

Accessing Support: Mindfulness

It is normal to feel stressed and overwhelmed when coming to terms with a cancer diagnosis and working through treatment. It is important to be kind to ourselves when we experience difficulty, and to remember that it is very natural to experience stress and worry. Nonetheless, there are mindfulness techniques and activities you can try out to help you manage your stress.

Mindfulness can be described as the skill of paying attention to and being more present in each moment (to thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, and our surroundings) and to respond in an open and non-judgemental way (with kindness).

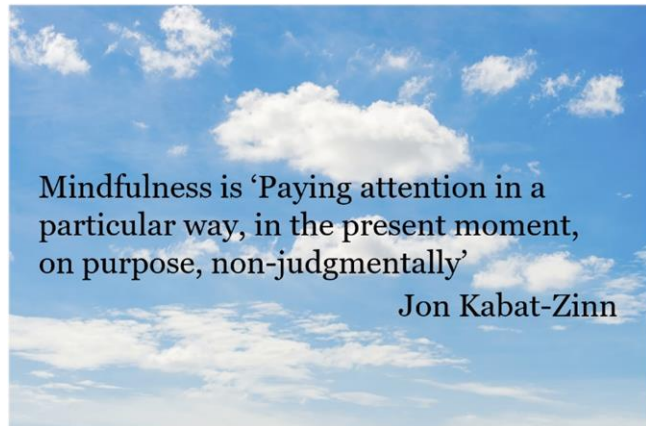
One of the first things we realise when we begin to be mindful is how much time we spend on 'auto-pilot', often caught up in a self-limiting whirlwind of thoughts, memories or worries, or finding ourselves in a struggle with unwanted or unpleasant sensations, such as pain or distress.

Mindfulness practice can help us to develop the skill of 'unhooking', as best as we can, from difficult thoughts rather than getting caught up in them or trying to avoid or push them away. Similarly, when we are being mindful, we can be aware of the sensations that come and go in our body and begin to respond rather than react to them. We can find that our experience is more fluid and changing than we first imagined it to be, and that we have space to make some choices. Although the purpose of mindfulness is not to feel more relaxed, some people do find they feel calmer.

As we become more mindful, we can find we experience emotions and/or bodily sensations as more powerful to begin with. This can feel uncomfortable in the short term, and it is important to look after ourselves if/when this happens. Generally, over time, gently acknowledging and beginning to turn towards what is present, even when it is unpleasant or unwanted, is helpful to us. Please take time to consider if exploring mindfulness is right for you and what level of support/guidance you need.

Below is a list of organisations who may be able to offer you some support, as well as some resources that you may find helpful to read/listen to. The range and quality of services/support available from such organisations may vary. This list has been gathered as signposting only, and The Royal Marsden cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information provided by an organisation listed or the quality of their services.

If you have any questions or would like further advice/guidance about where to seek specialist help in your local area, you can speak with a member of your Royal Marsden treatment team or the Adult Psychological Support Service.



The Royal Marsden Adult Psychological Support Service – Mindfulness Course

Every few months the APSS run a 6-week mindfulness course for patients here at The Royal Marsden. If you believe that this is something you would be interested in you can ask a member of your treatment team to refer you to the APSS for the mindfulness course, or you can email Psychological.SupportAdmin@rmh.nhs.uk and ask to be provided a self-referral form.

Breathworks

Mindfulness and compassion training run by experienced mindfulness practitioners with a focus on living with illness and/or stress. Of particular interest might be the online mindfulness for health course. Breathworks also have a free to join [community of practice](#) where it is possible to connect and share ideas with other people exploring mindfulness.

Website link: <https://www.breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk/>

Mindful Health

Under the ‘practice resources’ heading of this website you can find a variety of mindfulness practices and resources to support you in learning more about mindfulness.

Website link: <https://www.mindfulhealth.co.uk/>

Royal MILE Pre-habilitation Programme

A programme is intended for people who have recently been diagnosed with cancer and are just starting treatment. The link contains a series of videos which include advice on coping with stress and grounding and meditation techniques. Please note that, whilst this programme is oriented towards those who have been recently diagnosed, these techniques can be useful no matter what stage of cancer treatment or recovery you are at.

Website link: <https://patientinfolibrary.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/royal-mile-prehabilitation-programme>

Insight Timer App

A free meditation app which focuses on managing stress and anxiety and supporting sleep. The app offers a library of thousands of music tracks, meditations and stories.

Play Store:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.spotlightsix.zentimerlite2&hl=en&gl=US>

App Store: <https://apps.apple.com/ms/app/insight-timer-meditation-app/id337472899>



Burch & Penman (2013) "Mindfulness for Health: Relieving pain, reducing stress and restoring wellbeing"

A book and CD combination which details an eight-week mindfulness meditation programme for chronic pain management. The programme was developed by the founder of Breathworks and contains simple practices which can be incorporated into daily life and require only 10-20 minutes per day to complete. Also available on Kindle, with the accompanying CD being accessible on SoundCloud.

Website link: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Mindfulness-Health-practical-relieving-restoring/dp/074995924X>

Gilbert, P. & Choden (2013) "Mindful Compassion - Using the Power of Mindfulness and Compassion to Transform Our Lives"

Details a combination of compassion-focused therapy and mindfulness techniques for overcoming everyday emotional and psychological problems.

Website link: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Mindful-Compassion-Using-Mindfulness-Transform-ebook/dp/BO09ZRRORU>

Stanton and Dunkley (2017) "Using Mindfulness Skills in Everyday Life. A Practical Guide"

Written by two consultant psychologists, this book provides simple explanations, examples, and exercises for effectively incorporating mindfulness practices into daily living.

Website link: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Using-Mindfulness-Skills-Everyday-Life-ebook/dp/B01M9B4WoU>

Watts T. (2006) "Mindfulness: your step-by-step guide to a happier life"

Available in paperback and on kindle, this book contains several straightforward and easy-to-read strategies, advice, case studies, and practical exercises for mindfulness beginners.

Website link: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Mindfulness-step-step-guide-happier-ebook/dp/B019FNHCS0>



Williams & Penman (2011) “Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World”

A book written by practitioners of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy setting out practices that can be used to manage stress and anxiety.

Website link: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Mindfulness-practical-guide-finding-frantic/dp/074995308X>

Free meditations: <http://franticworld.com/free-meditations-from-mindfulness/>

Other APSS Information and Resources

The Adult Psychological Support Service has a range of signposting information sheets on topics such as: coping at different stages of the cancer pathway, supporting your physical and emotional wellbeing, relationships, and information specific to certain types of cancer.

You can view the signposting information sheets on The Royal Marsden’s [Patient Information Library](#) and the [Adult Psychological Support Service Website](#) (under ‘Further information and resources’). You can also request a copy of these by emailing Psychological.SupportAdmin@rmh.nhs.uk or telephoning **020 7808 2777** (Chelsea) / **020 8661 3006** (Sutton).

Additional support services

Cancer Care Map

An online database of cancer support services. You can search by postcode or by particular themes e.g. cancer type.

Website link: <https://www.cancercaremap.org/>

Maggie’s Cancer Centres

Cancer care centres with multiple locations, including The Royal Marsden Hospital, Sutton and Charing Cross Hospital, West London. Workshops, groups, information and one-to-one counselling available.

Website link: <https://www.maggies.org/>

Phone number: **0300 123 1801**

NHS Talking Therapies

NHS website to help you find your local psychological talking therapies service based on your GP address. Your local NHS talking therapies service can be helpful if you would like psychological support for cancer when you are no longer regularly coming in for appointments at The Royal Marsden, as well as for concerns unrelated to cancer or that predated your cancer and have become worse due to it.

Website link: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-nhs-talking-therapies-service/find-your-gp>



If you need any specialist and personalised advice about your cancer treatment, symptoms or side effects, please contact The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline. This hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week on **020 8915 6899**.

The Royal Marsden's Adult Psychological Support Service offers short-term, cancer-specific psychological and psychiatric support. You can either self-refer or ask somebody in your Royal Marsden healthcare team to refer you. For more information, visit [Adult Psychological Support Service | The Royal Marsden](#). Alternatively, contact us directly on **020 7808 2777** (Chelsea), **020 8661 3006** (Sutton), or email Psychological.SupportAdmin@rmh.nhs.uk.



If you have ideas for other signposting or information sheets, or if you would like to be involved in working with APSS to improve the service we offer, please scan the QR code to see more about our patient and public involvement, or email Psychological.SupportAdmin@rmh.nhs.uk or telephone **020 7808 2777** (Chelsea) / **020 8661 3006** (Sutton) with your ideas.

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