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**Pre Class Orientation**

The orientation is intended to give you a chance to meet the teacher so you can be more fully informed about the course. It is an intensive programme and at times can be challenging. It is not a quick fix and asks for a high degree of active participation. If this is difficult at this time in your life for you, or if it is deemed not to be in your best interests to proceed, you will be refunded your deposit. Examples of experiences that may make this course unsuitable at this time include: recent bereavement; recent recovery from addiction; current clinical depression that is not yet responding to treatment; recent psychotic episodes. Sitting with ourselves and turning inwards requires a certain capacity and, at times, a little distance is needed before we can ask this of ourselves.

On receipt of a booking the teacher will contact you to set up a suitable time for this conversation. Making time to meet the teacher is very important and is part of the protocol. At the end of the conversation the teacher will decide whether or not this course is suitable at this time for you.

During the conversation, the teacher may write very brief notes in a notebook that is kept under lock and key and will be destroyed once the 8 week course is over. Such notes might say ‘caring for an elderly parent; on medication for anxiety; just had a baby; suffers with depression/anxiety; work very demanding with little support,’ and so on.

**\*N.B. If you are on medication it is important that you make no changes to it while on the programme.**

**Rationale for the Pre-class Orientation:**

1. It allows the teacher to explain the mindfulness approach in more detail:

The class offers a way to learn that is experiential, it is not a lecture, unlike many traditional classes. This way of experiential learning, learning by doing, means that the best teacher is yourself. So after a guided mindfulness practice participants will be invited to say what they noticed during the practice, if they wish. Experiences might ‘I noticed how busy my mind was;’ ‘I noticed I was asleep most of the time;’ ‘I noticed how restless my mind and body felt;’ ‘I noticed my mind was full of planning the dinner and all the things that I need to do,’ for example. Over the 8 weeks of the course the practice is to untangle from this, gently and kindly, again and again.

1. It allows the teacher to underline how important it is to attend each session, as best one can, as each week builds on what has been learned already. If you know in advance that you are going to miss more than one session it is best to wait until the next course. If for some reason you can’t attend a class or will be late it is important to contact the teacher and let them know. The teacher will let the others know that you have been in touch and can't make it. Once the class forms, there will be no one else joining, so for continuity and a sense of cohesion, we ask you to make attending the class a priority.
2. It is a chance for you to ask questions.
3. It allows teacher and yourself to get a sense of the challenges that may show up when taking the course e.g. ‘this is too hard;’ ‘I am useless;’ ‘there is no point in continuing.’ There may be some disappointment midway (‘it’s not working;’ ‘I am still a mess and my mind is still all over the place;’) or the comparing mind can step in with how we think others are doing; with anxiety there may be the stress of actually practicing with a very busy mind, and with low mood it can seem very easy to give up.
4. It allows you to say why you want to attend and for the teacher to have more understanding about the stresses and challenges in your life. It is also important for you to share any current or past mental health difficulties.
5. It allows the teacher to emphasise the importance of home practice, to explain that this is an immersion course and to determine whether and where you can make the time to practice in your day. Home practice will take from 35-45 minutes a day for the duration of the 8 weeks. A commitment to slow and steady daily practice supports our capacity to respond to the ups and downs of life in more helpful ways.
6. It allows the teacher to explain the potential risks of the program:
   * 1. Physical, especially in mindful movement. Some people anticipate that this may be yoga and it is not. You always have a choice about how much or how little to follow the guidance being offered. In mindful movement the guidance is just guidance, not instruction, and you are encouraged to really tune in to what feels right for your body moment by moment. The teacher can help to adapt aspects of the programme to support your needs so that you can participate to the extent available to you;
     2. Emotional: understanding that difficult moods and deep-seated feelings from the past may show up. This may be the first time we are taking the time to get to feel what is really here – sadness, grief, fear, shame, trauma. The programme has a way of working with these, and the teacher can help to adapt practices to meet your needs, e.g. to offer shorter practices or to break up the practices, perhaps. However, it is vital that the teacher knows you have support and that you agree to look for extra support if needed. You will be reminded that you can contact the teacher between classes if you are struggling during the course. You may need to contact your doctor or therapist for extra support.
     3. Relational: you may change and others may be uncomfortable with the ‘new you.’ You may find yourself being more compassionate or more assertive, or saying ‘yes’ or ‘no’ where you might have said the opposite in the past!
7. It allows the teacher to explain some of the possible benefits of the programme:
   * 1. Increased awareness and concentration;
     2. Some people report a quieter mind, a sense of balance and enhanced well-being through becoming more familiar with the workings of the mind, including the ways in which we avoid or get caught up in difficulties;
     3. Research shows that the practice of mindfulness may significantly reduce symptoms of depression, low mood and anxiety;
     4. Learning new ways to cope more effectively with stress, pain and suffering, releasing ourselves from repetitive reactive habits of mind;
     5. Learning to be kinder to ourselves and take better care of ourselves, getting in touch with a different way of knowing ourselves and the world;
     6. Improved relationships;
     7. Research indicates that some people report physical health benefits, such as better sleep, less pain, better immunity etc..
8. It allows the teacher to explain the mindfulness approach in more detail:
   1. Mindfulness is paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment;
   2. In this practice, we cultivate a sense of curiosity, exploration, kindness and basic friendliness to whatever we experience;
   3. Mindfulness helps us to wake up to our lives;
   4. In this practice, we notice how the mind moves to the past or future; we practice bringing it back with gentleness and firmness to the present moment. The movement of the mind involved in ruminative, repetitive thinking takes away from our capacity to live more fully in this present moment.