

Breathworks Mindfulness for Health Course

Overview & Impact Summary

Mindfulness for Health (MfH) is a **pain management** and **self-management** skills programme for adults with pain, fatigue or other physical health conditions.

COURSE FORMAT



8 weekly sessions
of **2-2.5 hrs**

daily home practice
programme in
10-min sessions



groups of
12-15
participants



in person
or **online**



led by an
accredited
mindfulness teacher



free **lifetime**
membership
of online **community**
of **practice**

COURSE CONTENT



mindful
awareness
meditations,
tailored to
effectively
managing
pain and ill
health



daily **life**
exercises &
strategies,
including
pacing, for
improved
quality of life



gentle
'mindful
movements'
to increase
mobility and
confidence in
movement



wide-ranging
toolkit of skills
& practices for
ongoing use.

I am now living rather than coping, due to the skills, attitudes, and knowledge Breathworks gave me. My pain no longer controls my life in the same way, and even during flare ups my quality of life is way beyond what it was before.

Breathworks is a UK **charity**, providing Mindfulness for Health **courses since 2001**.



Founded by an 'expert patient', **Vidyamala Burch**, who has used mindfulness to manage **chronic pain** following severe **spinal injuries** in the 1970s, course materials are underpinned by **lived patient experience**.



The MfH **course handbook** was awarded **first prize** in the **BMA Medical Book Awards** (category clinical books for the general public), and is recommended by the Reading Well **Books on Prescription Scheme**.



Breathworks have trained **250+ accredited teachers** working across the UK, and a further **300+** operating in **35** other countries.



High accreditation and **supervision standards** ensure **robust governance** and reliable fidelity to the evidence-based programme.

Mindfulness for Health Course

Findings from Published Studies

Quantitative studies, including four RCTs, have found Mindfulness for Health course participants reporting **significant improvements** following the course.

I feel I am taking more management of my life without depending on the medical system entirely.

IMPROVEMENTS REPORTED



Pain experience

- Pain intensity and severity
- Pain interference
- Pain unpleasantness
- Pain acceptance
- Pain catastrophising
- Pain self-efficacy, ie confidence in performing activities while in pain



Mental health & wellbeing

- Quality of life
- Emotional distress/ psychological wellbeing
- Anxiety and depressive symptoms
- Positive outlook
- Satisfaction with life
- Vitality
- Self-compassion
- Mindfulness



Physical health & wellbeing

- Fatigue severity
- Fatigue interference
- Sleep difficulties

Many of these improvements have been found to be **sustained at 3 and 12 month follow up**, and several have been shown to correlate with **reduced healthcare usage**.



A University of Manchester Human Pain Research Group study concluded:

“The Breathworks programme improved the mental well-being of patients and their sense of being able to control their pain symptoms. These improvements were related to changes in patterns of activity in brain regions involved with cognitive control and emotional regulation.”

Source: Brown & Jones, Clinical Journal of Pain (2013)

Going on the course, I've been able to cut down on the tramadol, and some days I don't even take it.



Qualitative Findings

Doran (2014) interviewed individuals with persistent back pain, at 6- and 12- months after completing a MfH course. Themes in participant experience included:

Able to respond to early warning signs of flare ups

Learning to live in harmony with pain rather than tighten around it

Self-compassion, accepting pain and stop blaming themselves for flare-ups

Better quality of life despite the pain.

Full references at www.breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk/research.

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Findings from Published Studies

Long-Term Impact

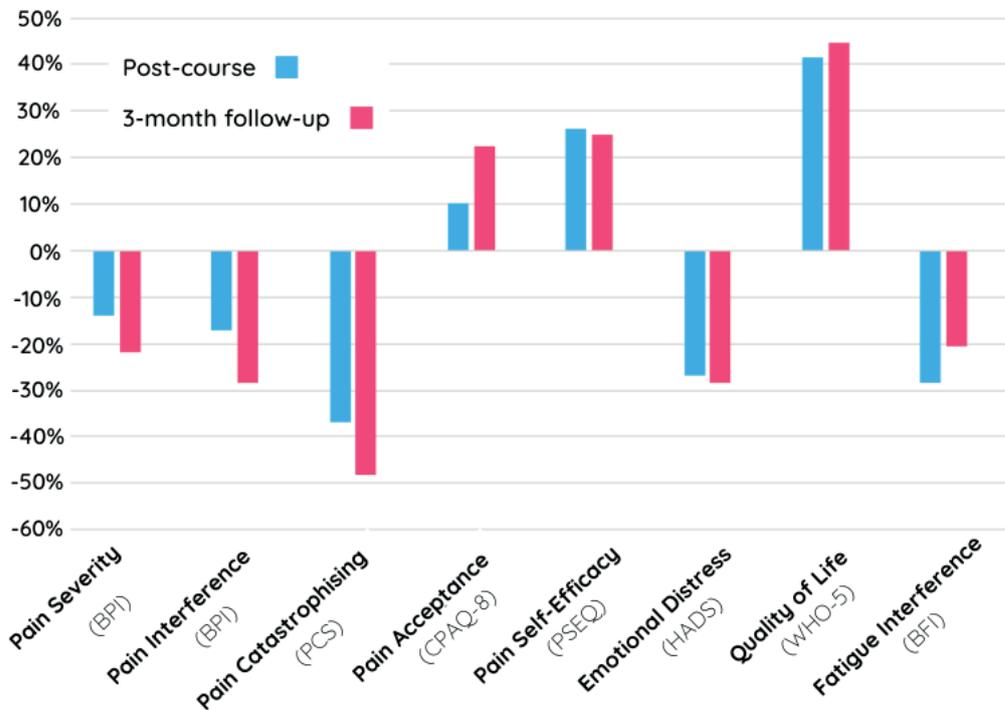
A study of past MfH participants (Long et al, 2016) found an **increased ability to self-manage their condition** and **positive changes in thinking** and behaviour sustained over the full period studied, **as long as 9 years after completion** of the course.

This is so much more than 'just an 8-week course' which you will forget in about 3 months' time, you are learning tools to enhance your quality of life, for as long as they are required.

MfH Participant, 2019

OVERVIEW OF OUTCOMES: % CHANGE

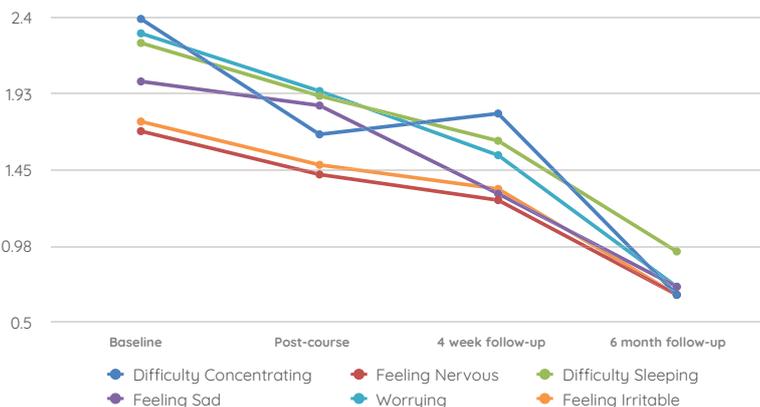
between mean pre-course score & mean follow-up score



Source: Breathworks poster presentation for the British Pain Society Annual Scientific Meeting (April 2021)

CHANGES IN PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS

from baseline to 6-month follow-up



Source: University of Manchester study, patients with late effects of cancer (2018)

“Whether you suffer with chronic pain, treat those who suffer, or care for a loved one who does, the Breathworks methods could radically change your life for the better.”

Professor Lance McCracken
Clinical Lead, Centre for Pain Services - Royal Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases, Professor of Behavioural Medicine - King's College London

Mindfulness for Health Course

Partnerships & case studies

Addressing Health Inequalities

Take Back Your Life (TBYL) is an adaptation of MfH for people with lower language, literacy and income levels, who despite being at greater risk of chronic pain and illness, may have limited access to mindfulness services.

A University of Leeds research project interviewed **TBYL participants** in Tower Hamlets and found evidence for:

- **Reduced pain intensity**
- **Reduced medication use**
- **Improved ability to self-manage condition**
- **Increased ability to return to work/participate within the community**

Online MfH for Accessibility

Breathworks is one of the longest standing providers of **online mindfulness**, providing online courses since 2011. Online courses provide the full evidence-based programme, with live teaching and peer to peer interaction, and **free lifetime access to an online community of practice**. Online programmes can **support accessibility** for patients **with reduced mobility**, or for whom issues such as **pain, fatigue, continence or shielding** can make it challenging to attend a regular in-person session.

“Great course and learning platform - really enjoyed being able to re-visit the sessions by listening to the talks and watching the teaching videos in my own time.”

MfH within Pain Centres

A study of MfH courses provided within a **pain centre context** (Agostinis et al, 2017) found clinically significant improvements in pain and wellbeing related measures at an **82% reduction in cost per patient** compared to individual treatment, and concluded:

“MfH may complement or replace the provision of more intensive PMPs where perhaps a full package is not required or when less intensive preparatory work may improve engagement.”

MfH within IAPT Psychological Services

Sheffield IAPT has provided MfH courses for people with long term conditions **since 2018**, reaching **100-120 people p.a.**, and have now trained **four Breathworks teachers**.

“They are one of the most popular courses in the service and are almost always fully booked. Recovery (defined by measures of anxiety and low mood) for people with a physical health condition is hard to achieve, but in fact there’s a very good recovery rate.”
CBT lead, Sheffield IAPT

MfH and Return to Work

A Wigan Borough project for people **long-term unemployed due to chronic health problems**, found that after the MfH course **5% of participants moved back into employment, 14% into training and 21% into volunteering**, these latter two steps towards employment **more than doubling the project target**.

‘Thank you for giving me my life back’
Wigan worklessness course participant