

Workshop 3

Taking Care of Ourselves: Theory and Practice

Facilitated by Christine Dewar

As a qualified and experienced teacher and holistic practitioner, I have been working in education and the fields of personal and spiritual development for more than 30 years. Work experience in various environments – corporate, schools, higher education, local government, voluntary sector and consultancy, responsible for developing and implementing personal development, coaching and employment programmes within the UK and through international development agencies. Currently, a teacher of Religious Studies and Philosophy in mainstream secondary sector where I conducted a brief study focused on the impact of Mindfulness training on senior pupils experiencing performance and exam anxiety.

As a meditation practitioner over 30 years, I became aware of the personal benefits of the practice and became very interested in its growth in a secular context, so completed the Diploma in Mindfulness Studies & Compassion in 2012. I have been teaching Mindfulness for 15 years with experience in developing and teaching mindfulness practices with young people mainly in the 12-18 age group. I run CPD programmes for education staff and teach adults and young people outside of school in groups and one to one, using various approaches including Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, MBSR, Compassion Practice and Insight to support clients and group participants across a range of chronic mental and physical health issues. I have also developed and run workshops on specific topics such as Cultivating Happiness, Cultivating Compassion and Buddhist Philosophy and Psychology.

I place strong emphasis on the explicit development of self-compassion – *‘the second wing of the bird’* - in any authentic practice and aim to facilitate the development of positive qualities as an antidote. I currently have a particular interest in the impact of mindfulness and compassion practice on issues related to emotional regulation, resilience and concentration in young people and on staff stress and burnout.

University of Edinburgh: BA English Lit & Philosophy; University of Edinburgh: B.D. Hons (Joint Pastoral Care & Counselling with studies in ancient languages: Dissertation research in Grief and Bereavement counselling);

University of Edinburgh: PGCE; University of Aberdeen: 2012 Dip Mindfulness Studies & Compassion (currently completing MSc research); Dip Clinical Hypnotherapy & Neuro Linguistic Programming

Workshop summary: Taking Care of Ourselves: Theory and Practice

I hope to present a balance of practical application and some theoretical background which might be useful in taking care of ourselves more kindly and gently:

- What mindfulness is and what it isn't
- Limitations in a secular context
- The careful balance of mindfulness and compassion in mental health
- What do we mean by compassion – are we just letting ourselves 'off the hook'?
- Benefits of Mindfulness in caring for oneself – focus on compassion practice
- How does personal practice bring benefit to others e.g. how might your own practice benefit you in your professional role and be of benefit to those you teach 'being your practice'
- Bringing the practice to others – teaching.

We will use some of the following practices in the workshop – probably 2 or 3 dependent on time:

- Settling down and noticing
- Coming home to your body
- Finding stillness and stability
- Thoughts and thinking – who do you think you are?
- Generating kindness.