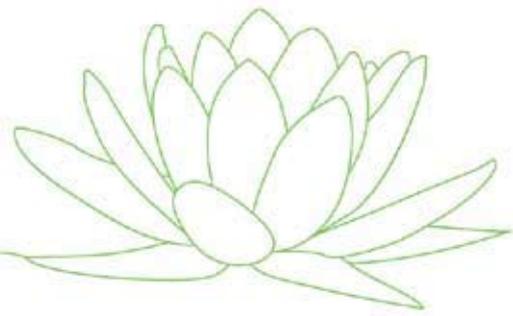


newsletter

ridgeway mindful psychology



January 2015

Image: Tim Cambray

New Year, New Intentions...

All too often, we fail to keep our resolutions, beat ourselves up, and fall back into same old. Why?

Welcome to our January Newsletter

The turning of the Year is often a time when we review our lives, our habits, our behaviour, our well-being and our intentions. We construct resolutions, rooted in ideas that we are not good enough as we are, that we should be a "better" person, or in an anxiety or feeling that we have wasted time, opportunities, relationships. These resolutions are usually around behaviours or habits, such as giving up smoking, or eating less.

All too often, we fail to keep our resolutions, beat ourselves up, and fall back into same old. Why? Because we think we deserve punishment when we fall off our perch? Shame, guilt and despondency overwhelm and cripple us.

With mindfulness, we place as much emphasis on our intention, as we do on our goal. Intention feels increasingly important in a world filled with "knee-jerk", – reacting to stuff simply to avert a difficulty, a void, a space in our life, or to grasp at something with any illusion of pleasure - acting without conscious intention - where a sense of the spaciousness of our own good company feels increasingly unfamiliar and potentially scary.

With Mindfulness the purpose is to keep returning, time and again, patiently, to our focus.

Less about reaching a goal, more about staying right here. The offshoot is that we develop a greater capacity for focus and concentration, and some sense of tolerance and kindness towards ourselves. And, paradoxically, these form a good basis for those other forms of effective habit change, allowing us to approach this with a sense of curiosity rather than crippling shame and guilt. Herein lies the possibility to begin again, this year, today, this moment, this breath, knowing that, if we're breathing and our heart is beating, there is more right with us than there is wrong with us.

We wish you all deep contentment for the New Year.

In this edition

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Life-limiting illness.

We've had the great privilege of working with people who are experiencing, or have experienced, a life-limiting diagnosis, and with professionals working in this area. Several professionals from Swindon's Prospect Hospice have participated in our course, and taken the practices back to their workplace. For those experiencing such a diagnosis – one or two have suggested that they'd have liked more tips and teaching on how to manage potential issues in the future, some have reported finding the practices uniquely helpful in managing some of the scariest of treatments.

Participant's Story...

Helen came on a course following some cancer treatment – here's her story.

As a busy teacher living in London I had heard the term 'mindfulness' but didn't really know what it entailed and thought it wouldn't apply to me. Looking back I didn't realise how it was to make a significant difference to my life...

A few months after moving to Gloucestershire, I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma, a type of blood cancer. I was 30. I had to give up work, and my time was taken up with hospital appointments, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. My treatment worked and I was in remission after 10 months.

It was during this time that I started to read about and practise mindfulness.

However, after a few months I relapsed. I needed more intensive chemotherapy, followed by a bone marrow transplant, the effects of which involved an extensive period of isolation.

People often ask me how I coped emotionally during this period, and I strongly believe that it was due to the mindfulness skills that I had learned and that I practised while in hospital. However I knew that my skills would improve if I took a mindfulness course, which RMP provided, as soon as I was able to.

As well as practice, the course enabled me to benefit from the excellent teaching of new skills, as well as the opportunity to discuss and connect with others. As well as helping me to become well again, I believe that I am now 'armed' with the ability to deal mindfully with any future difficulties that come my way.

Helen's Story

Dr Trish Lück

On 5 November, Dr Trish Lück, a Palliative Care physician, was invited to speak at an All Party Parliamentary Group on Mindfulness, reporting: *Mindfulness training offers Palliative Care workers a strengthening of the capacity of stable presence in the face of great suffering, deeply patient and self aware listening skills, open curiosity with less tendency to seek complex answers, unconditional regard, kindness and compassion for patients, families and fellow clinicians.*

Dr Lück's observations are endorsed by Palliative Care professionals who attended our course. They have also added that for those living with pain, the importance

of finding the best posture for the practices is especially important, and that the "noticing and savouring" that is fostered is helpful in staying connected with things that are pleasurable and beautiful, even amidst the difficulty. Learning to focus on the breath, especially, can help with anxiety and pain.

For those who would like to develop their practices for this context, the Breathworks Training may be helpful, see: <http://www.breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk> where there are more book and CD suggestions or workshops with Trish Bartley.

(see Book Review on back page)



Encounter with Ruby Wax!

Ruby Wax has been touring the show of her book "Sane New World", so when she arrived in Cheltenham, RMP directors Lizzie and Rosemarie were there to greet her, together with our friends from Stroud-based Mindfulness-West. After sending some business cards to her dressing room reminding her "Don't just do something - sit there!" and to "Savour each moment - we only have moments to live", the show began with Ruby sauntering on to the stage sofa carrying a teapot. The show was a fast paced mix of honest illuminations from Ruby's life experiences, together with some light but accurate insights into the neuroscience of mood and mindfulness. At the Q and A section, the roving mike found its way to Lizzie, and Ruby generously engaged in some (very mindful!) banter, during which Lizzie thanked her for being such excellent living proof that mindful may mean calm, but it absolutely does not mean boring!

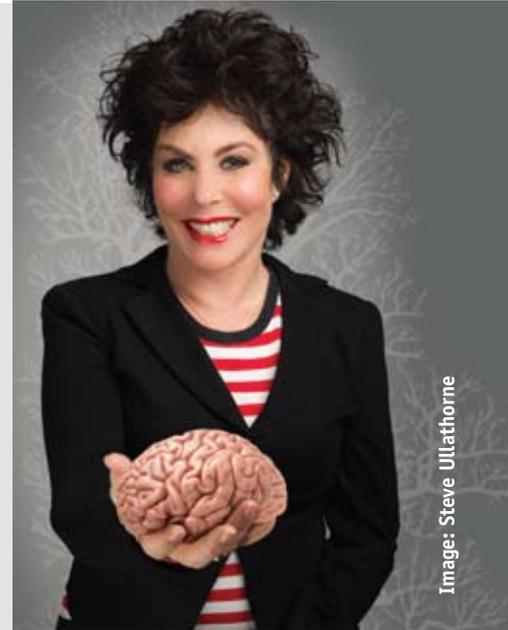


Image: Steve Ullathorne



We finished two more courses... at the end of November, so we welcome all of those participants to the RMP community, and hope to see you at our monthly practice sessions as and when you can. Lizzie enjoyed co-teaching with Richard Evans at Castle Eaton, and we very much hope we will see more of him within RMP.

Image: Rosemarie Thompson - Freelance Florist, understated, organic arrangements from local cutting garden

Monthly practice sessions

In November, we completed our three month pilot of monthly practice sessions and based on the response, we will continue to offer these as long as the positive level of interest continues. We do some practice, have a cuppa, introduce a little teaching (maybe by way of a podcast or similar) and finish with another shorter practice. Always on the last Friday of the month, 7 - 9 pm at Castle Eaton. Please, if possible, let Sarah Covington know if intend to come along.



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Free Tasters (1 hour sessions)
 Tues 20 Jan, 6pm. Ashcroft Centre, Cirencester GL7 1RA
 Weds 21 Jan, 6pm. Castle Eaton Village Hall SN6 6JZ

2015 8 Week Course
 (weekly 2 hour sessions, and all day on 8 Nov)
 Thurs 29 Jan, 7pm. Bromford Support, Cirencester GL7 1UB
 Fri 30 Jan, 12.30pm. Castle Eaton Village Hall SN6 6JZ
 The above course includes CDs, course notes and a Retreat Day.
 We also offer a follow up monthly practice session.

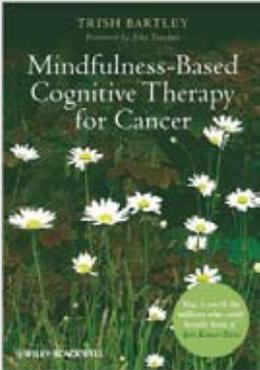
£280
 (£250 Early Bird rate if paid in full by Monday 15th September)

Note: Castle Eaton is between Swindon and Cirencester - approx 15 mins from each

Please note - there are bursaries in cases of financial hardship. Easy application. See website FAQs for details, or contact us



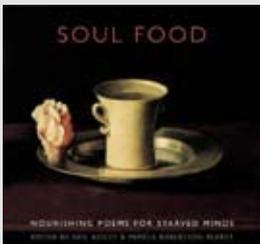
Book Reviews



Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Cancer

By Trish Bartley

A Handbook for those seeking to offer Mindfulness in a cancer context, but also for cancer sufferers as there is much here that is inspirational, as well as a wealth of tips and wrinkles, a unique view on mindfulness practices, poems and personal stories. (Look out also for workshops run by Trish at the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice at Bangor University, and at Oxford Mindfulness Centre).



Soul Food – Nourishing Poems for Starved Minds

Edited by Neil Astley and Pamela Robertson-Pearce

You'll find many of the poems we use during the 8-week course in here, and many more, to inspire, challenge or lift you. Great as a gift for a poetry-loving friend, or as a gift for yourself, because, of course, you're worth it!

And finally, a poem...

Begin by *Brendan Kennelly*

Begin again to the summoning birds
to the sight of light at the window
begin to the roar of the morning traffic
all along Pembroke Road.

Every beginning is a promise
born in light and dying in dark
determination and exultation of springtime
flowering the way to work.

Begin to the pageant of queuing girls
the arrogant loneliness of swans in the canal
bridges linking the past and the future
old friends passing though with us still.

Begin to the loneliness that cannot end
since it perhaps is what makes us begin,
begin to wonder at unknown faces
at crying birds in the sudden rain
at branches stark in the willing sunlight
at seagulls foraging for bread
at couples sharing a sunny secret
alone together while making good.

Though we live in a world that dreams of ending
that always seems about to give in
something that will not acknowledge conclusion
insists that we forever begin.



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