to you - there will be no pressure to speak up if you do not want to. Please respect the group and the environment, and treat any group discussions in confidence. We attach some guiding principles that everyone will be asked to abide by.

People often ask what books are recommended. This is intended to be an experiential course, and there will be reading material provided to support you on the course. In mindfulness practice we often talk about "beginner's mind", and the best advice might be to just arrive and follow the course. However, there is plenty of theory and lots of good books around, and if you are very keen to read more we can make some recommendations - a lot will depend on what you are looking for. There are some useful links from my website www.kenlunn.com,

Someone will be at JBCL by 5.30 pm each evening of the course if you want to arrive early and bring a light meal. The house rule is vegetarian food only. Tea, coffee and fruit teas are available, and there is a microwave. If you are coming straight from work, you might like to bring a change of clothes. Some of the practices involve gentle movement and lying down. The class will start promptly at 6.30 pm, so please be on time so that you can settle in properly and not interrupt the class once it has begun.

For this course, payment is due in advance - bringing a cheque payable to "Jamyang Buddhist Centre Leeds" to the orientation meeting is fine, or JBCL can provide details for a bank transfer. If there are any problems in paying the whole fee in advance, please contact me.

We look forward to working with you over the coming weeks. Meditation and mindfulness has been a key part of my life for many years, and I am delighted to be able to share this course with you. I hope it will provide you with a very beneficial experience.

Best wishes

xxx

xxx
Course Tutor, MBSR
Email:
Mobile:

Please complete this, and bring it with you to the orientation meeting.

Name, address, telephone number

Emergency contact:

GP name and telephone number:

Occupation:

Date of Birth:

What brings you to the course?

What appeals to you about the course?

Have you any previous meditation or mindfulness experience?

Do you suffer from any illnesses? (e.g. allergies, diabetes, high/low blood pressure)

Have you suffered from any mental ill-health in recent years (e.g. anxiety or depression).

Are you taking any medications at present?

Have you had any disturbing life event in the last year, or is there anything going on for you now that you would like me to be aware of?

If personal difficulties arise during the period of the course, do you have someone you could turn to for support?

Some practices involve gentle movement and stretches. Have you any physical condition that might affect your ability to do these?

How do you plan to make time (up to 45 minutes a day) for home practice?

Is there anything else that you feel the tutor should know?

Guiding Principles

This course is meant to be a learning experience for each individual. Everyone will take away different things from it. As a group we ask participants to abide by a few simple principles.

1. People will be invited to share their experiences. Please treat anything that is shared as confidential.
2. No-one is obliged to share their experiences - you are welcome to just listen.
3. If there is anything about a practice you are uncomfortable with, do not follow it. Do not do anything that is likely to cause you distress.
4. If you need anything for your own comfort, please sort yourself out. There are blankets and cushions provided. If you need the bathroom at any time, just take time out.
5. If you are going to leave the session before the end, please let one of the tutors know.
6. If there is anything you think the tutors should know, please speak to them privately if necessary.
7. A register is kept, please put your name down before you go.
8. Mindfulness is a label that is widely used, and it means many things to many people. Rather than define it, we will be exploring it throughout the course. Make your own judgements on what mindfulness is.
9. The course is experiential, and not theoretical. The tutors would be happy to discuss theory outside of the class and recommend reading for those wanting to explore further.
10. Mindfulness is developed through practice. To benefit from the course, you are invited to try some of the practices yourself. Each week there will be some recommended home practice.
11. The course is "secular" and not tied to any particular religion or world view. There will be strong overlaps with some Buddhist practices, and if you have any questions on that the tutors would be happy to clarify to the best of their abilities. Buddhism has a strong emphasis on ethics and wisdom that are not so explicit in mindfulness practices, and different Buddhist schools have subtly different uses of the term "mindfulness".
12. Please respect the environment we are working in.

