



mindfulness matters

By Dr Tamsin Betts



Meditation

Meditation has been shown to have a number of benefits – it relieves stress, promotes emotional health, improves focus and self-awareness, helps to alleviate chronic pain, promotes sleep, helps to manage addictions, and encourages kindness. People who regularly meditate feel that 10-15 minutes out of their busy day helps them to manage better in their work and at home, and cope with all the stressors of working in the NHS - obviously very beneficial in the current climate!

There are many different kinds of meditation but the one that we often come across is 'mindfulness meditation'. Mindfulness is about living entirely in the present moment. We often find we have drifted off somewhere in our heads - worrying, planning, etc – but if we try and live more mindfully on a daily basis, we can notice a sense of calm and space, allowing us to cope better. A simple example would be to really savour and enjoy our cup of tea or a meal or, when we go for a walk, properly looking at all the scenery around us. Mindful meditation involves sitting for any length of time and being present in that moment, noticing your thoughts and, every time your mind wanders off (which it will!), bringing it back to the breath. People often say "but I can't clear my mind, so I can't meditate". This is normal! Our thoughts are often racing around and just noticing what's happening can make us less reactive to those thoughts.



Again, there is a wide range of material out there to help you learn. There are two very generic websites, and apps - www.headspace.com and www.calm.com. I have used them both and like them both. They have sections for kids, and a whole raft of different meditations and simple explanations to get started. Calm also has sleep stories read by a whole range of familiar people if you have trouble with sleep. They are both currently free for NHS staff.



If you want something less generic, check out www.yogalikewater.com. Dan Peppiatt is an excellent yoga teacher who also teaches meditation, and has put together a series of short videos you can do over a week which take you through the process. Again, he has made this free for NHS staff. I really like his manner and find the course accessible, easy to understand and very calming! He will happily answer any emails or queries you might have.

Dr Tamsin Betts is a qualified doctor, trained yoga teacher, and executive coach.

She runs her own business coaching professionals and teaching yoga, mindfulness, and meditation. She has a keen interest in health, well-being, and nutrition, and recognises the importance of physical and emotional wellness in enabling us to perform at our best on a professional and personal level.

Tamsin worked as a GP for several years, before training as a yoga teacher and then an executive coach. She is married to a practising GP and has retained strong links with the NHS. She is aware that working in the NHS can bring enormous stresses, but also sees how rewarding and fulfilling it can be in the right circumstances. She currently also works coaching GPs through the **PCWC**, and has recently started as a case manager for the Wessex Professional Support Unit supporting doctors in training.

