



Sussex Mindfulness Centre Newsletter

March 2015 Issue #2

Earlier this month the first ever Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust Student Conference was held and hosted a variety of students representing different professions within in the Trust. The Sussex Mindfulness Centre hosted a stall at the conference and gained a lot of interest from students wishing to know more about the work that we do. The theme for the Student Conference was “Recovery and Compassion” and in keeping with that theme, this month’s SMC newsletter highlights how compassion is being explored within the SMC.

Compassion within the SMC

Paul Gilbert (2009) defines compassion as **caring for the wellbeing of the self or another, as well as recognising and being sympathetic, empathetic and tolerant of distress in a non-judgemental manner, and being motivated to alleviate the distress.**

Currently, there is a lack of evidence for interventions that show sustained and meaningful increases in compassion for others, and this research area is still in its infancy. Compassion is a difficult area to research because reliable quantitative measures of compassion and the implications of methods to increase mindfulness at an individual, group, and organisational level have not yet been developed. Although qualitative measures have been useful for guiding research developments.



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Although compassion is not explicitly taught in most mindfulness-based approaches, **the cultivation of mindfulness and compassion can be mutually enhancing. The SMC is interested in exploring research into compassion and possible clinical and organisational implications for compassion in the NHS.** We are exploring possibilities for compassion oriented work, both in 8 week groups, and in terms of developing a measure of compassion for others. These are both in very early and exploratory stages. We are also exploring the use of Compassion Circles to support compassionate practise in the Trust. Our work on compassion circles are also in an exploratory stage and are being evaluated.

Q&A with Lynn Ley!

What is your position within Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust?

"I am lead Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy Practitioner for Health in Mind (IAPT) in East Sussex"



How do you use mindfulness within the Trust?

"My post is dedicated to the teaching of the 8 week MBCT programme (for which I feel very privileged). I also supervise MBCT Practitioners in East Sussex and have supervised trainees on the Sussex Mindfulness Centre's 1 year training program. I also contribute to the Mindfulness All Days and Drops. In addition I contribute to the Mindfulness Advisory Group. My job also includes developing the resources for the program."

How many mindfulness groups do you currently run, and where within the Trust?

"Within Health in Mind we have a rolling programme of MBCT groups across East Sussex. They are currently held in Hastings, Lewes and Eastbourne and start each year in January, May, and September. This is a total of nine groups. I also offer weekly mindfulness drop-ins for staff which are held at Woodside in Hellingly."

How long have you been teaching mindfulness within the Trust?

"I began teaching MBCT in Brighton and Hove in 2006 and have held this post in Health in Mind for three years."

What do you enjoy about teaching mindfulness?

"I love working with groups of people. It is fulfilling and rewarding for me to hear how empowering participants find the course. There is a shared experience between participants and teachers. People often say they find it so helpful being in a group as they no longer feel as if they are the only person who experiences similar difficulties. It is amazing to see people blossoming and so heart-warming to receive such wonderful feedback."

How did you become interested in mindfulness?

"In 2006 I was a clinician and manager of a group work service in Hove and had recently finished a group work PGdip at the Tavistock and Portman when I heard about Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy. I had no idea at that time what it was, but was very curious and interested to find out more. I joined an 8 week course in the community and began my personal meditation practice. I was introduced to Dr Brenda Roberts (now retired) who was offering MBCT groups held at Hove Polyclinic. Brenda was so supportive, and encouraging, inviting me to work alongside her. This was such a wonderful opportunity and I believe it helped me to secure a place at Bangor University on their Mindfulness Based Approaches Course."

What do find are the benefits of using mindfulness-based interventions within the Trust?

“Some of the benefits within the Trust (and outside of the Trust) of becoming more mindful include an increase in mindful communication, enhanced listening, and the ability to step back and pause which allows a more responsive and less reactive attitude towards stressful situations. There can be shifts in attitude when practising mindfulness which can help an organisation run more harmoniously because staff can become more aware of unhelpful patterns, i.e. the very common self-criticism and the lesser known antidote of self-compassion and compassion for others. Mindfulness helps to develop a greater sense of acceptance and therefore can lead to more skilful action.”

What do you think is distinctive about a mindfulness-based approach compared to other approaches?

“The basic concept of mindfulness has its roots in moment to moment, non judgemental awareness. It helps to develop self acceptance and self kindness (and kindness for others). It encourages recognition of, and a gentle turning towards difficulty, which can enable the person to step back (decentre) from the difficult thoughts and feelings allowing acknowledgement of what is present without identifying with it. Another quality of the mindfulness approach is that it is not trying to fix, change or suppress, but rather by bringing attention back to a chosen focus (i.e. the breath) it allows for acknowledgement of what is present. It also helps develop an awareness of all the senses through a range of practices, i.e. mindfulness of sight, sound, taste, touch. Practices also increase awareness of the body as a whole, and present moment awareness of the breath. It is worth noting that aspects of the above can have similarities with other therapies.”

How would you like to see mindfulness developed within the Trust in the future?

“An increase in the availability of mindfulness groups for staff. Also the development of a self compassion and compassion for others program for staff and clients. As well as the continuing development of pre 8 week MBCT (for example a four week introduction to mindfulness.”

Thank you Lynn!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday 12th June: *The Continuing Dialogue Between Contemporary and Traditional Teaching of Mindfulness: What to Retain? What to Relinquish? The Place of Mindfulness in the Transformation of Distress.* **Speaker: Christina Feldman**

Book your place soon! Contact smc@sussexpartnership@nhs.uk or visit <http://www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/gps/education/smc/smc-events> for more information.

Mindfulness groups for staff now available – please visit <http://www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/gps/education/smc/smc-events> to sign up


<http://www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/gps/education/smc>

Reference list:

Gilbert, P. (2009) Introducing compassion-focused therapy. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 15 (3), 199-208.

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